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A HELPING HAND

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CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

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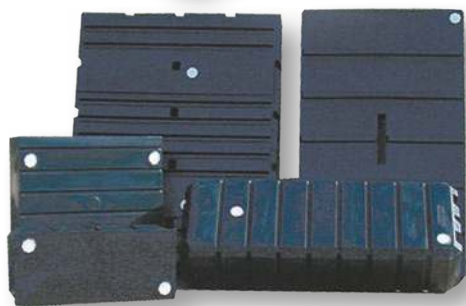
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Painted Potties and Promoting Portable Sanitation

A-OK WASTE SERVICES RAISED AWARENESS FOR ITS SERVICES BY HELPING AN EARTH DAY EVENT. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GIVE BACK TO YOUR HOMETOWN AND REAP GOOD PUBLICITY?

By Jim Kneiszel

As business development coordinator for A-OK Waste Services, Naomi Rosan is always on the lookout for new ways to market portable restroom and trash collection services in Macon, Georgia. So when she saw an opportunity to partner with a popular local Earth Day event, she was immediately on board.

After all, what better way to promote portable sanitation and other waste services than during an event celebrating a cleaner environment? It seemed like a natural fit for the growing 12-year-old company.

"I think there is value in having a conversation with our customers about what trash is, how we can reduce it, and what is the right and wrong thing to do with it," Rosan says. "Education is so important in any business, and in the waste business, people aren't even thinking about it. Once it's removed from their sight, it's out of their minds."

Rosan called the city of Macon and Mercer University, and the three entities partnered to decorate portable restrooms and display the painted potties during a popular farmers market at Tattnell Square Park in Macon. Hundreds of visitors viewed the painted restrooms and voted for their favorite in the first event of its kind in the city.

GETTING ON TV

A-OK contributed three fiberglass restrooms that have been taken out of service and allowed a group of Mercer students and A-OK employees to paint the restrooms in the company yard. A base coat of white paint was added first, and then the artists followed a theme of "save the species," writing environmental messages and festooning the outer walls with plastic animal and food figures, as well as different types of trash.

"You don't really expect to see port-a-potties as something that is going to send a message or be aesthetically pleasing," Mercer student Casey Colquitt tells a TV reporter from WMAZ-TV 13 who covered the Earth Day event. Rosan says local TV coverage enabled the students to spread their environmental message and the restroom company to increase its visibility in the community.

The Earth Day event fits nicely with a new approach to marketing the A-OK brand, Rosan says. She has also created a Talking Trash brochure that is handed out to prospective new customers. A-OK is involved in helping events like a fun run in nearby Warner Robins and a recent traveling tiny-house display in a Macon city park. The company utilizes social media to its goals for donated restrooms and service.

"I developed the (painted restrooms) event as a way to get new business in all areas. Visibility in the community is really key," Rosan says. "It fosters



goodwill, and I don't see a downside at all."

Earth Day drew hundreds of visitors, and Rosan was able to strike up a positive portable sanitation conversation with many people throughout the day. And the painted restrooms will continue to serve the company. Rosan expects to feature them on the company's Christmas parade float this year.

And the Earth Day event will return next year; Rosan promises it will be bigger and better. And don't worry about A-OK running out of restrooms to paint. She says there are enough of the retired fiberglass units to have the decorating contest for another 5-6 years.

Participants in the Macon, Georgia, Earth Day event decorate old fiberglass restrooms donated by A-OK Waste Services. (Photos courtesy of A-OK Waste Services)

WHY SHOULD YOU FOLLOW SUIT?

Why should your company benefit from getting involved in nonprofit events or local charity work? Consider these benefits:

Expand your customer demographic

Various reports and surveys show that the millennial generation (now at ages 23 to 38) are much more likely to do business with a company that demonstrates social responsibility. Some estimates are that 70% to 85% of young people factor this into their purchasing decisions. These are up-and-coming customers for your portable sanitation products and some sources



say they represent more than \$2 trillion in annual spending. If you can go after more of that potential business by doing good deeds, it's a win-win situation for your company.

