

business class

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# Feeling the heat

Josh Dupuis of  
Wildwood Saunas

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WORDS TESS VAN STRAATEN > PHOTOGRAPHY LIA CROWE

“I was home-schooled and I didn’t do well with books, and I couldn’t sit still and I couldn’t stop building stuff, so I decided to just go build stuff.”

**J**osh Dupuis has been building things since he was a child. He started working in construction at just 15 years old, but never thought he’d have a business building saunas.

“If someone had told me three years ago that I would be building and renting saunas right now, I would have laughed,” says Josh, the founder of Wildwood Saunas. “It was something that hadn’t crossed my mind until my wife, Amy, said she loved saunas.”

It all started in 2020 when Amy wanted to rent a sauna for Christmas. When they couldn’t find one, Josh decided to build one in the backyard.

“I thought it would be really cool to have one on a trailer because you could take it anywhere you want. Then I thought, ‘Let’s throw it on a trailer and rent it out!’” Josh explains. “You can bring the benefits to everybody and share such a cool thing. Show up at someone’s birthday party with a sauna and drop it off—it’s pretty cool. And we actually went camping with our barrel sauna.”

So Wildwood was born, and has since built up a business around custom sauna builds and mobile sauna rentals—including weekly Saturday stints at Willows Beach in Oak Bay, where they do both drop-ins and pre-booking.

“Business is really good and everybody loves it,” Josh says. “It’s such a great thing to have. Our goal is community building, and at Willows, the groups come and do some cold dips and everyone hangs out. It’s really cool and there are big smiles all around. When you come out of the sauna, it’s



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“I think people are really getting more aware of the health benefits. When I have pain from working hard all day, I’ll do a cold plunge and then a sauna and I just feel so relaxed after. It clears my brain and I find it puts me in a good mood.”

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hard not to smile. We really enjoy doing it, because it’s such a nice thing to bring to the community and the health benefits are great.”

For Josh, who also owns Josh Dupuis Construction, the building bug started at a very young age. “Being creative is definitely my passion,” he says. “When I was 11 years old, I built my first go-kart just by looking at a picture in a magazine. I bought a welder and learned how to weld. Doing that first go-kart and seeing it drive, that’s where it started. I thought, ‘What else can I build?’”

After struggling in school, Josh moved out on his own when he was just 15 years old and started in carpentry, building homes for five years.

“I wanted my freedom and I wasn’t very good at school,” he says. “I was home-schooled and I didn’t do well with books, and I couldn’t sit still and I couldn’t stop building stuff, so I decided to just go build stuff. I never thought I could own my own business because I was so terrible at school and math.”

But after getting into commercial refrigeration and obtaining his Red Seal in HVAC-R, Josh realized he *could* do math and concentrate on things he was passionate about. He spent the next eight years building grocery stores all over Canada before quitting his job to start his own construction company in Victoria three years ago.

“I was building the Walmart in Langford and on my days off, I was going home to Edmonton, where I was living at the time. It was -50 C there and I was in a T-shirt here, so it made sense to move here,” says Josh, who grew up in New Brunswick. “The weather is great, there’s lots of construction, and Victoria is beautiful. All the hiking here is crazy!”

Josh grew up playing competitive sports, including baseball,



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hockey, amateur boxing and skateboarding, and says the best advice he ever received was from a coach, who would say: “Mind your thoughts, because they become your words. Mind your words, because they become your actions. Mind your actions, because they become your character. Mind your character, because it becomes your fate.”

Keeping a positive mindset has been something he’s tried to do, even when faced with the challenges of the construction industry.

“Construction can be pretty challenging all the time,” Josh says. “The timelines, trying to get things done quickly and well at the same time, that’s probably the hardest thing. The biggest lesson I’ve learned is to double-check prices on materials before sending the quote.”

Summer is also a challenging time for the sauna rental business, especially when the last two summers have seen several heat waves and record-breaking temperatures.

“It really slows down when it warms up,” Josh says. “When it’s 30 C it’s hard to rent a sauna, but we still had lots of people at the beach. But now that it’s raining and not nice, we’re pretty busy because it’s a pretty unique way to warm up.”

Passionate about health and wellness, Josh says he thinks saunas are definitely making a comeback as people look for different ways to de-stress.

“I think people are really getting more aware of the health benefits,” Josh says. “When I have pain from working hard all day, I’ll do a cold plunge and then a sauna and I just feel so relaxed after. It clears my brain and I find it puts me in a good mood.”

Wildwood has two rental saunas right now and plans to build a third one soon. The company is also going to be designing cold-dip tubs next year, and is even considering

starting sauna boat tours. Josh says his dream is to have a whole fleet of saunas and to be doing custom builds full time.

“The biggest mistake I’ve made has been not starting this company sooner,” he says. “Not believing that I could be successful and not believing in myself enough. When things get hard, that’s when you’ve got to push through, and once you do, that’s what shapes you and makes you better. Don’t give up when things get hard. When you push through, that’s the game-changer.” **B**