

ISSUE 18

FEB 2026

# POOLNATION

SPOTLIGHTS & INSIGHTS



BIOGUARD ENRICHMENT  
CONFERENCE 2026

# WELCOME LETTER

Dear Pool Nation,

I hope many of you have stepped into 2026 filled with hope, excitement, and anticipation for what's ahead! During the first week of January, the Pool Nation team had the opportunity to travel to Tulum, Mexico, for the 2026 BioGuard Enrichment Conference. The conference was led by the one and only Alicia Stephens, alongside Ted Lawrence and the executive team from BioGuard. Together, they delivered a powerful and forward-thinking program that reflected BioGuard's long-standing commitment to excellence within the industry. The location invited us to step back from our day-to-day routines and come together to talk openly about where our industry is headed. This year's theme, "Next Is Now," served as a powerful reminder that the future isn't something we wait for -- it's something we build *now*. I encourage each of you to reflect on what that message means for your own business and goals for the year ahead. We asked that same question to several dealers featured in this magazine, and their perspectives are both inspiring and insightful.

At Pool Nation, *Next Is Now* represents momentum. It's about growing together, embracing new ideas, and stepping confidently into opportunities that move our industry forward. It means choosing collaboration over isolation and progress over complacency. One thing I admire deeply about the BioGuard family is their commitment to people. From the executive leadership team to Alicia's passion and authenticity, it's clear that BioGuard leads with a genuine desire to help dealers succeed. Their focus on education, innovation, and long-term relationships truly sets them apart. As we move into 2026, my hope is that this magazine encourages you and reminds you that you are not building alone. Our industry is stronger when we share ideas, support one another, and continue showing up with passion and purpose.

Here's to what's next, because the future isn't coming someday. **NEXT IS NOW.**

**Wishing you a successful and prosperous New Year,**

Edgar, Zac and John

*Pool Nation*

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# 2026 BIOGUARD ENRICHMENT CONFERENCE RECAP



**ALICIA  
STEPHENS**

## **'IT FEELS LESS LIKE A CONFERENCE AND MORE LIKE A FAMILY REUNION'**

More than 300 BioGuard Platinum dealers and guests from across the United States and Canada gathered Jan. 4-7 in Tulum, Mexico, for the 2026 BioGuard Enrichment Conference. Hosted at the UNICO Hotel Riviera Maya All-Inclusive Resort, the four-day event combined education, connection, and celebration with people from all across the industry.

“Our goal is to make education relevant, usable and empowering,” said **Alicia Stephens**, Director Of Training And Education for KIK Consumer Products. “When we come together like this, it feels less like a conference and more like a family reunion. It’s the kind where you can’t stop smiling because you’re genuinely excited to see everyone.”

That sense of connection was evident from the moment attendees arrived. Dealers reunited with longtime peers, met new partners and immediately stepped into an environment designed to encourage conversation, collaboration and community. Each day followed a flow that balanced learning with relationship-building. Attendees participated in half-day education sessions each morning, followed by afternoons dedicated to leisure activities, networking and immersive experiences throughout the resort.

During his opening remarks, **Ted Lawrence**, senior vice president of sales at KIK Consumer Products, highlighted the momentum behind BioGuard’s “Next Is Now” theme, focusing on the people and purpose driving the brand forward. Lawrence began by recognizing the extensive coordination required to bring the week together, thanking BioGuard’s operations, technology, and marketing teams for their behind-the-scenes work in creating a seamless and engaging experience.

“There’s so much that happens before we ever walk on stage,” Lawrence said. “From logistics and travel to last-minute changes, it takes an incredible team effort. I want to thank everyone who worked to make this week happen. These events are always special. It’s our opportunity to connect, learn, and have some fun together as an industry.”

Lawrence emphasized that BioGuard’s focus extends beyond products alone, centering on long-term dealer success through training, engagement, and industry stewardship. “At the end of the day, we’re not just selling chemicals,” he said. “We’re selling fun. We’re selling a lifestyle. And our job is to help you bring that experience to your customers every single day.”

Conference attendees say they loved the pace of the event. “The structure really allows you to absorb what you’re learning,” said Amanda McClain with Vaughn Pools. “You’re not rushing from session to session. You have time to talk through ideas with people who understand your business.”

## **EDUCATION WITH PURPOSE**

The educational programming placed heavy emphasis on real-world application. Sessions explored how pool and spa companies are successfully competing with big-box stores and internet retailers, while offering practical strategies centered on service, expertise and long-term customer relationships. Stephens opened the conference with energy that quickly set



**TED  
LAWRENCE**

the tone for the week. “This is Christmas for me,” she told attendees. “I get through the holidays just so I can be here with you. This is where my heart is.” She reminded dealers that the conference theme reflected action rather than aspiration. “We’re not just talking about what’s coming next,” Stephens said. “We’re living it. The future isn’t waiting for us. It’s here, and over the next few days we’re going to show you what that looks like.” A central focus of the conference was BioGuard’s evolving approach to education, highlighted by the introduction of BioGuard University, a redesigned training platform created to meet the needs of modern dealer teams.



“We asked ourselves a simple question,” she said. “How do we make dealers stronger, faster and more confident without adding more work to their plates?”

The result is a modular education system featuring training pods, streamlined certification paths and flexible digital access that allows employees at every level to learn at their own pace. “Education shouldn’t feel overwhelming,” Stephens explained. “It should make your job easier, not harder.”

