

## FRANCHISE OWNER SPOTLIGHT

# Ivan and Karina Oliver

By Mike Brodarick, General Counsel



**W**inning Rookie of the Year in 2018 and earning their way into the 2019 President's Circle, Ivan and Karina Oliver are on a roll. Ivan and Karina started out of their garage as new residents to San Antonio, and in just three years, they are closing in on \$2 million in annual revenue, with 17 employees and a dedicated facility. Although their first three years with PuroClean have been tremendously successful, they have not been easy. In this Spotlight, Ivan and Karina share how they built their business so quickly, as well as the challenges that came with rapid growth.

## What did you do before PuroClean?

When we moved to the United States in 2010, Karina was a stay-home mom, and I was an industrial engineer working in the medical device industry. I worked for a large corporation and held an executive position. We relocated several times for my career, and started to realize the higher I moved up the corporate ladder, the more I had to travel. I was traveling almost every week, which was difficult for my family and didn't align with our values. That's why we began looking for opportunities as entrepreneurs.

## What got you interested in PuroClean?

I love mowing grass, so we started looking into opening a landscaping business. I was researching the idea at the San Antonio Small Business Development Center and determined the local landscaping market was saturated. A counselor at the center suggested I contact FranNet to learn more about franchise opportunities. FranNet showed us several options, but I connected with PuroClean because I wanted something active and liked the mission of serving people in their time of need. We had also experienced a water loss in 2010, so we understood what customers were going through.

## What do you enjoy most about your business?

We enjoy helping our customers in their time of need. People are grateful to us for helping them in a disaster when they may have felt hopeless. It is rewarding to give them peace of mind at a time like that.

## How did you build a successful customer base?

We built the business through agent marketing. When we first started, I would be running a water loss, leave to clean up and change clothes at a gas station, then do a

lunch-and-learn presentation for an insurance agency. When the presentation was over, I would change clothes in my truck and go back to the jobsite. It was exhausting. Our Regional Director helped with our marketing strategy, and we eventually brought on help to take some of the load off me.

Over time, our business built a reputation in our community. Agents advocate for us because they know we can manage even their most difficult clients, and our customer reviews rave about what our team did to help them. Our customers also started sharing their positive experiences with adjusters, and now we get direct referrals from seven different adjusters.

## How do you recruit employees?

We use Indeed but also rely on word of mouth. There is a local maid service that sends us mold referrals. I was speaking with the business owner when COVID-19 restrictions were at their peak. Her business was at a standstill, and she had not figured out how they were going to navigate the new environment yet. The business owner was worried she might have to lay off her entire staff. I told her we had more work than we could handle at the time and

offered to take her employees on at PuroClean until her business was back on track. The employees helped us out on fire jobs for a couple weeks until the maid business put a new strategy in place. Now the maid business is back on track, and the employees didn't miss a paycheck.

### **What has been your most satisfying moment in business?**

Winning the 2018 PuroClean Rookie of the Year was one. Moving into our warehouse was another.

When we started, we kept some equipment in a temporary storage facility, and some in our garage. It was a nightmare because there was a lot of travel back and forth to get the right equipment to the jobsites, plus it was taking up too much space at home. We also didn't have a place to gather as a team and have a conversation or a good laugh. We would just pick up the equipment and go to the jobsite. Now we have a space to build the culture we want to build.

There is a picture of us in our rental home, when we first moved to San Antonio, hanging in the entrance of the new office. There is a stack of boxes behind us in the picture because we had just received our IEP and were preparing to open the business. That's how we started. So moving into a relatively big warehouse with a fleet of branded vehicles lined up in the back and a team of 17 employees supporting us was a very satisfying moment.

### **What is the greatest challenge your business faced and how were you able to overcome it?**

The rapid growth we experienced was stressful and challenging. But we leveraged the PuroClean Elevations Program to help us strategically add resources and prepare for future growth. Working together as husband and wife can be challenging too. Bud Summers, Executive Vice President of Operations and Training, helped us establish our roles in the company, and that helped a lot. We try to see each other as our most faithful employee.

### **Can you describe your typical day?**

My typical day starts between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. I love to come in early to get some quiet time and set the priorities for the day. I can't be everywhere and have to let my team do what they do best. But I go to jobsites to do quality checks for much of the day. I try my best to meet every customer and express some gratitude for allowing us to serve them. Karina has a lot to balance between our house, our office, and our finances. So every day is different for her.

### **Who has been your greatest inspiration?**

The beautiful lady who is my wife.

### **If you had one piece of advice to a PuroClean franchise owner just starting out, what would it be?**

Follow the system, and don't be scared. If you are persistent and listen to your Regional Director even when you don't like what they have to say, you will succeed.