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Blowing Oklahoma away

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People Magazine Personality Profile

Blowing Oklahoma away

The blowing wind in Oklahoma is usually a hassle for hair, but now it's a must-do.

Mae Badiyan, an Oklahoma State University alumna, opened her small business, The Blo Bar, on July 1, 2013, in her hometown of Stillwater, Okla.

"It all came together really quickly," Badiyan said. "I was having dinner one night at my grandparent's house and I was telling my Dad this idea I had. He said let's do it and two months later it happened."

Badiyan's post-graduation plans didn't include opening up a hair salon, but the skills she learned at OSU guided her down this new path in life. She majored in marketing and received a minor in international business while attending OSU from 1999 to 2003.

After graduating, Badiyan attended DePaul University's College of Law in Chicago, Illinois. She graduated in 2006 and stayed in Chicago to work as a corporate lawyer.

"I actually got my first job in Chicago because I was an OSU graduate," Badiyan said. "The HR manager at the company was also an OSU alumni and brought me right in."

As a corporate lawyer, Badiyan worked on business mergers and acquisitions. She enjoyed the challenges that came with the job. After a few years in Chicago, she moved to Israel and worked a similar job.

Badiyan is among many Americans who work outside of the U.S. According to a Fox News article, more than 2.2 million Americans live and work abroad.

Traveling enriched her experience of living in Israel. Badiyan visited China, India, Turkey and most of Europe. She first got a taste for travel while working on a case in Costa Rica

one summer during law school. Badiyan credits her desire to see the world began when she studied international business at OSU.

After working in Israel for three years, Badiyan wanted to move home to Stillwater. She wanted to try something new after working in corporate law for almost seven years. While adjusting back to life at home, Badiyan had dinner at her grandparent's house when a new idea struck her.

The Blo Bar

A blowout bar is a new specialty hair salon that only shampoos and styles patrons' hair. No cuts, no coloring, no perming - just blowouts. Badiyan had heard of this trend popping up all over the country, and she wanted to take her own swing at it.

Badiyan always took an interest in the beauty industry, but still needed to conduct lots of research before opening her business. She read countless fashion articles, beauty blogs and laws regarding owning a business. She also spoke with many people in the industry.

"I spoke to the lady that's been doing my mom's hair for 10 years," Badiyan said. "Just anybody I could think of I talked to them and got information."

The beauty industry has expanded the past five years, despite the recession in 2008. IBISWorld reports that with persistent and widespread unemployment during the recession, consumers were less willing to spend on high-value discretionary services, opting for basic hairstyling services. Blowout bars popped up around the country in 2009 and fulfilled this need.

Badiyan said the most difficult obstacle in opening her business was that she's a perfectionist. She realized that planning and researching can only do so much, and that the rest just had to work out on its own.

All the researching and planning was worth it as Badiyan had a successful grand opening. The trendy and fun environment her blowout bar provides is an open invitation for everyone to celebrate their beauty.

"I wanted to be involved in something that makes women feel better," Badiyan said. "I also knew that it was perceived as a shallow industry to be in. I knew that if I was involved in the beauty industry, that I wanted to recreate the model and do things a little bit differently."

Badiyan's favorite part about owning her business is that it makes people happy. She likes getting to meet new people and be in a positive environment with them. Her surroundings in her past jobs were quite different.

"When I was working in law, everybody I encountered was usually grumpy," Badiyan said.

Badiyan's customers must also be happy because she offers her services at a reasonable price. Blowouts at The Blo Bar go for \$35, which is \$10 less than the national average for a haircut, according to the website Angie's List.

Coming back to her roots

Being back in Stillwater brings Badiyan memories as her time as an undergraduate at OSU. She remembers all of the homecoming decorations she worked on with her sorority,

meeting her best friend at the Edmon Low Library and tailgating before football games. She also remembers her time as a student in the Spears School of Business.

“I surprisingly remember a lot of the things from my classes,” Badiyan said. “I had a senior marketing project where we came up with a marketing plan for a local business.”

Badiyan is now working with a group of OSU students in the School of Media and Strategic Communications. The group is a part of a campaigns class assisting her in spreading the word about her new business.

“I never would’ve imagined that would become full circle,” Badiyan said.

Badiyan continues to use her OSU education to lead her down this new path in life. She’s looking to build a strong customer base and expand the services The Blo Bar can offer. Currently, The Blo Bar can provide blowouts, manicures and pedicures, waxing, facials, makeup airbrushing, and eyelash extensions.

There are only four hair salons registered in town, according to the Stillwater Chamber of Commerce’s website. Even with twice that amount of competition, The Blo Bar is in prime position to become the favorite salon of many patrons in town. It’s also the only hair salon that specializes in blowouts.

The Blo Bar might never have come into existence without Badiyan’s passion and bold steps forward. The OSU alumna is taking life one blowout at a time.

“When something comes up that I want to do, I just find a way to do it and not have to wait for the perfect moment,” Badiyan said.

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