



## 'Tis the season

**Memorial Day weekend is upon us. Are you ready to get your pool ready?**

### Jessica Selby

Daily Times

The weather is getting warmer, and if you're lucky enough to have one, it's just about time to start getting your pool open for use.

The question is – are you prepared for the undertaking, or do you need to solicit the help of a professional? According to Annette Stockley, owner of the Pool and Patio Center in Coventry, there are a number of components that feed into that equation. But often, homeowners are capable of dealing with the tasks on their own, even if they're unsure at first.

“For many people, especially those who are not mechanically inclined,

the equipment like the pump, the filter and the motor, can be extremely intimidating making the process that much more difficult,” said Stockley.

### MAKING IT EASY

In accordance with the shop's motto (“We make it easy”), Stockley wrote a six-page pamphlet and created three single-sheet step-by-step documents for pool owners to follow in order to properly open their pools, start-up their filters, protect their pool liners and balance the water in their pools.

“I wrote this book to try and make the process as easy as possible,”

Stockley said. “The idea was to take some very confusing stuff and put in an easy to understand way that would not feel overwhelming. That is why I used a lot of charts and highlighted pull-outs, because I figured even if people only read that stuff, they would still come away with something.”

### PASSING THE TEST

The first document covers everything from the removal of a pool's cover to the balancing of chemicals in the water. It covers the filter start-up, and explains the process for sand filters, DE filters and cartridge filters.

There is also the “sanitize and clarify” stage. During this stage, the pool water must be brought in to a professional for tests for algae, bacteria and germs.

“One of the things that we ask people when they bring the water in to be tested is: “How does it look?” Because a cloudy pool is a clear indication that something is wrong with the water, but people need to realize that even if the water is clear, that doesn’t automatically make it safe and healthy to swim in,” Stockley said. “The water in my toilet is clear, but that doesn’t mean I would swim in it. It needs to be treated with chemicals so that the water is balanced and safe.”

If customers have problems getting their water clear, the instructions then some suggestions to solve the problem. Although there are several possibilities to remedy cloudy water, a shock treatment is the typical solution, Stockley said.

“I tell people to shock the pool is like setting fire to the water to burn out all the contaminants,” she said. “Unless I give them something that they can visually understand, its not always so easy for them to understand how the chemicals work and why and that is one of the most important things to get people who care for their pools themselves to do.”

### **DON'T JUST TOSS THE WATER**

One other fact that pool owners need to be aware of is that emptying a pool should never be the solution to solving a cloudy pool, Stockley said. According to Stockley, this sets up the pool owner for a range of other terrible fates.

“You never want to totally drain an above or in-ground pool because the liner shrinks and then has the potential to burst when you refill it,” she said. “There are a whole other range of structurally damaging things that can happen to the pool if you do totally drain it.”

Though instructions are intended to be simple, there are instructions for maintenance that are spread over a 10-day period. In that section of instructions there are also directions regarding the length of time that a pool filter should be run, which Stockley said should typically be eight to 12 hours a day; tips on algae growth prevention; and methods for adding water chemistry products to a pool.

“We want to help people make that process as easy as possible but if they are having a problem they can always call us and we would most definitely walk them through it on the phone but at times like now, when everyone is trying to get their pools open for Memorial Day, it may be very hard to get through to us, so we encourage people to e-mail us with their questions or to come in,” Stockley said.

For those who do not feel confident enough opening their pools on their own, the Pool and Patio Center does have several crews that are out opening homeowners’ pools on a daily basis. The demand for this service is currently so great that they are booked up until the third week in June. People typically start to call for this service as early as March, Stockley said.

For more information about the opening of a pool or about balancing the water in a pool, stop by the Pool and Patio Center to get a pool opening kit.

Other pool stores in the area including Cut Price Pools located in Warwick, the Pool Center on Route 3 in Coventry, and local Benny’s and Wal-Mart locations have similar instructions and tip booklets.