Build employee morale

Recent studies indicate that employees feel better about working for companies that demonstrate they care about their community. They respect employers who have a positive corporate culture and put a priority on charitable efforts. More and more companies are encouraging volunteer time off so employees can work for groups like Habitat for Humanity to help build a home for a family in need.

These projects make for a great team-building experience for your crews. When your employees work together on a charitable project, they get to know and respect each other. And hopefully that will transfer to the workplace, where they will look for ways to help each other reach your company goals. Also, when employees respect the company and feel better about their work, they are more likely to stick around, which will help with retention.

Network with other giving companies

A natural synergy happens when local companies get together on a community project. When you provide portable restrooms for a fun run or a community-building project, you meet like-minded contractors and event coordinators who might have a need for your services in the future. And they will pass along their positive experience with you to others in the community. I'm a firm believer that good deeds come back to you in positive ways and these charitable business partnerships make it happen.

"I developed the (painted restrooms) event as a way to get new business in all areas. Visibility in the community is really key. It fosters good will, and I don't see a downside at all."

Naomi Rosan

fault. You can keep your equipment sparkling clean; folks are still going to remember the worst portable restroom experience they've had. However, you can start to overcome that by placing more of your clean and fresh units in highly visible locations and by helping out events at churches, sporting events and charitable gatherings. When a nonprofit calls, give them your newest and best units and keep an attendant handy to impress and amaze users.

The three decorated restrooms were put on display at a popular farmers market in Macon, Georgia.

Enhance your reputation

It's undeniable that portable sanitation companies fight an uphill battle when it comes to reputation building. Like it or not, the fact is the general public doesn't always have a good impression of portable restrooms. Oh, it's not your

Make your community a better place

You are proud of your company and the neighbors you serve. Go above and beyond with your giving to show you appreciate the community that contributes to your success in so many ways. Think about the customers who keep coming back to hire you. Remember the good employees who come from your community and work for your continued success. Your contributions help make your hometown a better place to live. And improved quality of life attracts businesses and new families to your community, which in turn helps you place more restrooms ... and the cycle continues.

Take the tax deductions

While it shouldn't be your first reason for helping the community, you should take advantage of tax deductions for the donations you make. Consider the dollars you save as the cherry on top of the sundae of charitable giving. And if you can say yes to most of the requests you get for free service to nonprofit events, your tax savings can be significant. ■

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John Fehser of Ace Pumping & Portables found the right mix of gimmick and proximity in marketing red, white and blue portable restrooms to his customers. Find out how by reading this online exclusive.

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Nine Steps to Resolve Customer Conflicts

HOW DO YOU BUILD CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE? QUICKLY ADDRESS COMPLAINTS AND LEARN TO FORECAST PROBLEMS THAT WILL SET OFF RESTROOM USERS.

By Jeff and Terri Wigley

This month, we are honored to take on a question from Jeremy Johnston from On Site Cos. of St. Paul, Minnesota. Johnston was the Portable Sanitation Association International 2019 runner-up Service Technician of the Year. Johnston was recognized as an outstanding example of the model employee in the portable sanitation industry.

Russ Holm, vice president of On Site, writes "Jeremy Johnston consistently goes the extra mile to ensure the customer's satisfaction, upholds PSAI and company service standards, and lives our company's core values each and every day. Jeremy has gone above and beyond on numerous occasions, even going as far as relocating to a new branch. When it comes to job safety, customer service, service quality, dependability, initiative and positive attitude, Jeremy sets that standard that his team members look up to and strive for."

Question: Johnston asks, "Can you provide some good advice for conflict management while dealing with customers on the site?"

Answer: Conflict management is a serious matter, but one that can ultimately be used to increase customer satisfaction.

No one wants an upset customer; however, this is a reality in any business. Working in portable sanitation, compliments may come infrequently when service is good, but complaints come quickly when unsanitary conditions arise. Be prepared and have a company policy to address complaints, and your customers will appreciate your efforts.