The platform also integrates emerging technology designed to support, not replace, people. “AI isn’t about replacing humans,” she said. “It’s about amplifying expertise. The experts are sitting in this room. Our job is to give you better tools so you can do what you already do best.”

While education anchored the mornings, the afternoons created moments that reinforced BioGuard’s commitment to connection and culture.

## COMPETITION, CELEBRATION AND COMMUNITY

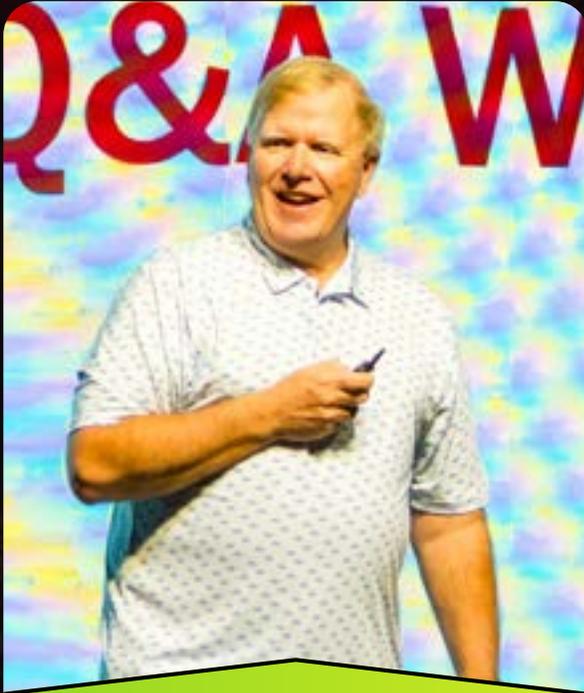
One of the week’s most talked-about experiences came when the resort pool was transformed into an Olympic-style arena, giving dealers the opportunity to race three-time Olympic gold medalist Rowdy Gaines. The friendly competition supported Step Into Swim, a national initiative dedicated to teaching children water safety and swim skills. Later in the week, a toga-themed celebration brought hundreds of attendees together for a final night filled with laughter, music and Roman-inspired flair. Guests also participated in local tours, exploring the culture and history of the region while continuing conversations sparked during the educational sessions.

For many attendees, the conference served as a reminder of what makes the BioGuard network distinct. “This event recharges you,” said Gabriel Adame with Crystal Clear Pools & Spas. “You leave with ideas you can actually use and it’s great how new relationships are formed.” Pool and spa business owner, Kiya Bachmann, shared a similar sentiment. “This week reminds us that none of us are building our businesses alone,” she said. “There’s power in growing together.”

As the 2026 BioGuard Enrichment Conference came to a close, one message resonated across the resort -- the industry is moving forward with confidence, clarity and shared purpose. For those in the pool industry, next isn’t coming soon. Next Is Now.

# STEVE OLINGER

## BIOGUARD PRESIDENT



**STEVE  
OLINGER**

As BioGuard enters its next chapter, President **Steve Olinger** addressed dealers in Tulum with a message centered on stability, connection and long-term growth. With more than 20 years at KIK Consumer Products, Olinger brings extensive leadership experience across multiple business units, including his most recent role as president of KIK's household division. While new to the pool business side of the organization, he emphasized that his history with the company and understanding of its culture run deep.

"I've been with KIK for 20 years," Olinger said. "I'm not new to this company, but I'm excited to step into this role and spend time getting to know you." He encouraged dealers to introduce themselves throughout the week, noting that learning their businesses, hearing their stories and understanding their challenges would be a top priority moving forward.

During his remarks, Olinger expressed gratitude for the relationships that have defined the BioGuard brand for decades. "Over dinner, I was struck by the number of 40-year-plus relationships in this room," he said. "Whether you've been with us for 40 years, 10 years or one year, thank you for everything you do for our business." That longevity, he noted, reflects both the strength of the dealer network and the resilience of the pool industry itself. Looking ahead, Olinger outlined key areas of focus for the year to come, including safety, accountability and growth. He emphasized BioGuard's commitment to supporting dealers through reliable product availability, continued innovation and a stronger, more responsive supply chain.

**"WE BELIEVE WE HAVE BOTH THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP YOU GROW YOUR BUSINESS," OLINGER SAID. "THAT MEANS DELIVERING THE BEST PRODUCTS IN THE INDUSTRY AND CONTINUING TO INVEST IN THE PEOPLE AND SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT YOU."**

# BIOGUARD UNIVERSITY

BUILDING STRONGER DEALERS FOR WHAT'S NEXT



Education has long been a cornerstone of the BioGuard brand, and this year marked a pivotal evolution in how that commitment comes to life. During the week's programming, the company announced the launch of BioGuard University, formerly known as H2Know, a reimagined training platform designed to support dealers and their teams with practical, accessible education built for today's operations.

Alicia Stephens said the platform has evolved with years of dealer feedback. "We asked ourselves a simple question," she said. "How do we make dealers stronger, faster and more confident without adding more work to their plates?" The answer came through a complete rebuild of BioGuard's education model, replacing outdated programs with flexible learning pods, streamlined certification paths and content designed for real-world use.

