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STAFF PHOTO BY DAN HENRY

Fred Friday, owner of the Chattanooga branch of Junk King, stands outside his new Chattanooga business.

Cleaning up

Former Olan Mills executive starts junk-hauling service

BY BRITTANY COFER
STAFF WRITER

Fred Friday went from a career in a picture-perfect industry to one where he's sifting through junk each day — but he wouldn't have it any other way.

"It's not only fun, but it's what people need," said the former Olan Mills executive, who worked for the photo company for 30 years until 2008. "It's a practical way to put things to use."

When the photo industry began feeling the effects of the economy, Friday changed career paths and took a job in Memphis for about a year before his wife died. Afterward, he wanted to move back to Chattanooga but couldn't find a job that fit his skill set.

That's when he heard about Junk King, a California-based junk-hauling service.

"At first I thought, 'I don't know if I

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— Fred Friday

want to haul junk," Friday said.

But after traveling across the country to visit the company's headquarters and learn more about the process, he decided to throw a substantial portion of his retirement savings into starting a franchise in Chattanooga.

Junk King began in 2005 and started franchising about a year ago, according to Chris Lindberg, who recently visited the Chattanooga location to train Friday and Friday's grandson, Cody Lockhart. Lindberg said the company tries to differentiate itself from other hauling operations by recycling up to 60 percent of the junk collected and

using biodiesel trucks that are better for the environment.

He said the company has about 20 franchises throughout the country, with plans to continue to grow.

Since starting the business at the beginning of January, Friday and Lockhart already have encountered some strange occurrences. In addition to computers, lawn mowers, antique radios and a set of golf clubs, the pair also have hauled three vending machines from a home.

It didn't take long for Friday and Lockhart to be inducted into the world of junk, recently cleaning up a house that had more than six tons of trash inside.

"We were able to recycle 1,000 pounds of it, but the rest was trash," Friday said. "It took two days of five guys working all day to get it all cleared."

Lockhart said he never thought he'd be hauling junk for a living, but the business "has untold potential."

"It's fun," he said. "Everything is something new, and you just never know what you're going to get."

For now, the local franchise is a pretty small operation, with Friday and Lockhart responding to all the calls and collecting the unwanted materials themselves in one Junk King truck. Within the next 18 months, Friday hopes to grow the business to have three trucks and a couple more employees.

His goal is to reach about 300 pickups a month in areas surrounding Chattanooga, including Cleveland and South Pittsburg, in Tennessee, and in Dalton, Ga.

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