1. Calmly listen to the customer. Do not respond to the customer's emotion with emotion of your own. You need to be calm and an attentive listener. Do not interrupt the customer. Let the customer completely describe and explain the issue.

2. Make sure you understand the complaint by repeating it back to the customer in an understanding manner. Take notes if needed for future reference and for informing other company personnel who may be at fault or involved in the resolution of the complaint. For example, if a service was missed, the billing department may need to be involved in order to issue a credit to the customer.

3. Issue a sincere apology. Do not just say "I am sorry," but rather "I am sorry that ..." The phrase "I am sorry" is overused and underappreciated in our language. Saying "I am sorry that your unit was not serviced because it was blocked" is more descriptive of the situation and underscores the previous point that you understand the problem.

4. Thank the customer for bringing the issue forward and assure them you will do everything in your power to work together to resolve the issue. Do not be confrontational when attempting to resolve conflicts. Working together solves problems more quickly and efficiently. If the units are completely used and out of toilet paper prior to the scheduled service

A call from a manager or supervisor will often go a long way to show the customer that the complaint was taken seriously and that the customer's satisfaction is the highest priority.

day, perhaps there are too many workers and not enough units. Discuss the numbers of workers on the site. Are there multiple shifts of workers? Are there more workers on this particular phase of the job? Does the workweek involve Saturday and Sunday schedules?

5. Be flexible, and offer several ideas the customer may find reasonable in resolving the issue. For example, could you manage usage by putting locks on several units to be used in the event all of the other units become full? Would moving the units closer to the street make them easier to service? Flexibility and creativity show the customer you are eager to resolve the issue.

6. Once you have created a solution, make sure the customer is completely aware of the solution. In the case of servicing crane units on the upper floors of a construction site, make sure the customer knows you will call when you are an hour away so that the crane operator can have the units on the ground and ready for you to service upon arrival. Ensure other members of your company are aware of this situation in case you are unavailable when this service is to be done.

7. Ensure your company is aware of the solution to the problem. If extra units or extra service is required, coordinate this with your company's dispatch personnel. Billing personnel may also have to be notified.

8. Follow up. Check with the customer the next week to make sure the accommodations you have agreed to have been implemented. A call from a manager or supervisor will often go a long way to show the customer that the complaint was taken seriously and that the customer's satisfaction is the highest priority.

9. Learn from the experience. Look for similar situations on other job sites. Be proactive in suggesting the location of units and the number of units based on the number of workers, and attempt to identify potential problems before they occur.

Complaints handled to the satisfaction of the customer can leave a lasting impression and strengthen the relationship with your customer. Unhappy customers who are turned around by your company's response to a problem can become your strongest allies and source of referrals. Identifying and addressing potential problems before they occur will strengthen your reputation as the expert in your area. ■



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The family team at Wilkinson Portables includes, from left, Chad, Kym and Fred Wilkinson. They are shown with an inventory of Satellite PolyPortables restrooms. (Photos by Lezlie Sterling)

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

The kids are taking over at Wilkinson Portables with plans to modernize and grow a successful, long-standing operation **BY KEN WYSOCKY**

For nearly 45 years, Fred Wilkinson toiled hard to grow Wilkinson Portables, a business that his parents started in 1958 with self-built plywood restrooms that weighed hundreds of pounds. Now his son, Chad Wilkinson, owns the company, and he and his wife, Kym Wilkinson, are busy — doing some heavy lifting of their own: modernizing the company and positioning it for further growth.

This process of one generation handing off the baton to another that wants to make big operational changes isn't always easy, as Fred, 61, Kym and Chad Wilkinson can attest. "We butt heads every so often when they come up with new ideas," Fred Wilkinson says. "But I also think they're starting to understand why I did some things the way I did. I'm learning

from the kids, and they're learning from me. We're learning together."

This succession dynamic no doubt resonates with many family-owned portable restroom companies. It often requires the children who buy a family business to negotiate a tightrope walk between respecting and listening to the input from a retired parent who still wants to be involved but at the same time deciding to do what they feel is best for the future of the company — even if it runs counter to the parent's advice.

