

# Hard Working,

## Skyler Painting in



Justin Dorland will tell you he was lucky, but you could argue it was more of a reward for plain hard work. People around him with faith in his talents and his drive for success helped him jump-start his solo career. Put him on a job these days and everybody wins.

He was just out of high school looking for work when he first picked up a brush to help out a home remodeler. After a decade of plying the trade with general contractors, he started up his own company, Skyler Painting. Sure it's not easy making the transition from employee to business owner, but by that time he'd built up a bank of industry support so he had the help—and the courage—he needed to get started.

One of the companies he worked for was CMG Painting, Inc., a commercial contractor in Nashville that bills itself as “experts in commercial painting and high-performance coatings.” Report for work to an outfit like that every day and you're going to learn a thing or two about slapping some chemistry up on a wall. “I got lucky in a way,” he said. “One of the guys there liked my work ethic and how fast I was—there was something about me that he liked, so he guided me and held my hand though the whole setup process as far as getting my license,

insurance, payroll, and all that sort of thing. I met the right person and I took off from there. I got a lot of work through him my first year...but I'm still learning, trust me!”

Working for a general contractor gave him experience in commercial painting, but lately he's going more residential, usually bringing along three painters on a job. He looks for that same ethic and speed when hiring a crew. “It's a challenge finding good help. I have good guys now, but a lot of them didn't really pan out. It could be because I'm so picky,” he smiles. In the end, it came down to *go with what you know*. “I hired my best friend my first year. He never knew how to paint, but he learned a lot the last couple years,” said Dorland. Hiring people you know can lead to problems, but Dorland assures us that both the friendship and the working relationship have stayed firmly intact.

### Kids and Fish

Everyone has a life beyond paint—well we shouldn't say that, because most likely someone doesn't—but Dorland will tell you when he's not otherwise occupied, he's pretty much about paint. You can see on his Skyler Painting Facebook page that there's a certain joy he takes in doing the work and getting it done. More than “just a sales pitch,” it's because that's what he likes to do. After hours he likes to fish, he likes to ride motorcycles, and most of all he loves spending time with wife Jessica and their two young children. Skyler Painting is named after his son who was his only child at the time; a daughter has since joined the crew. “When I'm not doing any of that, I look up stuff about painting. I'm always trying to learn,” he said.

He's self-motivated enough to learn on his own; lately after an initial stumble he's had success coating floors both with concrete stain and epoxy. At the time of our interview he was most excited about a recent concrete stain installation at a Nashville outpost of Lady Jane's Haircuts for Men (photo page 7).

Concrete stain is pretty easy for him, but epoxy is a different story. “I learned by trial and error,” he said. “The first one I did, we messed it up, but the second we got right. I study up on it. Epoxy is way harder to do—concrete stain is really simple. I've been learning epoxy as I go. I was just thrown into it and figured it out as I went. I like to do it though.”

# Easy Going

Nashville, Tennessee

by Jerry Rabushka, Editor

“When I’m working and painting and doing what I like to do, time flies by really fast.”



**Page 6,** Justin Dorland suited up and ready to spray.  
**Above:** Justin’s already training his son and company namesake, Skyley. **Right:** Before and after at Lady Jane’s Hair Salon, with perfect logo placement.



### Work for Everyone, Everyone for Work

Nashville has boomed over the past few decades—the census reports about a 10% population growth each time they count heads. There’s plenty of opportunity for a fella like Justin, but plenty of competition as well. “There are a lot of painters out here,” he observed. “It used to be there weren’t, but now every time I’m on the road I see a painter. So there’s a lot of competition but there’s a lot of work.”

So with so many folks out there swinging a brush, why hire Skyler? Well, you’ll get a good job from someone who knows what he’s doing and isn’t arrogant about it. “I’m a perfectionist,” he’ll admit. “I’m super OCD and I love to paint, so it’s not all about the money.” Well, he’s got kids to feed, so...“I mean of course it’s about money but I enjoy painting, so it’s not even like work. It’s stressful when I have deadlines, but when I’m working and painting and doing what I like to do, time flies by really fast. It’s just I get paid for it. I really like to paint.”

He’s got a pro support system; GC work accounted for the vast majority of his schedule during his first



year in business. His social media pages show someone who feels a sense of accomplishment with a job well done—his Facebook page has landed him some work but most of it is by referral.

Being new to having his own business, he’s trying not to do too much too fast, but work is happening. “I did some work in the Nashville mayor’s offices,” he said, “and some lab jobs at Vanderbilt University. I did the hepatology lab, that’s really high end! There can’t be a booger on the wall—it has to be perfect.”

How does he define good work? “I’m all about clean lines, good paint, good prep—no slack-a-joe paint job. I’m about good quality paint and work done the right way. No shortcuts for me.” And he’s not pushy, which goes a long way with his clients. He was even a little befuddled when we asked him about his sales pitch. “I just talk to them...like normal,” he said. “I don’t do the whole ‘put on my sales pitch’ voice...I’m just myself. I don’t try to ‘sell’ people like *this or that needs to be done*. If they want it done, I’ll do it. If I see something needs to be fixed while I’m doing something else I let them know, but for the most part I’m myself, man. I don’t go for the hard sell.”

So far, he notes with a combination of wonder and dread, things are going well and work is steady. “I’m still fresh, so I’m sure something is going to happen. I’ve had picky customers, but I roll with the punches. I look at it like if I was paying someone to do it, I’d want it done right. I haven’t had a lot of bad times but I’m sure there are going to be plenty of those. There’s a lot to this. I learn about painting, about products, just about everything.” [skylerpainting.com](http://skylerpainting.com) **TPC**

**Above:** Before and after; Justin did some painting for relatives at a family home. **Below:** Dorland painted it bold at Hume-Fogg Magnet School in downtown Nashville. “I did just about the entire school, working third shift,” he reports.

