

To realising my dream'

By Alan Davies

alan.davies@whitimes.co.uk

"Instead of stepping under a train, I wrote a book and realised my dream of becoming an entrepreneur."

Family issues and the recession nearly took one Potters Bar businessman to the brink, but after pulling himself back he has launched an innovative cleaning product which is receiving interest from large retailers.

James Koumis, 44, of Windmore Avenue, grew up in east London, the youngest of six children.

He left home at 18, met his future wife and moved in with her parents, who helped him set up his first business in cleaning, which enabled them later to buy their first home.

A couple of years later they re-mortgaged to do some work on the house and Mr Koumis set up a new business Building & Property Masters. After borrowing more money to put into it, he lost £25,000.

The debts started to pile up and, in 2007, Mr Koumis realised his family, now with three children to support, was in severe financial difficulty.

Mr Koumis said: "I had so many ideas, so many things I could offer but couldn't find a way to get out of the mindset I was in.

"I tried therapy and self-help

"I saw all these cleaning-type products on the shelves and thought there was a way they could be made better

James Koumis

books, but I didn't really notice the depression developing over time, which is often the case."

Then, after visiting a property show at the ExCel Centre, he suffered a massive panic attack.

"I had to get out, but when I got to the station to come home I saw this train coming, everything was in a kind of blur and I was about to step out under it when I had a mental vision of my family together on the beach being happy," he said.

"The thought just hit me that I couldn't do this. I fell backwards on to my backside and burst into uncontrollable tears.

"Some elderly lady came up to me and comforted me while I recovered a little, then she left. I had no idea who she was.

"I hadn't been able to see any light at the end of the tunnel and was fighting to get up every day after that."



■ James Koumis

The couple sold the family home and downsized.

Mr Koumis then wrote his first book - *The Family Who Are Living Their Dreams* - which was aimed at parents to read to their children, or for kids to read themselves.

He explained it was a way for him to express himself and what he had been through, and aims to teach children a positive outlook on life and to go for their goals.

"I was brought up with the opposite, so I'm now doing the opposite of that through this book," he said.

His second book, *How To Live the Life You Deserve*, was inspired by his daughter.

He explained: "We're like little drones out there, not living our lives the way we could be. We have one chance and should go out and try to do the things we want to.

"If you genuinely have a passion for something, follow your heart."

So that's what he did, and after three years from an idea to product, Mr Koumis has created and launched his 'Aquabrush', which he says is unique to the market.

"My family do a lot of walking and as a result mud is always getting into the car and house," he said.

"Then I saw all these cleaning-type products on the shelves and thought there was a way they could be made better."



■ Football players can clean their boots with Aquabrush

Brush set to clean up muddy paws and boots



Aquabrush is formed of a set of double action bristles, fitted with a 'pop up action' nozzle.

When opened, this allows a jet of water from the bottle to flow out. Creator James Koumis said: "Its unique selling point is that it fits with any standard water bottle with a 28mm neck, it jets and seals itself, so all you need is water.

"It's made in the UK, near Luton, is very easy to clean and there are no leakages or electronics.

"It can be used for travel purposes, cleaning pet paws, bikes, boots, spot cleaning on carpets, for multiple uses for different objects and different activities. It is also

very durable, re-usable and therefore eco friendly."

He added: "After my struggle, the things I wanted came true off the back of writing the book.

"I overcame the obstacles and am going forward with my life how I wanted."

The Aquabrush is now being sold through a garden centre chain, but can also be bought through the website www.aquabrush.co.uk and direct from the manufacturers at www.etree.biz/jks-creations/

→ For more information on Mr Koumis and his books, go to www.jkscreations.com