"I'm lucky because Fred is so easygoing," says Kym Wilkinson, who handles everything from marketing to finances to office duties while Chad Wilkinson handles in-the-field

Wilkinson Portables Placerville, California

Owner: Chad Wilkinson

Founded: 1958

Employees: 10

Services: Portable sanitation

Service area: 80-mile radius

Website: www.wilkinsonportables.com





operations for the company, based in Placerville, California, about 40 miles east of Sacramento. He bought the company in 2015. “We listen to each other, but sometimes we just have to agree to disagree.”

“In the end, we feel very fortunate that Fred developed a really solid business with a great foundation upon which we can build,” she adds. “But sometimes when something isn’t broke, you feel it doesn’t need to be improved. On the other hand, I feel like if you’re not moving forward, you’re moving backward.”

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

The biggest changes have centered on three areas: office/administrative operations, equipment and expansion into new markets. Wilkinson describes changes in office operations as “simple and complicated at the same time.” Simple because years ago, the company had invested in Summit Rental System software made by Ritam Technologies. Yet it was difficult, too, because it had never been fully used, so a learning curve ensued.

“New technology is scary to people,” she says. “The changes we made weren’t rocket science, but huge compared to where we were at. The bottom line is that it takes time and energy to learn how to use a new system and get the bugs worked out.”

For example, job orders used to be handwritten on a triplicate form, with one of the three copies placed in a pile until someone could manually hand-key them into the system. This was inefficient and prone to data-entry errors, Wilkinson says.

Learning how to use all of the software’s features is an ongoing process. “I’m learning more with each passing month,” she says. “My goal is to keep learning and expanding my expertise in our software to ensure we’re getting the most bang for our buck from the investment.”

Above: Fred Wilkinson spruces up some Satellite | PolyPortables restrooms in the company yard.



Left: Kym and Fred Wilkinson catch up on the day’s work in the company office in Placerville, California.

Below: Fred (left) and Chad Wilkinson pause to discuss service routes. The truck is an International MV Series with a Best Enterprises tank and Masport pump.



“Fred did an amazing job in developing such as solid business base. It’s one of the reasons why we have solid profit margins that allow us to take risks, like entering new markets.”

KYM WILKINSON

The company also introduced in-the-field credit-card payments and started using email to send invoices to and communicate with customers. As a result, communication now is faster and better tracked, she notes.

“We still have some customers who don’t like these kinds of technology,” Wilkinson explains. “But in a service-based industry, I feel it’s really important to offer customers options, especially if those options save us time and money.”

She also helped develop a new company website and started using social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, to advertise new products and service discounts. For efficiency’s sake, she also hired Diana Estrada, a graphic designer/

photographer, to designs ads and handle social media.

Wilkinson says a solid core of quality employees has helped Chad Wilkinson and her navigate all the changes: Bri Croffoot handling office duties and route drivers Ron Shipes, Chris Gray and Kelsey Alao.



Left: Fred Wilkinson is shown at Wilkinson Portables in Placerville, California.

Below: Photos of the early Wilkinson Portables restrooms — built in the shop using plywood — are displayed at the company to show how far the industry has come since the company was founded in 1958.



FORCED TRUCK REPLACEMENT

The state of California's increasingly stringent environmental regulations are prompting the company to replace its diesel-engine service trucks with vehicles that meet new emission standards. The company currently owns four diesel-powered restroom service trucks: a 2004 and 2006 International 4300, a 2017 Kenworth T270 and a 2018 International MV. All of them feature Masport pumps and 1,100-gallon waste and 400-gallon freshwater stainless steel tanks made by Best Enterprises.

The company also runs 1999 and 2000 Ford F-350s that each carry a 400-gallon waste and 200-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank from West-Mark. In addition, Wilkinson owns four Isuzu NPR 18-foot flatbed trucks used to deliver restrooms.

