



sheer dedication drives
VILLA SALON & SPA

When Villa Salon and Spa opened in June 2010, it was the manifestation of a lifelong journey for Ati and Pascale Khoury Jbeily. Ati first cut hair for his family as a boy in Beirut, Lebanon. In 1987, the Lebanese Civil War changed the course of his life. He escaped to Montreal with just \$50 in his pocket. There, he found himself working at a shoe factory and living in an apartment with several other young men. They were all broke, and he began to cut his friends' hair for free. Ati eventually decided to start charging \$5 a cut, just so his friends would leave him alone. To his surprise, they kept coming back.

It was also in Canada that Ati met Pascale, another refugee of the civil war. The couple soon married and moved to Austin, where Ati trained professionally as a stylist and began to build up a client base. Meanwhile, Pascale worked full-time, pursued her education, and cared for the couple's two children.

Pascale prides herself on being someone who is known to make dreams come true for her family. For her, becoming a business owner was the ultimate example of her ability to bring out the best in those around her. In 2010, Ati took his passion for hairstyling to the next level when he leased a space in the Village shopping center at Westlake and decided to open his own salon. Pascale quickly saw that her husband would be unable to handle the work of running the business and still be able to work with clients. "It is one thing to be a hairdresser," Ati reflects, "another to be a business owner." Empowered by her education in Intellectual Entrepreneurship at the University of Texas and driven by her love for her family, Pascale took control of managing the business.

It was not easy for Pascale and Ati to deal with the new levels of stress and responsibility at first. Ati recalls that fear of the unknown was his greatest challenge: "I invested my savings, put my house on the line... I've never known stress until I opened my business." Despite these fears, he had confidence in his dream and knew that it was worth the risk. At some point, he says, "you have to go with your gut."

As for Pascale, she was learning everything she could about being an entrepreneur. The first place she turned to for help was the City of Austin Small Business Development Program (SBDP). "I knew about the City," Pascale remembers, "and

how big it is on supporting local family owned businesses." When she called SBDP, she became aware of a wide range of services to support her business. She started by taking classes on everything from email marketing, to business plan writing, to hiring employees. When it came time to write a business plan, Pascale worked out the details with one of SBDP's business coaches.

Recently, Pascale attended SBDP's annual Women's Luncheon, where women business owners share their stories and advice. The experience inspired her. "I could see myself as one of the panelists some day down the road," she says, "mentoring and advising other women business owners." Already, Pascale is proud to be setting an example as a woman, being her own advocate, sticking to her



sense of purpose, and not letting the day to day steer her away from that purpose. She encourages other entrepreneurs, particularly women, to pursue their business dreams: "If I could do it, married at 19, a mother at 21...there's no excuse for anyone not to do it." Ati, too, feels satisfied, and not just with the salon. "I'm very proud," he says, "of my wife."

Now that the business is taking off, the Jbeilys focus on offering optimal customer service. Attributing the salon's focus on hospitality to their Lebanese origins, Pascale notes that their goal is to make every customer who walks in the door a regular. Ati also advises that customer service is key. "Become brilliant on the basics," he says, "Treat clients like they're valued. People can feel that." Their dedication to their customers showed at a widely-attended grand opening.