

# Dream No Little Dreams

## Two collegiate brothers open the store of their

Inspiration for The Seaview Outfitters came from a combination of Jack and Steve Thomas', both *Miami-Ohio*, passion for the outdoors and summers spent in Alaska. Their Aunt Renna owns the Seaview Café and Bar in Hope, Alaska and Steve and Jack had begged to visit since they were young. Since their aunt runs the business completely alone, they were not allowed to visit until all siblings were over 16 and could help out. They have now "lived" there for the past five summers, in a cabin with no running water, one light bulb and one electrical outlet. "Over those summers we took on more and more responsibility at her café and realized we would love to run our own business. We thought to ourselves what could we do in Oxford...and with very little retail in town, a very active community and our passion for it—The Seaview Outfitters was born," says Steve.



*Steve and Jack Thomas opened The Seaview Outfitters while attending Miami-Ohio.*

apparel store, celebrated its grand opening in August. The biggest challenge the brothers faced throughout the process was that many people did not take them seriously because of inexperience or belief these college students would not follow through with their idea. However, Steve believes this challenge turned out to be a reward, as they have developed some incredible relationships with people they would have never met otherwise. "Jack and I define our lives by the experiences we have and the relationships we get to make. You only get one life on this planet and we may not have the typical definition of 'success', however true happiness comes only if you're doing something you love," says Steve.

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The Thomas brothers are originally from Cleveland and Jack is a sophomore accounting major, while Steve is earning his Master's in accounting at Miami-Ohio. As students, their goal was to start a business they could run in Oxford while still taking classes. During the 2010-11 school year, they realized the need for more retail in Oxford and started to develop a plan to fill the need. Students and residents previously had to travel more than 30 minutes to purchase outdoor apparel and gear.

Once the brothers had the idea and concept for The Seaview Outfitters, they knew they had to develop a top-notch, comprehensive business plan to give them legitimacy. With the help of several college professors, local business owners and City of Oxford employees, they developed a 27-page business plan. It covered everything from sales projections and an analysis on the Oxford/Cincinnati market to expected expenses, marketing strategies and more.

The Seaview Outfitters, an outdoor equipment and



*The store's grand opening was in August, with Oxford's former mayor Alan Kyger (right) officiating.*

# dreams in Oxford, Ohio.

By Kellsey Miller

Many of their favorite experiences with the store have been the opportunities to engage with so many diverse people with diverse life experiences. On any given day, they could have a father come in to the store and say "I want to plan my family's first camping trip, can you help me get the gear I need?" to an outdoor enthusiast who says "I need the best equipment possible for my upcoming hiking trip I'm taking out West, can you outfit me?" "The opportunity to share our story and passion for the outdoors with others is a tremendous feeling, but also getting to hear how we helped people to have a trip of a lifetime or helped someone create an experience they will never forget is an awesome feeling," says Steve. "The Seaview Outfitters is a place to share stories with others and to be inspired by others."

Both brothers say having strict discipline and time management is key to balancing their coursework and the store. They also have compatible personalities and say it would be impossible to co-own the business otherwise. Neither wants the business to be an excuse for getting only average grades and are both supportive of the other's outside obligations. If Jack has an exam coming up that he needs to study for, Steve is more than willing to put in a little extra time at the store so that he can do that.

Steve and Jack also credit Alpha Upsilon Chapter and Delta Sigma Pi with much of their success. "Our chapter is the single-most dedicated, inspiring group of young adults that I have ever had contact with, let alone been a part of. Our brotherhood challenges us to dream and reach for any goal we may have in life. If you want to be an investment banker, we will support you and help



Steve (left) and Jack Thomas have spent many summers with their aunt in Alaska, helping out at her restaurant, the Seaview Café and Bar.

you to achieve this goal, if you want to be a marketing rep for your favorite company, we believe in you and will support you along your journey," says Steve. When Steve and Jack shared their idea with the chapter, the response was supportive and Deltasig brothers played a role in marketing the store on and off campus. Several brothers also work at the store.

For brothers wanting to start their own business, Steve offers some advice. First, develop quality relationships everyday with people from all parts of your life, as these mentors will be the ones who support you in the toughest of times and will be the ones who are always there to answer your questions. Second, anticipate the amount of time starting a business will take. One thing the brothers underestimated throughout the process was the amount of time it took to do everything. If you think it will take a month to lock down a lease, budget three months for it; if you think developing business relationships (with suppliers and what not) is a quick process, budget 10 times as much time as your original plan.

"Dream no little dreams," says Steve. With love and support from fellow Deltasigs, Steve and Jack were truly inspired to dream and achieve whatever they wanted. ▲



Jack (left) and Steve Thomas share a passion for outdoor sports, which inspired them to open The Seaview Outfitters in Oxford, Ohio.

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