**"THIS ISN'T JUST A REBRAND," STEPHENS TOLD ATTENDEES. "WE DIDN'T CHANGE A LOGO OR RENAME SOMETHING WE ALREADY HAD. WE LEVELED IT AND REBUILT IT FROM THE GROUND UP." SHE EXPLAINED THAT PREVIOUS EDUCATION SYSTEMS WERE OFTEN DIFFICULT TO UPDATE AS PRODUCTS EVOLVED. BIOGUARD UNIVERSITY WAS BUILT TO BE DYNAMIC, ALLOWING CONTENT TO STAY CURRENT AND RELEVANT AS THE INDUSTRY CHANGES.**

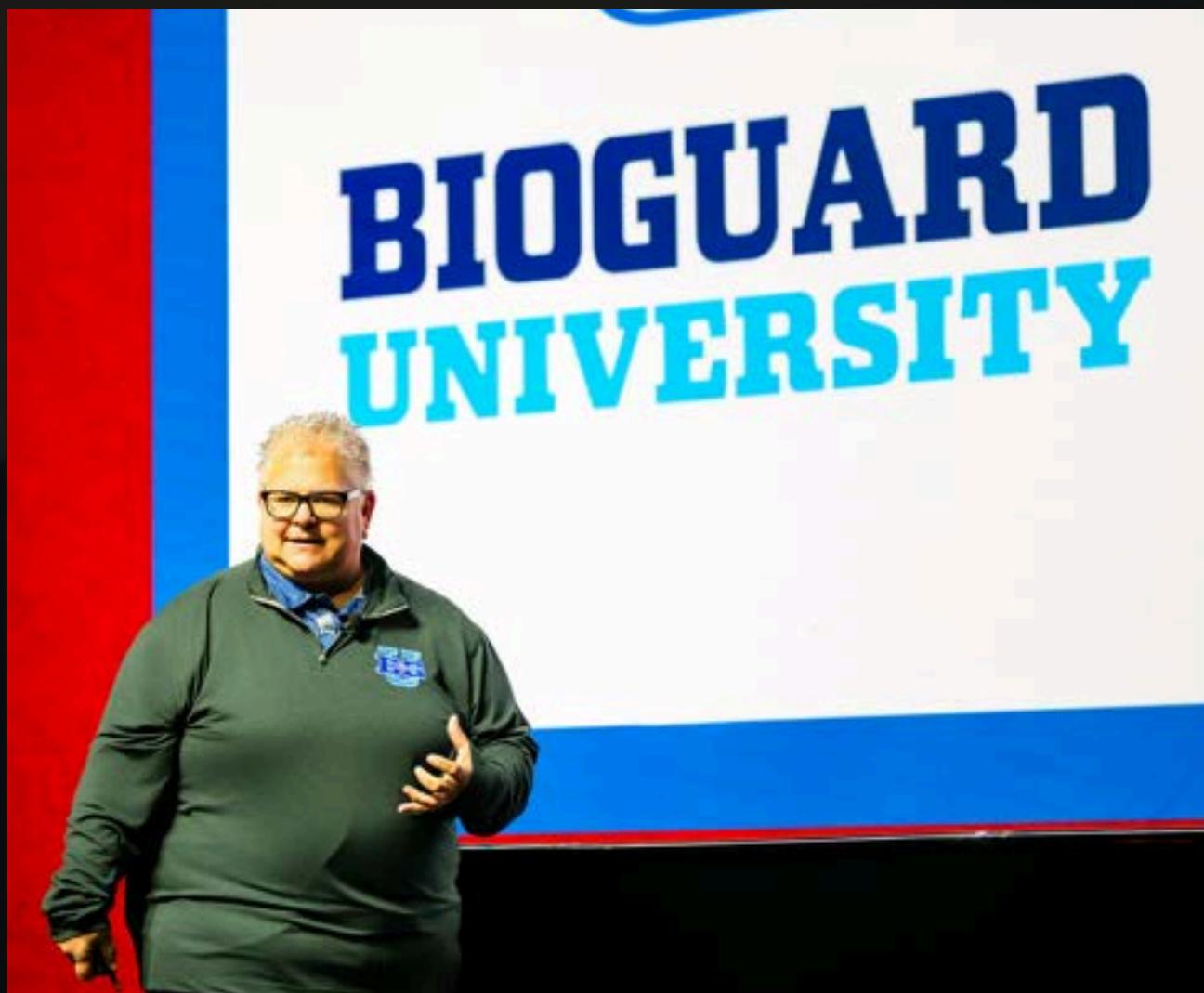
The platform features modular training tracks, online certification badges and role-based education for team members at every stage, from new hires to experienced staff. "Education shouldn't feel overwhelming," Stephens said. "It should make your job easier, not harder." Dealers can train employees at their own pace, helping build confident teams without pulling staff away from daily operations.

Stephens shared that BioGuard University is scheduled to launch its first phase on **March 1, 2026**. Dealers can expect foundational onboarding modules and updated product education at launch with additional features rolling out throughout the year. Advanced water care, retail strategy, and service-focused training modules are scheduled to follow as the program continues to expand.

“This isn’t a one-and-done launch,” she said. “It’s something we’ll keep building alongside you.” The goal, she added, is simple: “We’re not asking you to work harder. We’re giving you tools that make it easier to do what you already do well.”



## **BIOGUARD UNIVERSITY**



THE MAGIC STARTS HERE

# 2027 BIOGUARD LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED



Are you ready to experience something magical? BioGuard revealed the location and details for its 2027 Leadership Conference, inviting dealers to gather **Jan. 4-7, 2027**, at the **Walt Disney World Swan in Orlando, Florida**.

Designed specifically for business owners and managers, the BioGuard Leadership Conference (BLC) delivers a focused environment for education, collaboration and strategic planning. The event brings together some of the brightest minds in the pool industry to help leaders sharpen their vision, strengthen operations and plan confidently for the future.