The 2004 International service truck must cease operating in California by the end of 2019, and the 2006 International must be phased out by the end of 2023. "We also have to get rid of two of the Isuzu trucks — one this year and one next year," she says. (The 2017 Kenworth and 2018 International trucks are already emission-compliant.)

Fred Wilkinson (left) recently sold the family business to his son, Chad Wilkinson, and daughter-in-law, Kym. They are shown in the conference room at Wilkinson Portables.

Separate work and family time

Mixing business and family can be fraught with pitfalls. So if there's one thing that Kym Wilkinson and her husband, Chad Wilkinson, have learned since he bought Wilkinson Portables from his father, Fred Wilkinson, it's this: Keep work and family in opposite corners as much as possible.

"I think it's so important to try and separate work from family when you all work together," she says. Chad Wilkinson bought the company, based in Placerville, California, in 2015. "You quickly realize that even if you're angry at someone from something that went on that day, we're still all going to be at, say, my daughter's softball game later on or having a family dinner together.

"So embracing that family time in a positive way, and keeping work out of it, is very important."

So how does Kym Wilkinson handle disputes when they arise? "I take a deep breath and remind myself that we will always be family and that we all want the best for the business and each other," she says. "With that being said, though, there still are plenty of times when we've yelled, cried and hugged during some tense moments."

Fred Wilkinson says it helps to not sweat it when disagreements arise over issues such as equipment purchases or changes in operational procedures. "We get over it and move on — it's not the end of the world," he says. "We may have hard conversations, but no one holds onto any ugliness the next day."

While Wilkinson is retired, he still plays an active role in training new employees, helping out on big jobs and filling in when employees take vacations or get sick. "He's still our go-to guy," Kym Wilkinson says. "It works out great because he can still be a part of the business without working full time. Plus, he helps me keep our drivers on their toes and he's always teaching me something about the business."

To Fred Wilkinson, mutual respect is critical. All families have their problems, so when they arise, it helps immensely to listen to all viewpoints and be respectful. "Everyone needs the freedom to be heard," he notes. "And you have to respect each other. Because after all is said and done, we're all still working together as a family."

(continued)

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To mitigate some of the costs associated with truck phaseouts, the company plans to sell the chassis and transfer the tanks, which are in great shape, to new chassis, she explains.

“Our biggest business challenge is the state of California,” she says. “The laws and requirements are crazy. ... It’s hard to keep up with the expenses of running a business in this state, not to mention staying on top of the laws and regulations. It’s really painful and really expensive, but it’s a cost of doing business here.”

The company has about 500 portable restrooms, made by Satellite | PolyPortables, and roughly 150 hand-wash stations from Satellite | PolyPortables. This year the company added a Porta-Lisa Plus restroom trailer from JAG Mobile Solutions. It uses products from J&J Portable Sanitation Products such as Truex for odor control, Graffiti Blaster and UrinX II for cleaning, and J-Spray XT fragrance enhancer.

FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE

The third area of change — expanding into new business markets — is helping to mitigate some of the costs associated with the truck replacements. For example, for the last several years, the firm has obtained more federal government contracts for supplying restrooms to crews fighting forest fires.

“Without work from the government, we probably would still be running those two older trucks and struggling day to day,” Wilkinson says.

In addition, when business is good, the couple is disciplined about putting money away to save for future expenditures. They’ve also been fiscally prudent, not buying big-ticket items like new cars and paying off the mortgage for a building they purchased to house the company. “When we have years with good cash flow, we try to invest in the company — spend money wisely where it needs to be spent,” she says.

“We have a unit on every sports field in our area. I went to high school with people who own businesses here that have been passed down for generations. We all live here, and we love to give back.”

KYM WILKINSON

Networking with other vendors and suppliers also has helped the company gain new customers. For example, companies that supply staples such as ice and food service to firefighting operations have become good contacts for job leads.

“It’s a good idea to make friends with other vendors and suppliers,” she says. “For instance, we don’t offer fencing, but a guy down the street does. So we might tell a customer who needs fencing about him. Diversifying your business through these informal partnerships is huge. Pass their names around and they pass our names around.”

