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Former Bowling Green man opens restaurant in Florida

By DEBORAH HIGHLAND dhighland@bgdailynews.com Sep 21, 2017

Greenwood High School graduates Andrew and Amber Gaddie and their son, Aiden, 3, prepare for the opening of a Chick-fil-A in Clermont, Fla. Andrew Gaddie is the owner/operator of the restaurant.

submitted photo

Thirteen years after Andrew Gaddie began working at Chick-fil-A in Bowling Green, he cooked up a new venture for himself in Florida.

Gaddie is owner/operator of a Chick-fil-A in Clermont, Fla., where his wife, Amber, and their son, Aiden, 3 – along with their families from Bowling Green – are celebrating the grand opening Thursday.

“I fell in love with Chick-fil-A when I was 18 when I got to meet our founder’s son, Dan Cathy,” Andrew Gaddie said. “He spent about 30 minutes with me talking about the opportunities and how my passion for Chick-fil-A could turn into a career. At that time I

wasn't fully decided on what I wanted to do career-wise.”

Gaddie worked for the Bowling Green restaurant through his time at Greenwood High School and Western Kentucky University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration. He went to work for Chick-fil-A corporate in 2012 to help run company-owned eateries and was selected to become an owner/operator of a mall Chick-fil-A at Seminole Towne Center in Sanford, Fla.

“At 16, I had no idea that this would be my passion,” he said.

“I had the privilege of traveling the nation and being a grand-opening trainer,” Gaddie said. “I then had the privilege of becoming an interim manager with a Chick-fil-A Inc. and through that process is how I was selected for the opportunity at the mall.”

He relinquished the mall business for the opportunity to open the free-standing restaurant in Clermont, which is about 20 miles west of Orlando.

“Every day I get to do what I love, which is serving people,” Gaddie said. “I know that seems low on the totem pole. ... It's not the glitz and the glamour. It's walking food out to (guests) in the rain. It's helping moms and dads with their kids running around the dining room get settled. It's watching my team get married, watching them pursue their goals and their dreams. That's what it is about.

“It's about our guests. I don't have customers. I have guests.”

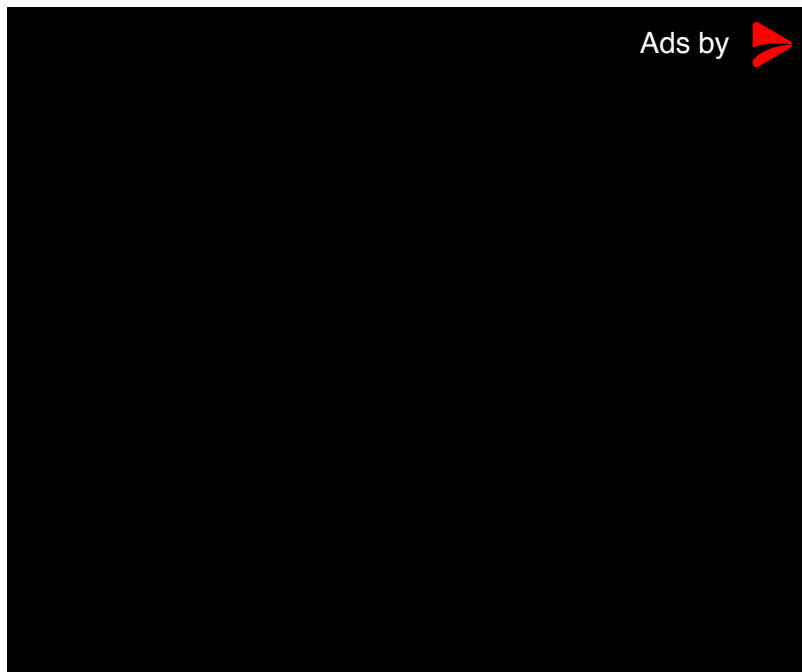
Being there to serve his guests is a long-held personal philosophy for the 29-year-old businessman.

“People come to Chick-fil-A because they want some food, but they also expect something different. We think this is a place of rest for some of our guests,” Gaddie said. “We have no idea what our guests are going through when they come to the counter. We make it our mission to see to it they get the best of the best service. We don't know whether it's their worst day or their best day.”

Gaddie is guided by his strong Christian faith and his belief in serving and loving one another, he said.

“It’s easy for me to care about people,” he said. “There’s nothing better than to see folks come in here and be fed but also to be emotionally fed and to be able to come in here and have a place of rest. ... At the end of the day it’s just how I’m wired.

“I enjoy doing those special things in the restaurant, if it’s talking to someone who may be dining alone or talking to a family where a cookie or a milkshake would turn that frown upside down. Chick-fil-A gives me an opportunity to love on people in a way I would not be able to do by myself. I get to pass that on to my leadership team.



“Ultimately, I’m hoping that I pass along that desire to love and serve. I think this world could really use a lot more folks that are genuinely passionate about caring about each other. I think we have such a cool opportunity to do that at Chick-fil-A,” he said. “It definitely doesn’t hurt that we have an exceptional menu and a beautiful facility.”

Gaddie’s father, Mike Gaddie, the associate athletic director for athletic training and sports medicine at WKU, is in Florida watching his son open the business.

“From a daddy’s perspective, he really did an outstanding job,” Mike Gaddie said of his son’s professional development.

“His mom and I are so, so proud of him,” Mike Gaddie said. “Connie and I have gotten to see him develop a passion for loving people and serving people and that’s really what he has done. He said something to us last night that brought tears to your eyes. He told everybody last night, yes it is a restaurant business and his career, but being able to serve people and be involved in the community is more than that.

“They (Andrew and Amber Gaddie) had to do this journey together. It’s really neat watching them grow together. My wife, Connie and I, it’s hard not to have a smile on your face and in your heart when you see your children live their dream out. He passionately wants to serve other people. From a parent’s standpoint, it is so exciting to see your children doing the thing that they truly love and truly put their heart and soul into it. The Chick-fil-A company has really allowed them to do this.

“They get to do this with the morals and values and character that we as Christians want to exemplify.”

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Night editor and senior writer Deborah Highland is a veteran journalist with 23 years of experience writing and editing both community and metropolitan newspapers. She has also developed websites and co-hosted a political talk show.