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# Business Advisor

FEBRUARY 2023

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## **TKO** PEST CONTROL, INC. *Knocking Out Pests for Over 25 Years*



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# TKO PEST CONTROL, INC.

## Knocking Out Pests for Over 25 Years

By Kathy Hunt

**W**hen mice start nibbling from the dog's food bowl and cockroaches invade the kitchen pantry, it's time to seek help from a reliable pest control professional. For over 25 years TKO Pest Control, Inc. has provided expert extermination service and pest control education to commercial and residential clients throughout Philadelphia, Montgomery, Berks, Chester, Delaware, and Bucks counties. Located at 411 North Lewis Road in Royersford, the company has been "exceeding expectations since 1996." Its numerous five-star customer reviews and inclusion on Montgomery County's *The Happening List Best of 2022* all attest to its focus on perfection.



TKO President David Collins with his wife Joann and their daughter Alisha.

PHOTOS BY STEVE LADNER PHOTOGRAPHY



LOCATED IN ROYERSFORD



On October 16, 2021, TKO celebrated its 25th anniversary. Founder and president David Collins recalled that, when he first started the company, he had assumed that he would be its sole employee. “I wanted to be a one-man-band and do my own thing, but I learned there are so many pieces to a successful business, and I must have been doing something right to need these extra people,” he said.

After three years of juggling service calls, sales, scheduling, bookkeeping and more, Collins enlisted the help of his wife Joann, who left her career in cosmetology to manage the TKO office. In 2004, when the toll of 16-hour workdays and seven-day workweeks became unbearable, Collins hired his first technician, Bryan Trout. Trout worked alongside Collins for 14 years.

Today, TKO consists of a team of nine employees, including Joann, who handles accounting, and daughter Alisha, a former special needs therapist who serves as the office manager. Collins’ nephew Dave Gaugler is among his team of licensed technicians. Gaugler schedules, oversees and supports the company’s Philadelphia clients.

“I’m proud to say we have 98-percent employee retention,” Collins said. “I like hiring people who have had challenges, who are hungry, who are looking for something different. I look deeper into people and, if I see I can help build someone’s life up, that’s a pay-off for me. I think you should always try to help other people. I start with a clean slate and train our guys as I was trained. I’m very particular, and I learned from some great people,” he said.

He cited the late entomologist and Pennsylvania State University professor Dr. Stanley Green as an important influence. He studied under Green at Penn State’s Abington campus. Before that, Collins had worked for five years at a local, family-run pest control business. He personally has more than 30 years of experience while the company collectively has over 40 years of experience in pest control.

Collins attributes TKO’s continued success to his employees. “It is not me,” he said. “It is not one of the best techs. It’s a team effort. There is no ‘I’ in this team and never will be at TKO. I may be the guy who started the business, but we built this together.”

### **Commercial or residential, TKO can handle it all**

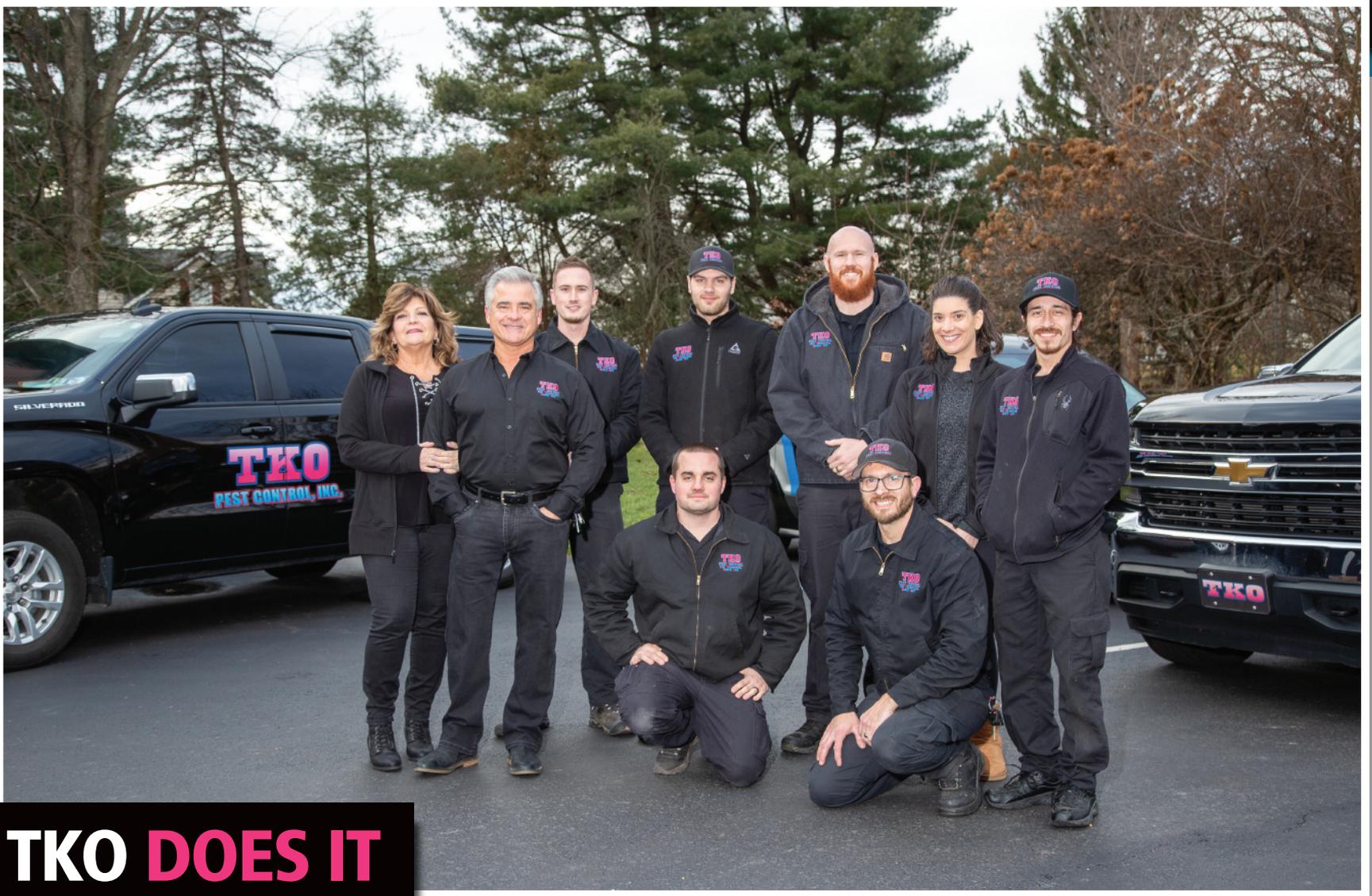
From warehouses and offices to apartments and houses, TKO Pest Control can expel insects, rodents, and wildlife from all types of settings. In recent years, the 60-40 split between commercial and residential customers has been inching closer to 50-50 as increasingly more homeowners have sought out his team for help with household nuisances such as ants, wasps and yellowjackets, mice, wildlife and more, Collins said. He added that, as more people started working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they began to notice unwanted roommates that had been living, unobserved, in their houses. Unsure how to evict them, they sought professional help from TKO.