SERVICE MATTERS

Of course, it’s also essential to provide good customer service and clean units, which are company hallmarks established

by Fred Wilkinson decades ago. “I built a reputation by keeping restrooms clean,” he says. “If you keep restrooms clean and provide good service, customers will keep coming back. ... You’ve got to be proud of your work.”

While the company doesn’t do it for corporate gain, Kym Wilkinson says that being active in community activities — like donating money to local Little League and soccer teams and supporting groups such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America — sometimes reaps business benefits. Other times, she’ll offer a customer a free month of service, just to get an opportunity to prove the company can provide better service.

Deep community roots and long-standing relationships with families who own local construction companies and other businesses motivate the company to maintain a high level of service.

“I use our restrooms and so do my friends when we’re at soccer games and other events,” Wilkinson explains. “We have a unit on every sports field in our area. I went to high school with people who own businesses here that have been passed down for generations. We all live here, and we love to give back.”

A BRIGHT FUTURE

Operationally, Wilkinson would like to keep investing in new technology, such as barcode-based inventory tracking for restrooms and route-mapping software, as well as equipping route drivers with iPads for more efficient communications and operations.

Beyond that, Kym and Chad Wilkinson have an ambitious goal for future growth: double the company’s sales revenue in five years. That will entail entering new markets with better profit margins, such as special events in the Sacramento area.

“Renting out 40 restrooms at a music festival for a weekend is more profitable than renting out 40 restrooms on construction sites for a year,” she points out. “Making that much money on just one shot makes way more sense.”

“But we also have to balance that with continuing to provide great service to our existing and stable customer base, because there’s no guarantee you’re going to keep getting those special event contracts every year,” she says.

In the meantime, Wilkinson is grateful for the groundwork laid by her father-in-law.

“Fred did an amazing job in developing such as solid business base,” she says. “It’s one of the reasons why we have solid profit margins that allow us to take risks, like entering new markets. Or if we bought a restroom trailer, for example, and it didn’t work out, the business can withstand the blow.”

“Sometimes when you take over business from a previous generation, it’s gone so far downhill that you’re trying to save it rather than grow it,” she concludes. “So we’re very happy to be planning for more growth.” ■

To learn more about Wilkinson Portables, watch a video profile of the company at www.promonthly.com.

MORE INFO

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Where's the Restroom?

August 2019



Follow the clues to
identify the winter
wonderland shown in
this mystery snapshot

Cool and Quiet Construction Site at Night

YOU WON'T SEE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AT THIS SITE IN THE NIGHTTIME HOURS. BUT THERE ARE A LOT OF FOLKS OUT FOR AN EVENING STROLL AND A REFRESHING BEVERAGE. **By Jim Kneiszel**

A bright yellow PolyJohn Enterprises PJN3 restroom shows up well under the streetlights at this downtown construction site. The unit and an excavator are protected from vandals by a 6-foot chain-link fence. This is a busy downtown with many banks, restaurants, museums and hotels all within a few blocks of the work site shown. In the background, you see this city's tallest skyscraper by a long shot: 35 stories, or 745 feet high. While that building is modern, the century-old brick structures in the foreground are more typical of this historic neighborhood.

Here are a few more clues to help you identify the restroom location:

1. This city was founded right around 1700 as a French colonial outpost.
2. Elevations here are as low as 10 feet above sea level, but there is no ocean in sight.
3. Step aboard for a military adventure.
4. Why are all these beads hanging from the trees?
5. The state flower is the oakleaf hydrangea.
6. Five Major League Baseball Hall of Famers were raised in this city. That's just about the most anywhere.

To win the contest, be the first person to respond with the name of the city and the intersecting streets where the restroom is located. The winner will receive a *Portable Restroom Operator* T-shirt and recognition as a geographical whiz. Send your responses to editor@promonthly.com. The winner will be announced at www.promonthly.com and through the PRO Facebook page. ■

SEND YOUR MYSTERY PHOTOS! Do you have an interesting spot where you've been dropping and servicing restrooms? Send some photos to be considered for our feature, *Where's the Restroom?* If we decide to run your photos in a future issue, we'll send you a *Portable Restroom Operator* T-shirt! Send your photos to editor@promonthly.com.