The week begins Monday with a traditional welcome reception at the hotel, offering attendees the opportunity to reconnect with fellow dealers and the BioGuard team. Educational sessions will take place Tuesday, concluding at 3 p.m. to allow time for leisure activities, including access to the parks, resort amenities or Disney Springs.

The conference culminates with an exclusive closing-night experience at Epcot, featuring private dining, a reserved viewing area for the nighttime fireworks show and a BioGuard after-party that continues into the evening.

New for 2027, the conference offers multiple registration types and variable pricing, giving attendees the opportunity to bring family members and extend their stay at one of the world's most iconic destinations. A dedicated BioGuard ticket portal will also provide access to Disney park tickets at a discounted rate.

Registration closes **Nov. 1, 2026**, or earlier if capacity is reached. Once full, registration will move to a waitlist.





# FRED AND KIYA BACHMANN

BACHMANN'S POOL, SPAS & SAUNAS MADISON, WISCONSIN



## BUILDING A LEGACY

THE BACHMANNS CELEBRATE OVER 40 YEARS OF POOL AND SPA EXCELLENCE IN WISCONSIN

In 1985, **Fred Bachmann** had no intention of entering the hot tub business. As a second-generation building contractor fresh off managing a renovation project for a Madison hair salon, his focus was firmly on the family construction company he ran with his siblings. But fate, as it often does in this industry, had other plans.

“One of my best friends, who was a foreman on the job, ended up breaking his leg in a pretty bad accident,” Bachmann shared. “He was laid up for four or five months, and he just had a newborn. Workman’s Comp wasn’t going to cut it. He said, ‘Hey Fred, hot tubs are the thing of the future. We should sell these.’” That conversation sparked what would become a 40-year career transforming Bachmann’s Pool, Spas & Saunas into one of the most respected wellness retailers in the Midwest.

## THE ACCIDENTAL ENTREPRENEUR

Fred’s entry into the industry was anything but planned. Initially, he began calling manufacturers simply to avoid paying retail for two hot tubs. “I called around being frugal,” he said. “They told me, ‘You have to buy three.’ My sister wanted one, so we put one in her basement and two in the hair salon.”

Around that same time, Matt Teague from Watkins Manufacturing arrived in Madison with a hot tub strapped to the back of his Buick. A former encyclopedia salesman, Teague had a reputation for persistence and for believing deeply in the Hot Spring brand.

“He hits the thing with a baseball bat,” Bachmann said. “My brother’s an engineer, so we looked at it and said, if we’re going to sell a hot tub, we might as well sell a good one.”

Teague did more than secure a dealership agreement. He pushed Bachmann to relocate his showroom from an industrial area to a visible retail corridor on Stoughton Road, even negotiating the lease himself.

“He said, ‘Fred, this location is killing you. This is where you need to be,’” Bachmann recalled. “I moved there, and the business started growing. He was right.”



**THAT MOVE MARKED THE BEGINNING OF STEADY EXPANSION, EVENTUALLY LEADING TO BUILDING OWNERSHIP, MULTIPLE LOCATIONS, AND LONG-TERM REAL ESTATE INVESTMENTS THAT HELPED STABILIZE AND SCALE THE BUSINESS.**

## THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Fred met Kiya in 1997 while she was managing a bar he frequented. She had moved back to Wisconsin years earlier with her young daughter and a determination to rebuild. “We were just drawn to each other,” Kiya said.

They married in 2000, and she joined the business the following spring. Fred placed her in charge of a newly acquired Janesville location, a decision that would shape the next chapter of growth. “Looking back at it, that was cruel,” Fred said with a laugh. “But that’s really where our pool business started.” The acquisition brought pool installation expertise into the company, opening the door for Bachmann’s to expand beyond spas. Fred’s construction background made the transition natural. “I grew up rebuilding engines and keeping construction equipment running,” he said. “Building things is what I know.”

Working together requires intention. Over the years, the Bachmanns learned how to safeguard both their marriage and their business. They placed their offices on opposite sides of the building and set clear boundaries between work and home. “Work is work,” Kiya said with a smile. “When we go home, it’s just us. We don’t bring work home.”

## QUALITY OVER EVERYTHING

From the beginning, Bachmann’s philosophy has been simple and unwavering. “I learned from my dad a long time ago, you get what

you pay for,” Fred said. “I’ve always been quality-oriented.” That mindset influences everything from product selection to staffing. The Bachmanns believe profitability enables excellence, not the other way around. “When you’re profitable, all things are possible,” he said. “You can hire good people, retain them, train them properly, and give them the tools they need to do the job right the first time.”

Today, Bachmann’s is the only Hot Spring dealership to win the International Service Department of the Year award three times. Their Madison and Brookfield showrooms feature premium brands including Hot Spring Spas, Radiant Pools, Tylo Saunas, Endless Fitness Systems and BioGuard water care, a partnership that has remained consistent for more than four decades. “I’ve been using BioGuard since 1985,” Fred shared. “When we started selling spas, Matt told us you need the right water care partner, and we’ve never looked back.”



That long-term loyalty extends beyond products. Fred and Kiya have attended nearly every BioGuard conference since the early 2000s, viewing the events as both education and reunion. “These conferences feel like family gatherings,” Fred shared. “You see people you’ve known for decades, and you also meet new dealers who are just getting started.”

