

NICK AND URSULA NOVELLINO

CNE Grounds Maintenance and Spring-Green Franchise Owners, Newport News, Virginia

Full-Time Dedication

Nick and Ursula Novellino grew and diversified their landscape maintenance business with a Spring-Green franchise.



Career firefighter Nick Novellino originally got into the green industry part-time as something to do on his days off.

When he left for 14 months in Iraq as a contract firefighter, his wife, Ursula, quit her job to run his landscape-maintenance business in his absence. And after Nick returned home, the couple decided to focus their efforts on making the business a full-time job — and it only grew from there.

“I didn’t intend for it growing to the size it did,” he said.

Their company, CNE Grounds Maintenance Inc., provides mowing, pruning, fertilizing/weed control, and snow/ice removal to the Newport News, Virginia area. They service a range of properties, including single-family townhomes, commercial properties, and apartment complexes.

In 2011, the Novellinos had more than a decade of green industry experience under their belts and started looking for other ways to expand their business. The couple knew what it took to grow their maintenance services but weren’t sure what it would take to expand their lawn-care division — and that’s when they discovered Spring-Green.

But Nick and Ursula put the CNE expansion on hold in 2012, when Nick was involved in a motorcycle accident. They focused their efforts on keeping the business afloat through his recovery and picked up where they left off with Spring-Green in 2015. They eventually became franchise owners in 2016, but the couple never felt pressured to make a decision before they were ready, Nick said.

Finding the Right Financing Fit

Once the couple felt like they had found a franchise that shared their business philosophy, the last remaining concern was figuring out their financing options. They looked at the SBA loan but soon realized it would be a tedious process, and they weren’t making progress with any of the banks they contacted.

However, Spring-Green’s financing eliminated any concerns the couple had, and “Spring-Green’s assistance was never more than a phone call or email away during the process”, Nick recalled.

“Without their capability of financing us, we likely wouldn’t be franchise owners. It’s just another benefit of Spring-Green,” Ursula added.

Keeping Both Under One Roof

The Novellinos house both businesses in the same office space, shop, and have one admin for both. Their CNE and Spring-Green businesses have separate employees, but having them all in one place makes running the two companies easier for the couple.

“I can tend to both businesses — not necessarily at the same time, but in the same area — without having to move to a different office or different building,” Ursula said.

Having two sets of employees focused on different services hasn’t posed any problems for the Novellinos.

“I don’t think there are any drawbacks,” Ursula said. “You’ve got the guys who want to cut grass, and you have the guys who want to put down the fertilizer, and they don’t want to cross.”

Their biggest challenge is finding the time to keep the two running smoothly.

“Just having enough time in the day to manage both of them. That’s really what it boils down to,” Nick said. “If we’re not devoting enough time to one company then it’s being taken away from the other. So, it’s just about time management.”

“With Spring-Green, we should be able to do the same amount of work, with half the number of employees.”

Less Is More

While their existing business with CNE is doing well financially, Spring-Green offers, even more, economic stability. The couple also appreciates Spring-Green’s support system when they have practical questions on topics like improving lawn health or correcting disease and insect problems.

But above all, the Novellinos respect Spring-Green’s family atmosphere and values, as well as the straightforward approach and commitment to over-delivering on their promises — to both customers and franchise owners.

“That’s a big thing for us,” Ursula said. “If we tell you we’re going to do something, we’re going to do it, and they operate the same way.”