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The Kimbles

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**Twin brothers
employ hard work,
good choices and
each other to
develop a booming
RTO business**

By Kristen Card

Mitch and Mike Kimble—fraternal twins who look almost identical—begin every day together with a 5:30 a.m. workout before heading to their mutual offices at 8 a.m. They work together all week and spend most weekends together, too, tailgating, golfing or fishing.

So the question inevitably arises: After 47 years of twin-brotherhood, don't they get sick of one another?

"Not at all," Mitch answers immediately. "Our dad brought us up to get along; fighting was not permitted. We've always respected each other, rooted for each other."

"And it was always a goal of ours to get together and be a team in business," Mike adds. "We knew if we got on the same team, then we would be extremely successful. We continue to prove that every day. I enjoy coming to work every day. I enjoy seeing my brother every day. We just wouldn't know any other way."

Brought up with meager means in the small town of St. Francisville, Louisiana, the Kimble brothers worked side-by-side from a young age, beginning in their father's seafood restaurant. When college didn't work out for the two, they both got "gofer"-type jobs at a nearby nuclear power plant.

But the pair's professional paths briefly parted when Mitch went to work for the Fraenkel Co., a Baton Rouge-based furniture manufacturer, while Mike remained in the utility industry. Mitch went quickly from the warehouse to the sales floor and ultimately accepted a colleague's offer to partner and open their own rent-to-own store

in 1993. A few years later, Mike rejoined his brother and, in 2000, when Mitch's original partner left the company, the Kimble brothers were on their own—together.

Today, the pair has expanded 1st Choice Home Furnishings from four stores to 14 in Louisiana and Mississippi, with more than 100 employees and a second business arm, Kimble Development, a commercial retail real-estate company. Mitch tends to be the people motivator overseeing 1st Choice, while Mike typically is the number-cruncher managing the development arm.

But the twosome's success and their togetherness haven't come without some sacrifices. Both men have been married for more than 20 years and, with five children between them, they readily recognize their wives' remarkable support and understanding through the years.

"There were a lot of long hours getting to where we are," Mitch notes. "And when the first person you call in the morning and the last person you talk to at night is your brother, well, that's something [our wives] have had to get used to, as well."

Which is not to imply that the Kimble brothers are easing up. In fact, they seem to feel they are just starting to hit their stride.

"If you had known us growing up, you would have never thought we would be where we are now," Mike says. "We were brought up on hard work and we've continued with that work ethic. We have built something bigger than we ever expected—and we are just getting started." ✧

Opposite page: Louisiana State University football fans Mike and Mitch Kimble display their custom tailgating Chevy Blazers with an "Eye of the Tiger" logo painted on the hood.