

## A Ray of Sunshine from The OC – Class Act Personal Services

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Virginia Culp, owner of Class Act Personal Services

As Babe Ruth once said, “It’s hard to beat a person who never gives up.” Those words are quoted in a newsletter Virginia Culp sends to clients of her high-quality cleaning service, Class Act Personal Services, and those words perfectly describe Virginia herself.

Virginia owned and operated a print shop for over 25 years with her now ex-husband, putting in over 100 hours a week for many years. “We worked our foolish heads off,” she said. They were booked solid with work and had to turn clients away, until the printing world turned upside down as technology changed. The entire printing industry suffered with the emergence of digital media, and Virginia ended up losing her shop and her home.

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At that point, she dusted herself off and decided to start another business. She figured that she had been cleaning since she was ten years old and everyone was always telling her how cozy and clean her house felt—why not start a cleaning business?

For the next six years, Virginia built up her cleaning business and had several dedicated clients. She was just reaching the point of needing to hire additional help to handle the demand when tragedy struck again—after cleaning long days for six days in a row, she ended up with a serious back injury and could barely move for three months. “I was in excruciating pain 24/7, relying on a cane to get around,” she said. Having no backup cleaners, Virginia’s clients held on for over a month before they had to look elsewhere for cleaning while she recovered.

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As Virginia spent months battling to get back on her feet, she continued to research cleaning techniques and products. “I’m a research fanatic. I cleaned while growing up, but doing it professionally is a different story. You need to know what products to use on all different types of surfaces to avoid damage. There is a lot to learn in this field of work, if you want to run a successful, and professional cleaning service business.”

This time away from active cleaning was also what made her realize how much she enjoyed doing it. “I miss putting a smile on people’s faces. When I was managing the print shop, I was also raising my son, organizing family gatherings, doing all the gardening, going to school part-time, etc. I was the one who cleaned my home. I never had a cleaning service, so I really feel for other women and men who do it all themselves. They work professionally and then they come home to take care of their home tasks. There isn’t any time for leisure activities.”

I’m not going to just clean your home but to offer more, to talk to you. People miss that warm personal touch.

Virginia’s goal is to offer high quality professional services, while adding the old-fashioned personable touch. “In today’s high-tech world, that personal touch has often been lost.”

One of the biggest challenges that Virginia and other cleaning business owners face is competing with independent, non-professional cleaners who quote below the average market rates. “Clients need to understand that you do pay for what you get, and there are risks in hiring non-professionals. I educate my clients about the many differences in cleaning techs. Some cleaning techs will just get a mop and use cheap or diluted cleaning products on all surfaces, without the knowledge and skills that professionals have for the best outcome. Professionals pay a good living wage to their workers, and many are insured for the client’s protection. I educate my clients about the value of our services; such as, we perform background checks on our independent contractors, we pay them a good living wage, and this provides for the best quality of services. We also use quality products. Businesses need to charge for the value that they bring to a client. Not all cleaners are created equal.”

As she builds her business back up again, she is focused on bringing on a team of independent contractors to assist with the workload. “You might like being a solo cleaner, but you’re putting your business at risk if anything happens to you. I had to change my business model, because it’s this or nothing. I decided to change my business model, to work with independent contractors, rather than hiring employees. CA has one of the most expensive workers’ compensation insurance costs in the nation”

She is confident that she’ll get to a place where she can finally take a break and have some fun but is not there yet. “All my life I’ve been a really hard worker. I’m curious, I love learning and creativity. I love a challenge and am a natural problem solver. I have determination, resilience, passion, honesty, and integrity, which are critical when you’re in someone’s home.

It’s been six years of hard work and I’ve only been able to have lunch with a friend once in the past year.”



One of Virginia’s lovely sunset photos

Before work got overwhelming, Virginia was an avid photographer and sold her prints online. “I have a very creative mind, with ideas constantly popping into my head. I wish I could do it all, but I can’t, I must pace myself. I just need to focus, stay positive, never give up, and keep working toward my goal.”

When I asked her how she maintains such a great attitude, Virginia said, “Challenging events happen to all of us. For some of us, at no fault of our own, we endure more challenges than the average person. You need to have the right thought process and attitude to get past these difficulty situations. Throughout my life, I made the decision to strive to be a better, not bitter, person. That makes a person internally strong. I want to make a positive impact on others.”

If you live in Orange County, California and are looking for an amazing house cleaning service who can make a difference on your home and bring a smile to your face, check out Class Act Personal Services.

