

# NEIGHBORLY

By Sherry Lucas

Clinton native and young entrepreneur Bradley Bailey hopes Mississippians' penchant for sweet tea will sweeten the market for his burgeoning beverage company, Natural Saga.

Bailey, 25, graduated from Clinton High School in 2012 and, after a four-year stint in the Marine Corps, again calls the town home. Moving back in with family provided a good home base for focusing on his start-up business as well as planned forays into real estate.

"Just coming back from the military, I knew I wanted to start something. Other than working for someone else, I wanted to start something on my own," says Bailey, who set to brainstorming. "This clicked in my head — starting a tea company." When he was stationed in California, he was introduced to bubble tea — a tea-based drink, also known as milk tea or boba tea, that originated in Taiwan, comes in different flavors and was catching on.

Versions of the beverage are in Asian restaurants here, but Bailey wanted to be on the early end of bringing the trend to

Mississippi with his own sweet tea brand, Natural Saga.

"The only difference is, we don't use the boba pearls (typically made from tapioca) they use. ... What I do is basically milk tea. You can add vanilla, strawberry, peach — just different flavors."

"I know Mississippi has a love for sweet tea. It's something different and something new that could come into Mississippi and work. I have tried it out over the past year and a half, and people love it. It just has to catch

on first."

Fresh at Five in Clinton is one of the avenues Bailey uses to boost Natural Saga's profile.

"It's more of just showing your face — showing yourself off to the public, saying 'Hey, I'm here.' ... You're not really going to make money doing these events, but you're going to get a following." Natural Saga has been located in The Hatch, a business incubator in Jackson's Midtown district, since February. Clinton remains a comfortable home base as the

startup gains steam.

"It's still home because it's a quiet neighborhood. It's just a small drive away from The Hatch. It's just a small drive away from anything I need to go to. It's really the only neighborhood I grew up in," he says of home with his mom, Jacqueline Bailey. Anthony Bailey is his father.

Another venture for Bailey involves real estate — moving to Jackson, fixing up a house, moving back to his Clinton home base as he rents it out, "then rinsing and repeating." It's a good outlet, too, for his hobby in trade skills, such as electrical work. He also enjoys reading.

The tea business continues to steep. At The Hatch, two big water boilers and a big whisk (nearly waist-high on him when upright) are the tools he needs for what's still a mostly one-man operation, depending on the order size.

"Right now, we're just trying to make a name for ourselves," he says, with lines of sweetened and unsweetened tea. He wholesales cases of twenty-four to businesses such as Offbeat, across the street from the Hatch, and the soon-to-come Coffee Prose, across from Millsaps College.



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