

On the job ... with tax preparers John and Brien Gregan

# Father and son team up for tax time

**Family affair:** John Gregan was pleasantly surprised when his son, Brien, decided to follow in his footsteps by joining his business, the Waldorf-based Southern Maryland Accounting and Taxes.

"It was a complete surprise," John said. "He seems to like it, and he does real well. He has a knack for it. A lot of our clients watched him grow up."

John, a former Internal Revenue Service agent, established the business in his home in 1979 and moved his office to Federal Square near the intersection of Smallwood Drive and Leonardtown Road in 1998.

He is a certified public accountant who holds a license to represent clients before the IRS. The business offers a range of services, including the preparation of individual, corporate and small business federal and state tax returns as well as tax planning.

Brien, a Thomas Stone High School graduate, said it was a natural choice to join his dad in the business because he spent so much time around it when he was growing up.

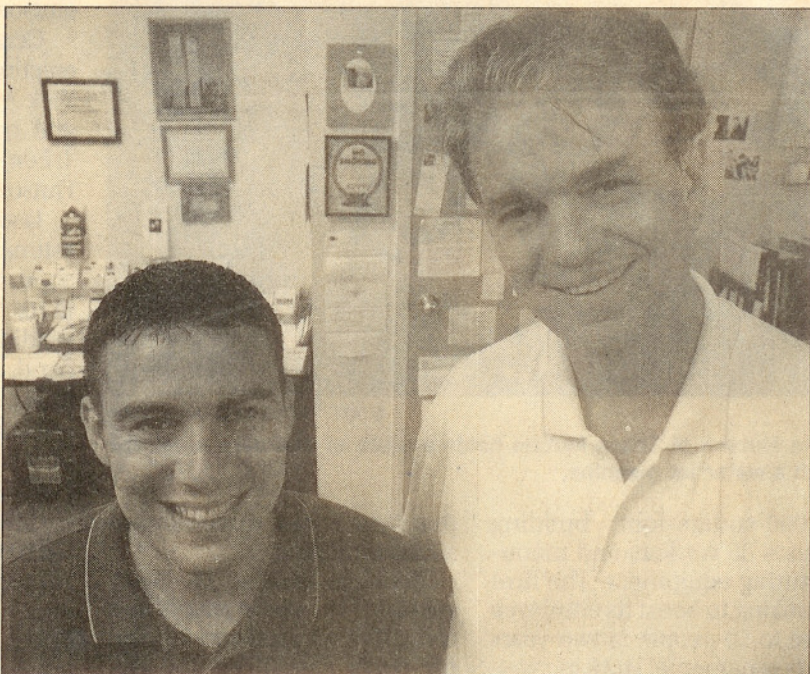
"I like it a lot; it's very interesting," he said. "That's the main reason I got into it. You can save people money most of the time, which makes clients happy."

Brien earned his tax preparer designation after passing the IRS's special enrollment exam. The exam includes testing on the preparation of individual, corporate and partnership tax returns.

**Homegrown success:** The firm, known as SMATAX, is used every year by more than 1,500 clients who are seeking to avoid hassles with Uncle Sam and the IRS.

John said he is particularly proud that SMATAX is a homegrown business.

"I bought a home in Waldorf because I knew that it was going to be a growing community," the Iowa native said. "Some clients and their families come here from all over the United States."



STAFF PHOTO BY GARY SMITH

**John, right, and Brien Gregan are a father-and-son tax preparation and accounting team at Southern Maryland Accounting and Taxes.**

Brien said a well-seasoned accountant and tax preparer is also somewhat of a therapist, especially when a client has gotten a disturbing letter from the IRS.

"When clients get an IRS letter they sometimes freak out," he said. "It makes me feel good if I can help them. I guess there's a little bit of therapy involved in what we do."

**Keeping busy:** The tax season, which runs from January through April, is a busy time of year for the Gregans.

"It's crazy around here; it's non-stop," Brien said. "All I do is work."

"We're very busy," his father said. "On a typical day I sit down at 8 a.m. and don't get up until 8 p.m."

The Gregans stay plenty busy the rest of the year, too, John said.

"During the off-season we're still pretty busy," he said. "There's always something to do. The IRS never sleeps, so why should we?"

The best way to break into the profession is to take a tax preparation course, then do a few tax returns, John said.

"People have got to try it out to see if they like it," he said. "The best way to get involved in the profession is to work at an accounting firm."

Tax preparers and certified public accountants have to continually take courses to stay current with the industry, he said.

"A lot of the business is interpreting tax law. I need to stay up with it," he said.

In addition, John is a member of the National Society of Accountants, Maryland Society of Accountants and National Association of Enrolled Agents.

Both father and son said the best part of the profession is interacting with their clients.

"I just love it," John said. "It's a people-oriented business, and I like working with people. I can't go anywhere where people don't recognize me."

"I have a passion for it," Brien said. "It's not just looking at things in black and white. I have to look at the whole picture because I don't want to miss anything."

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