“People will call up and say, ‘I always see your trucks in commercial parking lots. Do you do homes?’” Collins said. “I tell them that, if we can do restaurants, we can do houses blindfolded.” He pointed out that, during the colder months, homeowners may have problems with rodents, which, as warm-blooded mammals, are looking for a cozy place to spend the winter. In the summer, residential calls focus more on ants, beetles, wasps, and other flying insects.

“We do have a large number of commercial clients and are huge in the food industry,” he said. “We’re here to protect the food industry’s reputation. I was Le Bec Fir’s, George Perrier’s, guy for 21 years. When Chef retired, I started working with his people’s restaurants. We do a lot of Center City flagships. I say ‘flagship’ because, when you get to that caliber of restaurant, one that’s world renowned, and everything is really, really, precise, that’s when you know you’re doing something right. But we don’t just do flagships. We take care of the local, corner delis, too. Everyone’s reputation is equally important,” he said.

When TKO technicians go to any location, they arrive as pest control professionals, dressed in uniforms and booties, prepared to listen and work to remediate the customers’ issues. Donning kneepads, they crawl on their hands and knees, searching in every nook and cranny with a flashlight. “They’re checking everything,” Collins explains. “They want to find problems before the customer does and before the customer’s customers do. If it gets to that point, it’s too late. Red flags go up. Reputations are ruined.”

*Continued on page 6)*



# TKO DOES IT

## Residential Pest Control

When you have a pest problem in your home, call TKO Pest Control, Inc for guaranteed effective solutions and fast response times. We deliver the highest quality pest control services from the city to the suburbs.



## Commercial Pest Control

Your business can't afford a pest problem. That's why we provide the safest, most effective, and environmentally safe pest control products and techniques in the industry for our commercial customers.



## Wildlife Control

Don't try to handle a wildlife infestation by yourself. Call in our experienced and well-trained professionals to remove unwanted animals such as squirrels, bats, skunks, and raccoons from your home or business.



## COVER STORY

*(Continued from page 5)*

Once the technicians have established what the problems are, they discuss appropriate approaches for controlling and/or resolving them. With homeowners, they consider whether children and pets live in the house, if anyone has health issues or is pregnant, and if the property has any structural concerns, such as a leaky roof or pipes. From there, they come up with a plan that fits the customers' needs. They also thoroughly investigate the pest problem before proceeding with any treatment. Whether the customers represent residential or commercial properties, each receives a personal technician who understands the client's situation, preferences and home or facility.

"Instead of just spraying down the place, we look for the source of infestation," Collins said. "That's the best way, so we don't have to use too many chemicals and we minimize the environmental impact of treatments."

After treating a site, the technician will implement, and also advise, the customer about prevention techniques so that the pests don't return. Pest control is an ongoing effort, one that can't be neglected for months on end. If that happens, the customer will be back to square one, with the same pests and same issues, Collins points out.