At the 2026 Enrichment Conference, the couple said the setting stood out, but the community mattered most. “You’ve got people at every stage,” Fred explained “Some who’ve owned businesses for 30 or 40 years, others who just bought one. It’s energizing to see that mix.”

They were especially excited by the announcement of the 2027 Leadership Conference in Orlando. “We’ve got two grandkids now,” Kiya said. “The idea of bringing family to Disney while still growing the business, that’s special.”



## WELCOMING THE NEXT GENERATION

For years, Fred and Kiya explored succession options, even investing heavily to prepare the business for sale. They considered employee ownership and outside buyers, never assuming their daughter Ashley would eventually return. Ashley Kampmeier had built a successful career outside the family business, first in retail management and later in human resources at a large insurance firm. But something was missing.

When Fred asked her to help write a job description for an operations manager role, the conversation took an unexpected turn. “At a hockey game, she asked if I’d posted the job yet,” he said. “When I said no, she told me she wanted to apply.”

**“I STARTED CRYING RIGHT THERE IN THE ARENA,” HE SAID. “I SAID, ‘WHEN CAN YOU START?’”**

Ashley joined the company in 2024, bringing renewed energy and clarity. Kiya said she watched the spark return to the company almost immediately. “It reinvigorated all of us,” she said.

As Bachmann’s celebrates four decades in business, the focus is no longer just growth. It’s about legacy. “Two years ago, I didn’t think the third generation was even possible,” Fred said. “Now we’re working for it.”

# JENNA PAQUETTE

PAQUETTE POOLS AND SPAS,  
HOOKSETT, NEW HAMPSHIRE

## PAQUETTE POOLS AND SPAS CONTINUES A FIVE-GENERATION LEGACY WHILE PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

For Jenna Paquette, the BioGuard Enrichment Conference represented more than education or location. It offered a chance to step back, reconnect, and gain momentum alongside other pool pros. "This industry moves fast," she said. "But relationships are still what matter most. When you come to something like this, you realize how connected we all really are."

That sense of connection mirrors the story of Paquette Pools and Spas itself. A fifth-generation, family-owned company serving Southern New Hampshire since 1923, the business has evolved alongside the industry while staying anchored in values that never change. Long before water care systems became sophisticated and retail showrooms became immersive, the Paquette name was already tied to craftsmanship, consistency, and trust. Founded by Phil Paquette as a construction company, the business initially focused on bridges and institutional structures.



Over the decades, it transitioned into residential building, and in 1957, expanded into swimming pools when Phil's son Gerry built the first Paquette Pool in his own backyard. What began as a side project quickly became the company's defining path, setting the stage for decades of growth in aquatics.

By the time Jenna entered the picture, pools were already woven into daily life.

"I remember customers calling our house on the landline," she said. "I remember going to job sites with my grandfather and sitting in the car while he met with homeowners. I didn't think anything of it at the time. It was just normal."

## GROWING UP IN THE BUSINESS

Jenna's childhood was shaped by showrooms, service counters, and family conversations that often revolved around pools. She remembers playing store as a kid, pretending to answer phones and helping with marketing mailers when the entire family would gather to stuff envelopes by hand.

Still, her path into the company was not immediate. Before joining Paquette Pools and Spas in 1999, Jenna worked across multiple industries, including retail, banking, food service, cosmetics, and general merchandising. Those experiences proved foundational, teaching her how businesses operate beyond the pool world.

"I think working outside the industry helped me more than people realize," she said.



"You learn customer service, time management, and communication. All of that transfers." When staffing changes created an opening within the company, her father made the call that would bring her home. "I didn't really plan it," she said. "He told me it was time."

More than two decades later, Jenna serves as sales manager, working alongside her family and a team of roughly 30 employees. The company builds and services inground pools, above-ground pools, spas, and outdoor living spaces across Southern New Hampshire, a region known for its short but intense pool season.

"In colder climates, people think things slow down," she said. "But in reality, there's a lot happening in a short window. Openings, closings, service calls. Everything matters."



## BIOGUARD IS A CENTRAL PART OF THE COMPANY'S MISSION

For Paquette Pools and Spas, BioGuard has been part of the business for more than four decades. “We started using BioGuard back in the 1980s,” Jenna said. “It’s always been part of how we take care of our customers.” But for her, the relationship extends beyond products.

“The support makes a huge difference,” she said. “Having reps who are knowledgeable and responsive changes everything. When you can text someone, call someone, and actually get help, that matters.” That support was reinforced during the 2026 BioGuard Enrichment Conference, where dealers gathered not only to learn, but to share ideas and challenges openly.

“These events remind you that everyone’s dealing with the same things,” she said. “Like staffing, scheduling, customer expectations. You don’t feel like you’re on an island.”

Jenna has attended BioGuard conferences for years, from early education-focused sessions in Atlanta to the immersive Enrichment experiences held today. “They weren’t always destination trips,” she said. “But they were always valuable. You learned something you could bring back to the store.”

That focus on education aligns with how Paquette Pools operates internally. “We have a very knowledgeable team,” she said. “A lot of our employees have been with us for years. That experience is something you can’t replace.” The conference theme, “Next Is Now,” felt especially timely for Jenna. As her father prepares for retirement, Paquette Pools is intentionally planning for the future, with a strong focus on succession planning, leadership development, and continued operational growth.

“We’re very focused on what comes next,” she said. “How do we make the business stronger for the next generation?”

