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FEATURES

Kentucky roots drive Owensboro native to success

by John Kirkpatrick

June 28, 2020





Owensboro native Jed Conklin credits his Kentucky roots for a successful career. | Photo courtesy of Jed Conklin

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Born and raised in Owensboro, Jed Conklin's work in photography has taken him to the far ends of the world. While his camera eventually landed him in Spokane, Wash., his "go-getter" attitude encouraged him to channel his inner entrepreneur.

A 1995 graduate of Daviess County High School, Conklin purchased a dilapidated three-story building in Spokane in 2012 that dates back to the turn of the century. Doing the majority of the work himself, he managed to transform the top two floors into eight high-end, industrial-style loft apartments.

"A friend of mine who is a successful real estate agent, Dan Spalding, was constantly encouraging me to buy a building and open a studio," he said. "He loaned me the money and helped me design it."



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The area was experiencing a renaissance and he was reluctant to open first-floor retail spaces to just anyone. As investors approached him with ideas ranging from office space to bars, he respectfully declined.

“I really wanted retail, maybe a bike shop, or a restaurant — some kind of hip business that would bring energy to the block,” he said. “This would, in return, help the city and increase the value of my property.”

That is where Conklin’s Kentucky roots come into play. With more than 200 acres of family land at his disposal as a child, his love for the outdoors drives many of his adventures.

“My mom went into labor while fishing at Carpenters Lake,” he said. “My dad picked up hunting and fishing as a teenager, so it was no brainer for me. I’ve dedicated my entire life to it.”

Insert “Hunt” — an outdoor-themed restaurant that features an elevated campfire menu. Conklin joined hands with renowned chef Tony Brown to see the project come to fruition.

“I just had an idea and space. I pitched the idea for ‘Hunt’ and even though he wasn’t a fisherman or hunter, he loved it,” Conklin said. “I knew I had the capabilities of designing and building it. From there it was a matter of working with the city on permits.”

Brown, who’s appeared on the Food Network’s “Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives” and “Guy’s Grocery Games,” also has his own restaurant in the building. It’s named Eyvind and consumes one bay of the first floor, while Hunt is located in the basement. An extra bay named the Redband Room serves as an event space and consumes the remaining bay.

Of course, Conklin’s adventures in the great outdoors didn’t end in Kentucky.

Degrees in print and photojournalism from Western Kentucky University propelled him to stints in Wyoming, New England, Colorado and eventually Washington. Upon being laid off in 2007, Conklin began his freelance career, where he chased editorial work all over the globe.

He and his wife Courtney have two children. Their daughter Maeve is 3, while their son Calhoun is 1. They return to Owensboro to visit his parents Dot and Keith on an annual basis.

Conklin's adventures and work can be found on Instagram at @jedconklin, @field_to_feast, @huntspokane, @redbandspokane, @thebickett. Visit www.huntspokane.com and www.redbandspokane.com for more information about his business ventures.

"I fulfilled my own prophecy because I couldn't find anyone else to do it," he said. "I'm blessed to have had a lot of help along the way."

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