

Red and Black
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Classes, ice cream perfect mix-in for brothers

By MATTHEW HUNT

The two local franchise owners of Cold Stone Creamery said they wake up no later than 6:30 every weekday morning.

They're swimmers, University students and brothers, and their newest acquisition -- the ice cream shop in downtown Athens -- is their fifth Cold Stone franchise in two states.

Colin Underhill, a senior finance major from Louisville, Ky. is the captain of the University swim team, and his brother, Townsend, is a second-year MBA student.

Both have schedules that forbid sleeping in, and they balance their days between a tightly-scheduled slew of classes and keeping shop.

And they said they love every hectic second of it.

"When people eat ice cream, it makes them happy -- and we're in the business to have fun and make people happy," Colin said. "I consider myself in the service industry, not the product industry."

The Cold Stone downtown shop opened in late May, after eight months of searching for a location, luck with the \$25,000 franchise rights and sympathy from the owners of the downtown property.

"College students can afford to have ice cream at their belly line because they burn it off so easily," Colin said. "It's a perfect match."

But the catalyst for the store is more complex.

Everyday in Louisville, Townsend would see a line out the door at a Cold Stone shop. When he finally tried it, he said the ice cream was "unbelievable."

After a conference call to their father, they were ready to get started.

Now, Colin said, business is better than expected, and the "utility man" (as the store's employees call him) gets it done through prioritization.

"I completely focus my schedule on working the store," Colin said. "And why not? It's the most practical way to get an education -- first-hand experience."

In setting up shop, Colin and Townsend have dabbled in accounting, finance, marketing, sub-contracting, supply-chain management and real estate.

Townsend even scheduled his business classes around the store and said the store comes before school.

"Working with my brother gives us an early start on our master plan to work together," he said.

The brothers said the most important aspect of the store is fitting in with the community and the city of Athens.

There's a mural to David Greene and Uga, a specially-stained Georgia "G" on the floor (to make it look worn) and an employee roster that Townsend said is, and will always be, made up of University students.

As for the future, the Underhills currently are talking with the University in an attempt to get Cold Stone on campus in the Tate Student Center, the new East campus dining hall and Sanford Stadium.

"Running the store ... it's a very unique experience," Colin said.



Townsend Underhill (right), a second year MBA student from Louisville, Ky., and his brother Colin, a senior finance major, pose for a portrait. The brothers own franchises of Cold Stone Creamery in two states. (Renee Brock * The Red & Black)