That question has guided every chapter of Paquette Pools and Spas for more than a century. Each generation has taken what came before and adapted it for the world ahead. For Jenna, attending BioGuard events reinforces that evolution. "You leave feeling encouraged," she said. "You go back with ideas, confidence, and a reminder of why you do this."





# BRYAN AND AMANDA MCCLAIN

VAUGHN POOLS & SPAS HEART OF MISSOURI



When **Bryan McClain** first walked through the doors of Vaughan Pools & Spas in the mid-1990s, at the encouragement of his mother who worked there, he wasn't thinking about ownership, succession, or legacy. He was simply focused on learning the business and running a store well.

By that time, the company was already a cornerstone across Central Missouri. Founded in 1971 by Richard Vaughan and his wife, Catherine, and later guided through succession by their children, Cathy and Rick, Vaughan Pools & Spas had grown from a single backyard installation in Jefferson City into a multi-location operation serving communities in Columbia, Sedalia, Osage Beach, and Rolla.

For homeowners, the name carried weight. For employees, it represented stability. And for Bryan, newly hired to manage the Sedalia location in 1997, it signaled responsibility. "I never imagined I'd one day own the company," he said. "I just kept learning."

That mindset has defined nearly three decades of work. Bryan learned construction cycles, retail operations, chemical programs, customer relationships, and the quiet leadership required to guide teams through unpredictable seasons. He watched the company expand, weather economic downturns, and earn national recognition, including induction into the AQUA 100 Hall of Fame and multiple honors from the Master Pools Guild and the Association of Pool and Spa Professionals.

## 'YOU DON'T WALK IN TRYING TO REWRITE 50 YEARS. YOU WALK IN TRYING TO PROTECT IT'



By the time ownership discussions began, Bryan had spent almost as much time inside Vaughan Pools and Spas as he had anywhere in his life. Alongside his wife, **Amanda**, the idea of purchasing the company was something they approached thoughtfully and with deep respect for what had been built long before them. So when the opportunity officially came in June 2025, the moment carried far more weight than a business transaction. It was deeply personal.

"This wasn't about buying something new," Bryan said. "It was about taking responsibility for something that already meant a lot to people."

Stepping into ownership shifted Bryan's role overnight. Where once he focused on one location, he was now responsible for five locations. Decisions once discussed in meetings now rested on his shoulders. The transition unfolded during a deeply emotional season. Founder Richard Vaughan passed away shortly before the sale was finalized, followed months later by the passing of Bryan's own father. Both men, he said, represented a generation defined by work ethic, humility, and quiet pride. "They didn't talk about legacy," Bryan said. "They lived it."



That sense of responsibility became especially clear at the 2026 BioGuard Leadership Conference, where Bryan and his wife Amanda attended not as managers, but as owners. They sat alongside dealers who had spent decades building their businesses. Some were on the path toward retirement, while others are mentoring the next generation. For Bryan, it was both grounding and motivating. “You realize how many people have walked this road before you,” he said. “You don’t take that lightly.”

Vaughan Pools and Spas has partnered with BioGuard since the late 1970s, long before industry consolidation reshaped the market. Bryan credits that longevity to trust built over time. “In this business, consistency matters,” he said. “When you’ve been through slow seasons, hard seasons, and good ones, you value partners who stay present.”

Bryan and Amanda said the conference reinforced something important. Ownership is not about making bold declarations or fast change. It was about listening, learning, and understanding what must remain intact. “You don’t walk in trying to rewrite 50 years,” he explained. “You walk in trying to protect it.”

## LEADING WITH RESPECT FOR THE PAST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE

As new owners, Bryan and Amanda describe their role less as innovators and more as stewards. They are not chasing expansion for expansion’s sake. Instead, they are focused on strengthening operations, supporting employees, and ensuring the company remains stable for the next generation. A family- and community-first mindset guides their leadership. Integrity is at the heart of every decision. “We’re not here to overhaul everything,” Bryan said. “We’re here to take care of it.”

That mindset reflects Amanda’s professional roots. Before stepping into ownership, she spent years working as a nurse and later in healthcare leadership roles, where precision, empathy, and accountability were part of daily life. The experience shaped how she approaches business today. “In healthcare, you learn quickly that people matter,” Amanda said. “Communication matters. Systems matter. And taking care of the people doing the work is what allows everything else to function.”



That perspective now influences how Vaughan Pools and Spas operates behind the scenes. While Bryan oversees construction, operations, and long-standing customer relationships, Amanda focuses on employee engagement, internal organization, and the company's voice through social media, photography, and storytelling. Her goal is simple but intentional: make sure the people who power the business feel seen. "Our employees are the face of this company," she said. "Customers know their names long before they know ours."

That philosophy resonates deeply within the BioGuard dealer community, where many businesses share similar generational stories. At the conference, Bryan found himself learning as much from quiet hallway conversations as from formal sessions. "There's wisdom in those rooms," he said. "You realize you're part of something bigger than your own company."

For Amanda, the experience reinforced the importance of connection. "It's easy to feel isolated when you're running a business," she said. "Being surrounded by people who understand the challenges, who've been through transitions themselves, that matters."

Today, Vaughan Pools and Spas stands at a meaningful intersection. The foundation laid in 1971 remains strong. The people who built it are honored. And the next chapter is unfolding not with fanfare, but with intention. "We're grateful," Bryan shared. "We're grateful for the trust that was placed in us, for the people who came before us, and for the team that shows up every day."





