

# Fabricare



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The Magazine of  
the Drycleaning &  
Laundry Institute

## BRIGHT ENERGY-SAVING IDEAS

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**PLUS:**

**DLI'S PREMIER CLUB—  
EXCLUSIVE BENEFITS,  
UNBEATABLE VALUE**



Jordan, Rick, and Lynda Wood show the sign they display in their store that highlights the honors Davis Imperial Cleaners has earned in the past year.

# DAVIS IMPERIAL

## Raising the Bar

By Scott Alloway

The list of honors for Davis Imperial Cleaners in Chicago, Illinois, is both long and impressive. The 52-year-old institution has earned many, including the following:

### 2007 Best of Chicago

#### Best Couture Dry Cleaner

-Chicago magazine

#### 5 Star Certified Couture Cleaner™

-Leading Cleaners Internationale

#### "Cleaner of Choice" Curator of Costumes

-Chicago History Museum

#### "Finest Services in the World" 2006 and 2007

-Esquire's The Big Black Book, The Style Manual for Successful Men

And now **the first ever AOE designee with all nine icons as the Recipient of the 2006, 2007 and 2008 Award of Excellence** from the Clothing Care Council, Washington, DC.

Rick and Lynda Wood are justifiably proud of their hard work and accomplishments, but when they explain the reason for their success, it comes down to a simple, "It is our passion. You can't ever take your eyes off the goal."

The Award of Excellence was a natural fit for the Woods. Through the program, there is a measurable set of required criteria, the Woods pointed out. Passing the Certified Environmental Drycleaner, Certified Professional Drycleaner, and Certified Professional Wetcleaner exams earned Rick Wood the Certified Garment Care Professional designation. Davis Imperial then met the other AOE requirements by demonstrating exceptional stain removal, continuous training, excellence in cleaning, advanced education, community service, and the successful passage of the on-site quality inspection with a 100% score.

"The recent inspection of your business clearly demonstrates why Davis Imperial Cleaners is the first organization in the Award of Excellence program to earn all nine of the 'Special Achievement' icons which are granted only after achieving certain critical Points of Excellence," said Brian Johnson, Director of Training and Technical Services for DLI.

"Completion of the AOE requirements assists the drycleaner in setting the highest standards for excellence in fabric care and demonstrates a company's commitment to maintaining the highest level of excellence in all aspects of their business," Rick said. In tune with Davis Imperial Cleaners' "Perfection Is Not An Accident" motto, they reiterated their belief that success comes from their dedication to the three P's: Persistence, Perseverance and Perspiration as well as "the completion of such excellent programs such as AOE."

"Davis Imperial Cleaners is honored to be the recipient of the 2008 Award of Excellence and the first in the world to have completed all the points of excellence, earning all nine icons reflecting that achievement," they told attendees at a recent meeting of Leading Cleaners Internationale. The three Wood family members who now operate the business all brought different experiences to the company.

For Rick, President of Davis Imperial Cleaners, it was a summer job starting in June 1972. Father-in-law Bernard Davis asked Rick, since he had the summer off from teaching high school English and journalism, if he would be interested in running the vacation routes. Rick said yes and never looked back. "I was going to go back and get my Masters. Instead I went from running the vacation routes to managing production and creating our fire restoration business."

Lynda (daughter of founders Leona and Bernard Davis), Vice-President and Director of Communications and Marketing, brought her experience teaching high school communications as well as being a women's apparel buyer for 10 years in the 1970s. In addition, Lynda was also an educator at the International Academy of Design and Technology teaching fashion merchandising during and after their



Leona and Bernard Davis founded Davis Imperial Cleaners in Chicago 52 years ago. The company's commitment to excellence was affirmed with a perfect score on their plant's AOE quality inspection.

business: community service, advanced training, Earth Day projects, and sponsorship of a youth baseball team. We think it is important to give back."

And to top it all off, Davis Imperial is reaping the rewards of doing good work, both professionally and in the community. "Business has been extremely strong. We never rest on our laurels. Daily quality checks, constantly striving to meet our clients needs. 'No' is not in our vocabulary when a reasonable request is made," Rick observed.

"We talk all the time about finding the perfect balance of working on your business and in your business. Our success is a combination of being on the floor checking the pieces each day and also stepping away from the daily activity to plan the business. This combination is sometimes hard to achieve and that is where our staff comes in," Rick said. "Our staff understands our mission, our standards, and the expectation to excel above those standards. Beautiful packaging must be the finishing touch to a beautiful garment."

The Woods talk about the business and their passion. "It's about loving your life's work, which has a positive effect on your business. We're happy here. My 82-year-

two sons, Joshua and Jordan, were born. While raising their two sons, she supported Davis Imperial Cleaners in their advertising, promotion, and marketing efforts before joining the business full-time in 2001.

Their son Jordan now serves as the General Manager. He expressed an interest in joining the company when he graduated from Lehigh University in the winter of 2003 with a degree in Supply Chain Management and Finance.

One of the most important keys to a successful operation is the staff. Finding and retaining good staff is always

## **Davis Imperial Cleaners is the first in the world to have completed all the points of excellence, earning all nine icons reflecting that achievement.**

challenging, they said. "We are very particular about who works in our facility. Most of our people have gray in their hair. People we bring on board have experience. Over 30% of our staff has been with us over 10 years and our store manager and stain technician have been with us 34 and 35 years, respectively."

Handling couture and designer garments means having employees who understand the garment industry and fashion. Training is continuous and everyone on the floor recognizes and respects what they are handling. "Our job is to return the garment in like-new condition so when the client receives it after processing it is ready to wear," says Lynda.

Their success in the AOE program is a source of pride because they were measured by an impartial outside agent. "Having someone establish criteria you have to meet forces you to raise your level of quality—not just in your facility, but also in your community. Recognition for our hard work is rewarding," Rick said.

It took them one year to get the nine AOE icons. It was a team effort. "The stain swatch went to the tech—you want to make sure the stain is removed. Rick did the Certified Professional Drycleaner, Certified Professional Wetcleaner and Certified Environmental programs," Lynda said. "The other things were things we do normally in the course of

old mother loves to visit and takes great pride in the growth of the business. I called her to tell her Davis Imperial had been named best couture dry cleaner in Chicago. We both cried. I remember her on the floor on her knees pinning a dress on countless occasions and my dad doing everything on the outside running routes, servicing their clients. Success does not come without great sacrifice."

The Woods' message to the industry is to never rest on your laurels. "We are a work in progress. Staying abreast of the latest fashions trends and technologies, we are always mindful that excellence in fabricare and in our facility is the result of incorporating the most relevant technologies with the old world techniques and attention to detail of our incredible technicians," they said.

"Our team of professionals understands our vision and they never forget that the sole reason we are able to feed our families and enjoy some of life's simple pleasures is that out of more than 1,000 drycleaners in Chicago, our clients have rewarded Davis Imperial Cleaners with their business, and for that we are very grateful. The Award of Excellence Program developed by the professional staff at DLI and the Clothing Care Council challenged us to meet standards that will continue to assist us in our desire to excel at our craft," they concluded.