## No worries with wildlife

Insects and rodents aren't the only pests that TKO controls. When wildlife encroaches into living or work spaces, TKO is on the job, ready to expel such creatures as squirrels, bats, birds, raccoons, skunks, snakes and mice. Because wildlife extraction is unique to each location and creature, TKO dispatches a trained professional to create a customized plan for quick, humane removal. The basic steps for crafting this plan don't vary, though.

Initially, a TKO technician will determine how the pest(s) entered the property and then block and seal the access points. Over the years, TKO has established that wild animals often enter buildings through gaps in exterior walls and roofs, vents in attics, plumbing, dryers and ovens, and garage door openings.

After finding, humanely trapping and relocating the animal, the technician will finish sealing the entry routes while still leaving vents and doors fully functional. In some cases, a one-way door or tunnel may need to be installed over the entry/exit hole to allow any remaining animals to escape but not to return. Such devices are frequently used with squirrels.

Before leaving the site, the technician will offer tips and techniques to ensure that wildlife won't be tempted to come back to the house or commercial facility again. TKO provides free estimates for wildlife and all other pest control matters.

# TKO PEST CONTROL, INC.

*Exceeding Expectations Since 1996*

[www.tkopestcontrolinc.com](http://www.tkopestcontrolinc.com)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**610-792-5461**

**TKO Pest Control Inc. provides solutions rather than random efforts by using the most environmentally friendly and effective, state-of-the-art materials and techniques available to the pest control industry today.**

***Please call for an inspection and needs assessment for your home or place of business.***

## MICE: The uninvited house guest

- Can cause fires by gnawing on wires
- Can contaminate food and food prep areas
- Can spread diseases such as hantavirus, salmonella, and listeria
- One pregnant female can produce up to 60 babies in one year if left untreated



## Resilience paired with a passion for the public

Collins' personal, yet professional, approach to business can be attributed, in part, to his childhood. Raised by a single, working parent in his maternal grandparents' Norristown home, he learned the virtues of helping others and treating people with respect from his mother, Roseann Collins. He grew up, in his words, "very, very poor" and discovered the value of hard work at a young age. At 12 years old, he began cleaning a local supermarket warehouse and, by 13, he was shining shoes outside the Montgomery County Courthouse. He worked throughout his high school years in a co-op program. He credited his maternal grandfather, Vincent Colucci with his strong work ethic. Colucci simultaneously held down three jobs to support his family and also boxed as a hobby, and it is in his honor that TKO — which stands for "technical knockout" in the boxing world — is named.

In 2007, a near fatal motorcycle accident resulted in the loss of Collins' right leg above the knee. Even with this major setback, Collins kept on working. He recounted a pre-dawn service call at Le Bec Fin that took place shortly after the accident, before he received his leg prosthesis. "I was laying on the floor, with my crutches next to me, putting some traps under the equipment — I had shorts on because they were better for walking — and I hear, 'Oh my god! Oh my god! I

never knew you had one leg! You just lost your leg and you're here?' Then Georges Perrier calls his people over, shows them that I'm working there with one leg, and says, 'Look at this guy! He's not complaining! He's a worker! That's what I want to see in people!' It was amazing," he said.

An event that tested everyone's resilience was the COVID-19 pandemic. "During the pandemic, when restaurants had to close their doors, we had to make people understand the importance of continuing the (pest control) service," Collins said. "When buildings are shut down, it's even more important to stay on top this. If you open your doors, after months and months of being closed, and you've got all these pest problems, you have to work from scratch toward a clean slate all over again."

Understanding that the pandemic had financially undermined many of his customers, Collins helped his clients keep their businesses pest-free. "We allowed people to float a little bit," he said. "I know you're hurting. You've been loyal to me. I'm going to be loyal to you." That's what it is to have a good relationship. You be there when people need you. And that's what we've done. Other than two businesses that had no choice but to close, we didn't lose a single customer during the pandemic."

In addition to restaurants, the company works with bakeries, casinos, theaters, country clubs, nursing homes, schools, offices and apartment complexes, and federally inspected meat and poultry processing plants. Fully

licensed, certified, bonded and insured, TKO is a member of the **National Pest Management Association**, **Pennsylvania Pest Management Association**, and **Spring Ford Chamber of Commerce**.

"I'm very passionate about how I do things," Collins said. "I like people to like me, and I like dealing with the public. I find it to be exciting and a challenge to deal with people. In this role, it tends to be even more so. When someone contacts us, they're already upset. Something negative is going on in their house. They may have had bad experiences with other companies, and they put you in that same place. I teach all my people not to get upset and to put themselves in the customer's position. I tell them to challenge themselves as human beings and find some commonality," he said.

He also instructs his staff to be upfront with customers. "My technicians have to be accountable for everything," Collins said. "They will never lead the customer to believe that they have the answer for everything. If they are stumped, they let the customer know this and then they reach out and get the proper information from me. If I don't know it, I'll reach out to entomologists and chemical companies to get the proper information. They won't leave a customer hanging, wondering how long something takes and when things will change."

For additional information about TKO Pest Control, Inc. services or for a free estimate, please call 610.792.5461 or visit the website <https://www.tkopestcontrolinc.com>. As Collins points out, "It's not a matter of if you need a good pest control company. It's a matter of when."