# CINDY KANNON & TRACEY COCHRAN- SHAUGER

LAKELAND POOLS & SPAS,  
VERNON TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY

## SIX DECADES STRONG: HOW TWO SISTERS ARE CARRYING LAKELAND POOLS FORWARD

In Vernon Township, New Jersey, the pool season doesn't ease in. It arrives suddenly, usually late, and with very little patience. "You can plan all you want," Cindy Kannon said. "But up here, the weather makes the final call."

That reality has shaped Lakeland Pools & Spas for more than 60 years. Founded in 1964, the company has served Sussex County and the surrounding rural communities through decades of changing technology, shifting consumer habits, and the unpredictable nature of northeastern pool seasons.

## ADAPTING AS THE INDUSTRY CHANGES

Cindy has been part of that story since 1975. Her sister, Tracey Cochran-Shauger, joined the business in 1988. Long before either woman thought about ownership, the store was simply part of daily life.

“It was never something we planned,” Cindy said. “You just grow up in it.”

Originally owned by their aunt and uncle, Lakeland transitioned to the next generation when Cindy, Tracey, and their sister Debbie purchased the company together. When Debbie retired several years ago, Cindy and Tracey became partners, carrying forward a business that had already become woven into the community.

Today, Lakeland operates one retail location, but its reach extends far beyond the storefront. In a region dotted with farms, winding back roads, and growing residential neighborhoods, the company services pools across an area where the season is short and expectations are high. “Everybody wants their pool open by Memorial Day,” Cindy said. “That’s the deadline.” Some years, Mother Nature cooperates. Others, it does not.

“There have been springs where it rained nonstop,” she said. “Our techs were opening pools in the rain, day after day. You just push through.”

Over nearly five decades in the business, Cindy has watched the pool industry transform in ways she never could have imagined when she started. “When I came in during the 1970s, customers were extremely loyal,” she said. “They came to the store, they trusted what you told them, and they didn’t second-guess everything.”

Today’s customer behaves very differently.

Since COVID, many younger homeowners have moved into northern New Jersey communities with existing pools. While ownership has increased, foot traffic has not. “They want to click on Amazon and have everything delivered,” Cindy said. “They don’t necessarily want to come into the store.”

That shift forced Lakeland to rethink its approach. Instead of waiting for customers to walk through the door, the company began meeting them poolside. One of the biggest changes has been the launch of Lakeland’s mobile water testing lab. Technicians travel directly to customers’ homes, test the water on site, add chemicals if needed, and offer flexible service options ranging from one-time visits to weekly maintenance.

“It’s our way of staying connected,” Cindy said. “Maybe they’ll come in afterward, maybe they won’t. But at least we’re still helping them take care of their pool.”

The move reflects a broader trend Cindy sees across the industry. While retail once anchored most pool businesses, service has steadily taken the lead. “We didn’t have service for many years,” she said. “When my uncle passed away, the service side was sold off. We brought it back about eight or nine years ago, and now it’s actually bigger than our retail store.” In northern climates especially, homeowners are increasingly outsourcing everything from lawn care to pool maintenance. “People just don’t want to do it themselves anymore,” Cindy said. “Service is becoming essential.”

Even as technology reshapes buying habits, Cindy believes expertise still matters, especially when water problems escalate. “People think they can do it themselves until the pool gets out of hand,” she said. “Then they call the professionals.”



## COMMUNITY, CONFERENCE, AND LOOKING AHEAD

For Cindy and Tracey, industry relationships have always mattered as much as operations. Their long partnership with BioGuard spans decades and remains central to how Lakeland operates. “I’ve been with BioGuard since the 1970s,” Cindy said. “It’s always felt like a family.”

That sense of connection is one reason the sisters continue to attend BioGuard events year after year. “These conferences remind you that you’re not doing this alone,” Cindy explained. “You sit in a room with people who understand your challenges.”

She describes BioGuard as more than a supplier. “They could just be a numbers company,” she said. “But they’re not. They support you. They show up. They care about helping dealers succeed.” That support, she said, has never wavered, even through industry changes and leadership transitions. “It’s rare,” she added. “There’s nothing else quite like it.”





As Lakeland looks toward the future, Cindy is honest about where she and her sister stand. “We joke that we’re on the back nine,” she said with a laugh. “We’ve put a lot of years into this.”

For a long time, third-generation ownership did not appear likely. Their children pursued careers outside the pool industry, building lives of their own and leaving the future of the business uncertain. That outlook began to shift last summer when a younger employee, Stephen Vecchio, joined the team. Stephen is the boyfriend of Tracey’s daughter, and while he is not related to the family by blood, his interest in the business quickly stood out. “He came in last summer and just ignited something,” Cindy said.

“He’s curious. He writes ideas down. He asks questions.” Stephen’s enthusiasm brought renewed energy into the store, sparking conversations about new service offerings, spa valet programs, and operational improvements. More importantly, Cindy said, it reminded both sisters that passion and leadership can come from unexpected places.

“Seeing that excitement makes you believe there’s still room to grow,” she said. “It reminds you why you got into this in the first place.” After more than six decades, Lakeland Pools & Spas continues forward one season at a time, guided less by trends and more by people. “In this industry,” Cindy said, “relationships are everything.”



**THEY'RE ENGAGED!  
GABRIEL ADAME AND REGINA MORIN  
CRYSTAL CLEAR POOLS & SPAS,  
ANGLETON, TEXAS**

## A PROPOSAL MADE POSSIBLE BY THE BIOGUARD COMMUNITY

For Gabriel Adame, the pool industry didn't begin as a lifelong plan. It began as work, then turned into purpose. Over the past decade at Crystal Clear Pools & Spas in Angleton, Texas, he has grown from a route technician into maintenance supervisor, earning a reputation for taking on the toughest service calls and restoring pools others consider beyond saving.

