

Do-it-yourselfers can button-up pools without a professional

By JASON PISANO

COVENTRY – As summer draws to a close, it's time for homeowners to start thinking about the annual task of closing their swimming pools for the season.

Annette and Kenneth Stockley have owned Pool & Patio Center for 20 years and perform about 300 pool closings each season.

And while closing a pool isn't as much fun as swimming in it, it's not necessary to hire professionals to do the deed as long as you understand what the closing process entails, explained Annette Stockley of Pool & Patio Center in Coventry.

In addition to offering pool closing services, the Stockley's sell a kit that offers step-by-step detailed instructions for the do-it-yourself pool owner.

There are seven major steps one must take when closing a swimming pool. First and most importantly comes the removal of all the debris from the pool water. The pool must be vacuumed, skimmed, scooped and brushed on all the walls and the floor. Debris that is left in the pool water may cause a stain and will contribute to less than perfect pool clarity come springtime.

"We recommend that all filter systems not only be drained but

also have any water residue blown out of the system," said Stockley. "We also recommend that all above ground filter systems be brought inside for the winter season."

Next, an air pillow is installed (for an above ground pool) then comes the installation of a winter cover. Air pillows are placed in the middle of an above ground pool to absorb ice expansion. As the ice expands, it crushes the air pillow and does not put undue pressure on the pool wall. The air pillow should only be inflated to three-quarters capacity.

"The next step is to install water tubes. Water tubes hold down a winter cover that is surrounded by decking," she said. "To do this, you fill the water tubes three-quarters of the way to allow room for ice expansion."

To complete the process, winterizing chemicals are added to the pool water to ensure a crystal clear pool in the spring. Once that's completed, all that remains is routine maintenance to assure your pool is prepared for the winter months.

"After their pool is closed, the owner must make sure that they remove the accumulation of excess water on the top of solid winter pool covers," said Stockley. "If they do not do this

step, they can cause structural damage to their above ground pool and/or damage to their above ground and inground winter cover. Also, excess water that accumulates on the top of a winter cover poses a drowning risk."

Pool & Patio Center, Inc., located at 53 Sandy Bottom Road in Coventry, is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information call 823-7290 or visit their Web site, www.poolandpatiocenter.com. Customers who are interested in Pool & Patio Center's professional pool closing service are urged to schedule an appointment as early as possible.

