

# J&H Lawn Service, Inc.: A business with solid roots

WAY BEYOND THE POINT



**Left to right: Genaro Quintana Perez, Kenyachta Watford and Daniel Blanks of J&H Lawn Service, Inc., with autumnal planter arrangements around the "LOVE NN" sign in City Center. (Photo by Anna Dorl)**

*By Patti Moonis*

Family-owned and operated for 32 years, J&H Lawn Service, Inc. is not your stereotypical small mom-and-pop shop.

Hands "dirty" owner Daniel Blanks purchased the business with his parents in 2000 and has been maintaining, curating and updating some hefty commercial contracts ever since.

One of the biggest? The City of Newport News. Add to that Christopher Newport University (CNU) and the College of William & Mary (W&M), and throw in an occasional military base, like Camp Peary or Fort Eustis. Big stuff.

Blanks got started in the landscape business fresh out of Hampton High School. He loved being able to work outside. By the time he acquired J&H, he had earned several environmental and conservational certifications and had taken classes through the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for protecting the waterways, but mainly learned through "hands-on hard work," he says.

His first job for the City of Newport News was for general grounds maintenance for the historic Warwick Courthouse, built in 1810 and on the National Register of Historic Places.

Blanks says he really enjoyed working with the city and bid on several more contracts. J&H has contracts for the Denbigh Community Center and the Midtown Community Center.

"We've especially enjoyed revitalizing the downtown City Hall area," Blanks says. "That's something that I'm proud of."

J&H takes special care to install native plants in the City Hall spaces and also in nearby Victory Landing Park, which it also maintains. Both are close to the James River in downtown Newport News. Blanks says installing native plants is important because they bring in native insects. And that brings the area back to its roots.

In fact, the company slogan is "Quality Starts at the Roots."

"We pride ourselves as owner-operated and give attentive, quality service," the landscaper says. J&H is a true family business. Blanks's wife, Sonia, "wears many hats" for the company, he says. "We have a very strong team and have really good, long-term employees (16). We treat them like family."

Another contract Blanks enjoys is the City Center Fountain area. The city has installed large planters around the fountain in the colors of the Newport News city logo. He says he changes the plants out with each season.

But what he really loves is when he sees his work on television. Local news programs will often use live shots of the City Center fountain during their broadcast. "It's nice to see my work flashed on the news. City Center is shown a lot," he says with a smile.

In 2020, through Covid, the landscape business was able to "fill in the gaps" for CNU and W&M by assisting and supporting in-house workers. Then it picked up contracts for CNU, such as maintaining the Yoder Barn and the dorms across Warwick Boulevard opposite the main campus and assisting in-house staff in the common areas.

At W&M, he says, the business does more enhancing and adding than maintaining.

For equipment, Blanks says they have an electric golf cart outfitted with a 100-gallon water tank they use around City Center. And there's the 350-gallon watering trucks used downtown.

J&H also has a contract to maintain the area around the Virginia Marine Police Operations building in downtown Newport News. Blanks says it's "interesting seeing the different boats brought in from accidents, or after being confiscated."

For the future, Blanks says he wants to continue to help take care of his family and his employees. "We are very blessed and happy to be where we are," he says. "I really like the contracts we have."

And the J&H in the company name? They are the first initials of the original owners' names, Janice and Henry who started the business in 1992.

**TO THE POINT:**

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The logo for Oyster Pointer features the words "Oyster Pointer" in a red, serif font. A blue arrow points to the right, positioned below the text and underlining the word "Pointer".

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