



AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Brad Johnson's LawnAmerica

FOUNDED: 1999

HEADQUARTERS: Tulsa, OK

TITLE: Founder and president

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY: 25

SERVICE AREA: Tulsa and surrounding area, Bartlesville, Grand Lake

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Longtime member of PLCAA and PLANET

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: Three

EMPLOYEES: 40

SERVICES: Fertilization, weed and insect control, aeration, seeding, Primo Maxx applications, soil testing, mole control, snow removal during the winter

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS/HOB-BIES: Backpacking, being with family

FAMILY: Wife, Becky, children, Jake, Katie and Luke, and three grandchildren

After building and selling one successful lawn care company to TruGreen, then starting and building a second lawn care company, **Brad Johnson** took most of the 2010 season away from his business, Brad Johnson's LawnAmerica, to hike the Appalachian Trail. The experience taught him two things: 1) People are generous; and 2) His company did pretty darn well, even without him. Now he's writing a book about the experience.

Brad, we understand you hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2010, all 2,181 miles of it. Tell us how you did it. I hiked it in three segments. I started at Springer Mountain in Georgia on May 28. That's kind of late. I got a late start and hiked more than 800 miles to central Virginia. Then I came home for a while and later in the summer hiked from Maine south for about 1,000 miles. This past December I finished the remaining 175 miles to Harpers Ferry (WV). Because I did the entire trail it's considered a thru-hike.

Why did you hike it? After I got a letter from TruGreen offering to buy my company, it started me thinking about what I would like to do if I could walk away from this business and do exactly what I wanted to do — hike the Appalachian Trail. Over a 3-month period I read books about the trail, talked to people who had done it, either all of it or some of it. And I decided I was going to do it and do it for charity.

Which charities? There are five: The Little Light House, Folds of Honor,

Young Life-Rogers, Habitat for Humanity and the Salvation Army. We put the hike out there. We publicized it. We called it AT2010 A Compassionate Journey. We developed a logo for it. We put it on our website and our guys even wore shirts last year that had the logo and sponsors on it. All American matched donations dollar for dollar. In the end we raised more than \$105,000.

Everybody on the trail has a trail nickname, what was yours? The Compassionator.

What was the toughest thing about hiking the trail? It was very hard physically but the mental and emotional challenges are even greater. Mostly being away from my family, from my wife and from my business.

Did you have any physical problems or injuries in the mountains? I had to get a

cortisone injection for a bum hip to begin with. I had shin splints, got infected toes and got a spider bite on my face. It bit me on the cheek. With some medications the swelling on my face finally went down. I had to go to the doctor about four times while I was on the trail but nothing major, thankfully.

Did you ever consider quitting? If I had dropped off the Trail after two weeks I would have looked pretty stupid. I kind of painted myself into a corner and that was partly by design. I had to finish this because so many people knew about it. You almost have to have a reason to hike the Trail and I had a reason. There were a couple of times when I hit the wall and got a little discouraged. It wasn't that I didn't think I could make it because I knew I could, but things happen.

Has the hike changed you?

The experience has made me appreciate relationships even more. My family. My friends. My employees. My customers. That's what you miss most, the relationships.

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