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Partnerships with local charities and apparel company Bombas allow Lance Olinski to offer personal items to the homeless population he serves. (Photos by Olivia Ogren-Hrejsa)

A Helping Hand

Texas-based Streetside Showers aims to help the homeless lead a life with dignity

BY BETTY DAGEFORDE

THE TEAM

In 2017, when Lance Olinski saw a homeless man washing up in a public restroom in McKinney, Texas, the accountant and ordained minister was touched. “It just gripped my heart,” he says. “I had a lot of compassion for him.” Determined to do something to help people in need, he founded a nonprofit public charity corporation, Streetside Showers, and started providing mobile showers for the homeless.

Currently Olinski wears all hats, from truck driver to website designer, but does have a part-time administrative assistant, Hannah Couch, a legally required three-member board of directors to help with governance, and a slew of volunteers. His family is also very involved. His wife, Shannon, helps with office functions and equipment maintenance. Their children help at sock-rolling parties — Seth



(24) and his wife, Jess; Aimee Daily (22) and her husband, Aidan; Claire (19) who also does their social media; Chloe (16); and Julie (7) who stuffs hygiene bags.

Olinski services his Comforts of Home Services shower trailer between guests.

COMPANY HISTORY

Olinski got started by Googling “mobile showers” and found an organization in California providing showers for the homeless,

(continued)

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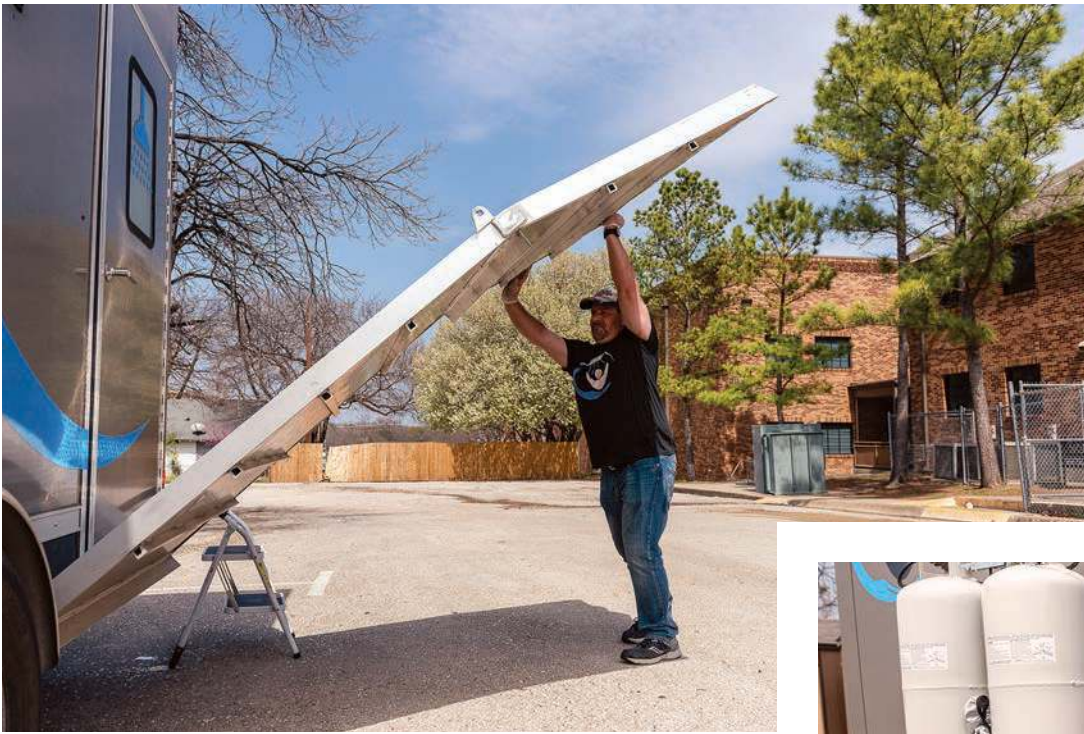


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Left: Olinski secures the ADA access ramp on his Comforts of Home Services shower trailer after one of his weekly stops at a local church in the Dallas area.