"I started out just looking for a job," Gabriel said. "But once I began cleaning pools and watching them come back to life, something clicked. I loved the process."

That satisfaction grew into passion as he moved deeper into service work. Coastal flooding near the Gulf often brings extreme challenges, from river water rushing into backyards to debris no homeowner expects. "We've pulled crawfish out of pools," he said. "We've even seen live catfish swimming around. But we never walk away from a bad pool."

It's that problem-solving mindset that keeps Gabriel energized. Every day presents something new, and he thrives on diagnosing the unknown and restoring order to chaos. Over the years, Crystal Clear Pools & Spas has supported his growth, sending him to manufacturer trainings across the country and encouraging him to expand his technical expertise.



**"MY BOSS, KIM SCOTT, IS INCREDIBLE," HE SAID. "SHE INVESTS IN TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP, AND THAT SUPPORT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE."**

In early January, Gabriel and his girlfriend, Regina Morin, made plans to attend the 2026 BioGuard Enrichment Conference together. For Gabriel, the trip felt like another step forward in a career he genuinely loves. For Regina, it was simply an opportunity to step into the world he talks about every day. She had no idea the experience would soon change both of their lives.



## A PROPOSAL MADE POSSIBLE BY THE INDUSTRY

Gabriel and Regina met three years ago through Facebook Dating and quickly formed a connection that felt natural and steady. Marriage had been part of their conversations, but Regina believed a proposal was still months away. “I thought it might happen later in the year,” she said. “I definitely didn’t expect it there.”

What Regina didn’t know was that Gabriel had been quietly orchestrating a plan that would involve far more than just a ring. It would involve an entire industry community.



The engagement ring made the journey to the conference tucked inside Gabriel’s checked luggage, nearly derailing the surprise before the trip even began. “She almost found it,” Gabriel said, laughing. “I had to move it fast.”

Gabriel shared his proposal idea with members of the BioGuard team, who immediately stepped in to help bring the moment to life. What started as a personal milestone quickly transformed into a coordinated effort involving conference organizers, company leadership, and a professional photographer. “They were just as excited as I was,” Gabriel said. “Everyone wanted to help.”

On the day of the proposal, BioGuard staff carefully created a distraction, asking Regina to step aside and write down her information while the final details were set in motion. During those few orchestrated moments, the ring was discreetly passed to Gabriel as the photographer prepared nearby and conference attendees unknowingly became part of the scene.

“I was shaking,” Gabriel said. “I honestly thought I might pass out.” Photographer Jamilyn Boze, who was asked to help stage the surprise, said the experience felt both meaningful and joyful to capture. “I felt honored to be part of the engagement session,” Boze shared. “Kim Scott asked if I would set up a ‘fake’ photo session on the beach, which I’ve actually done for real at these events before, so it looked completely natural. I was able to gather several attendees who were already on the beach and have them participate so it felt authentic.”

When Regina finally turned around and saw Gabriel waiting, the carefully orchestrated moment unfolded exactly as planned. Surrounded by palm trees, industry colleagues, and cheers from nearby attendees, Gabriel dropped to one knee and asked her to marry him. "Saying yes to him was easy," Regina said, reflecting on the moment. "I'm still processing it."

The celebration was immediate. Applause broke out across the beach as conference attendees rushed forward with hugs and congratulations. Word of the proposal quickly spread throughout the resort, turning a private moment into a shared celebration. "I couldn't have done it without them," Gabriel said. "BioGuard made it happen. They turned my idea into something better than I ever imagined."

For Regina, the proposal carried a deeper meaning beyond the romance of the setting. "I always said if he proposed, I wanted it to be somewhere special," she said. "He absolutely delivered." The experience also gave her a new appreciation for the profession that Gabriel cares deeply about. "Being here, you see how supportive everyone is," she said. "This industry really does feel like a community."

That sense of connection is what continues to fuel Gabriel's passion for his career. He credits BioGuard not only for helping create one of the most important moments of his life, but also for providing education, training, and professional support throughout his journey in the industry. "I love the brand," he said. "The quality of the products, the people, the training, it all matters. And I'm really excited about BioGuard University. I already have it written down on my calendar."

**FOR NOW, THE COUPLE IS CHOOSING TO SAVOR THE ENGAGEMENT ITSELF BEFORE DIVING INTO WEDDING PLANNING. THE MOMENT, THEY SAY, IS ONE THEY WANT TO HOLD ONTO JUST A LITTLE LONGER. "I COULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT THE PEOPLE AROUND ME," GABRIEL SAID.**



# 2026

## BIOGUARD DEALER AWARD WINNERS

### UNITED STATES

**Dealer of the Year**  
The Pool and Spa House

**Retail Excellence**  
Thatcher Pools

**Rookie of the Year**  
Fox Valley Pools and Spas

**Tru2Blue Award**  
Pool Blue

**Social Media Influencer Award**  
Cada Pools

### CANADA

**Dealer of the Year**  
Club Spa

**Retail Excellence**  
Piscines Jack & Jill Pools

**Rookie of the Year**  
Remington LeisureScapes

**Tru2Blue Award**  
St. Lawrence Pools

**Social Media Influencer Award**  
R & R Pools



