

# Growing the Green



## A COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE STUDENT BUILDS HIS LANDSCAPING BUSINESS

By Katie Starzec

Watching the sun sneak over the horizon, a K-State student pauses work to enjoy the moment. This is what he lives for – watching the sun rise and set while being able to work outdoors.

It started when he was in eighth grade, mowing lawns for neighbors. As a junior in high school, he mowed 47 yards a week, had three employees and was contracted to do all of the Kansas Home Developers landscape jobs.

Now, Brett Grauerholz, a golf course management student, has his own landscaping company.

“I wanted to be outside all of the time,” he says, “so I started my own business.” With some help from Chris Brock – a business partner, coworker and friend – Grauerholz refabricates yards, landscapes new homes and installs turf, irrigation systems, hardscapes and water features. In the past year, he’s worked on a couple dozen projects.

“It’s a huge sense of accomplishment. I can drive by four months later and say, ‘I did that,’” Grauerholz says.

### A Good Reputation

He has obtained all the equipment he needs to run the business and takes pride in protecting his good reputation, he says. “With small businesses, getting a reliable name out into the community is vital, especially when it’s tied into the company name on the side of the truck,” he says.

Business partner Brock adds his irrigation expertise to Grauerholz Landscaping, but gives a lot of credit to Grauerholz’s ambitions. “Brett’s pretty intelligent for his age. He’s doing very well for himself, and he’s a busy kid,” Brock says. The two men met when Grauerholz started working for Colbert Hills Golf Course. Since they both did landscaping jobs on the side, they decided to pool their knowledge to make extra money. They now do jobs

in Manhattan, St. Mary’s, Lawrence and “pretty much wherever people need something done,” Grauerholz says.

### Challenges

However, juggling schoolwork, a regular job, a business and a social life can be a bit challenging. “It’s hard to find the time to study,” Grauerholz says, “and sometimes school comes second. But I try to do projects on the weekends so they won’t interfere with classes, and I still find time to hang out with the guys.”

Not only does he have to worry about getting his projects done, but a slew of responsibilities comes with owning a business. “Paperwork, budgeting, advertising, bidding to get a job, using my resources to save the most money – it’s all part of the game,” Grauerholz says.

After he started making a name for himself, a more experienced landscaper challenged his youth and became a rival, he says. Grauerholz had to stand up for his name and prove that he was qualified to working the landscaping industry.

“If you have a business, you can’t be afraid to stand up for yourself or ask questions when you need help,” he says.

### Looking Forward

A big asset to Grauerholz’s business has been his family, he says. “My family helped me through everything, from Mom making sandwiches for me when I got home late, to Dad helping me

finish a project. They have been a big support system.”

Grauerholz says that since he’s pursuing a degree in golf course management, he’s not sure how long he’ll be operating the business. But he says he’ll always have something to fall back on if the golf course industry doesn’t work out. 🐾

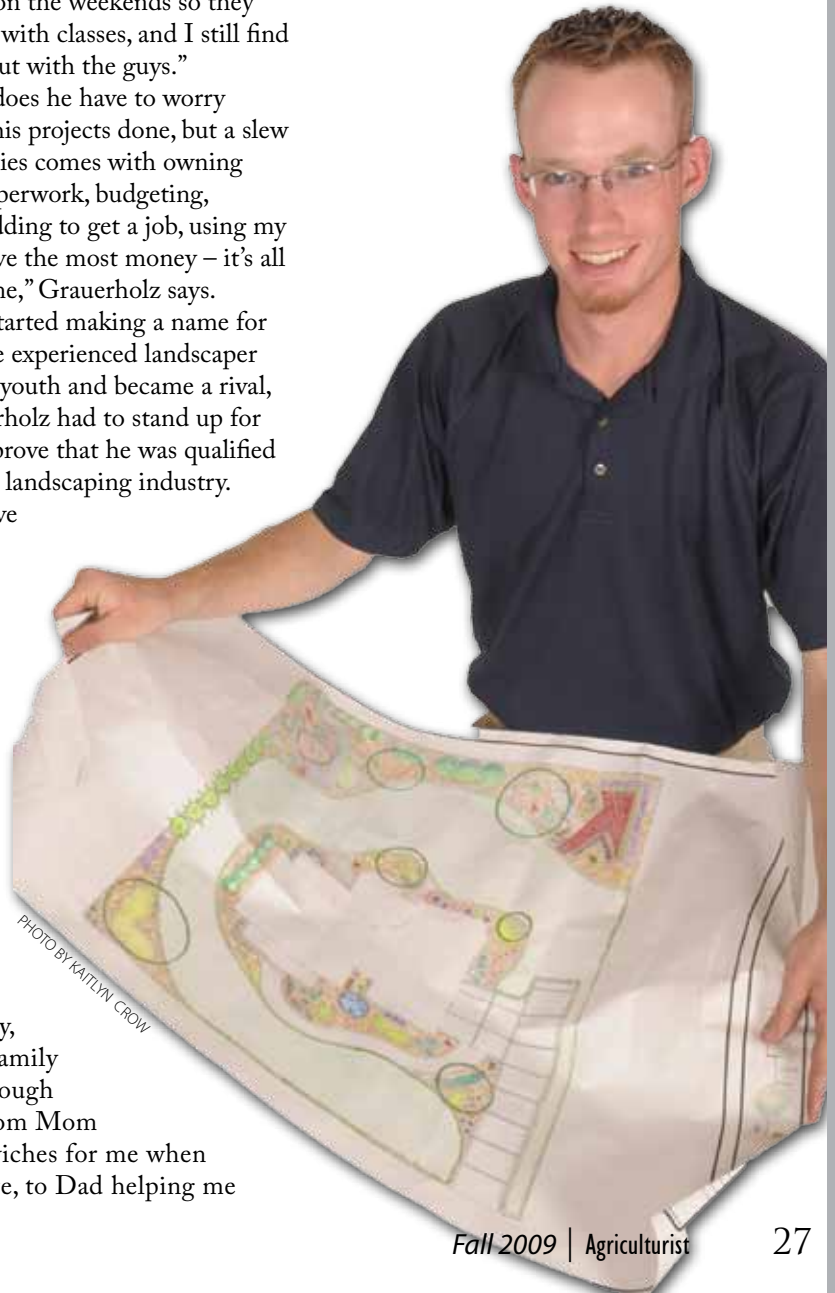


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