Below: The shower trailer can run using this Honda generator when electric power isn't available.

Lava Mae. He spent a week with them, then researched manufacturers, did some fundraising, and in May 2017 bought a Forest River two-stall shower/restroom combo. The next month on a Sunday evening, using their donated 2000 Lincoln Navigator, he took the trailer to the parking lot at Vintage Church in downtown McKinney and opened the doors.



The unit attracted media attention, which led to other communities contacting Olinski expressing interest. That's when he had to make a decision about his career and the direction of the company. He left his accounting job, did more fundraising and expanded to two other communities. By March 2018 he purchased a 2005 Ford Excursion and a Comforts of Home Services three-stall shower/restroom combo with ADA-compliant accessibility.

MAIN EVENT

The homeless typically live in the woods or in their cars, Olinski says, and 54% have jobs. "They are working; they just can't get the sustainable income to have a house or apartment. Housing has just become so expensive." By providing showers, he is trying to restore dignity and give them hope.

The two-stall trailer is used on Sundays in McKinney. The large trailer is used Tuesdays and Fridays in Denton at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (which houses a soup kitchen) and Wednesdays in Plano at the Collin County Assistance Center. Monday Olinski does maintenance, Thursday fundraising and office work — and Saturday is occasionally a day off. They only close when it's below freezing.

Guests, as he calls them, sign up on a first-come, first-served basis and are given a towel, washcloth, soap, shampoo, razor and other hygiene products. "Then we give everybody four or five pairs of fresh socks and one or two pairs of underwear," Olinski says. Three or four volunteers help. They work about four hours, but it's a full day considering time for driving, setup, cleanup and disposal.

(continued)



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Right: Olinski befriends one of his guests, Jared Ellis, during a visit to the shower trailer. In addition to a shower and personal items, Streetside Showers donated food for Ellis' dog, Twinkle.

Below: Streetside Showers graywater disposal is completed at an area RV park that provides a discount on dumping and propane refilling.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The company relies on donations for expenses (which include a modest salary for Olinski). Olinski talks with churches, clubs and community organizations and also uses social media. "People assemble their groups — women's group, bible study, Boy Scouts — and really come together to help me with all my supplies." He also likes to have fun with it. For a town parade, they decorated one of the trailers and he and a few friends dressed in *Star Wars* costumes and walked along with it.

"I'm a *Star Wars* nerd," he admits. "I'm a member of the 501st Legion, which is the premier *Star Wars* costume club around the world. It was really cool and created a lot of buzz. I'm always looking for the wow factor. It helps people know who we are and helps me raise money."

Corporate partners include apparel company Bombas, which supplied 1,000 pairs of socks in 2018 with a promise of 5,000 for 2019, and Unilever, which provides hygiene products as part of its Right to Shower initiative. The First Baptist Church of McKinney donates parking spaces for equipment storage. Hosting locations pay for water. Licensed hair stylists often show up to give haircuts (217 in 2018). Designhill designed their logo, and a friend vinyl-wrapped the trailers for a classy look.

"I want us to look good in the community," Olinski says. "We're a professional shower service not a hodgepodge organization. We have beautiful trailers. I want people to know we're serious."

"When I ask people, how the shower was, a very common response is 'I feel human again. I feel like a million bucks.' It's amazing what a shower does. And it's such a simple thing."

LANCE OLINSKI



Olinski squeegees the shower floor in the Comforts of Home Services unit between guests.



Olinski returns towels for laundering. An Embassy Suites hotel donates towels and provides laundry service for the Streetside Showers charity efforts.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are critical to the success of the operation. They come from everywhere, including the community service list used by judges to dispense community service sentences for traffic offenders. Olinski plans to create training videos, but right now it's on-the-job training to learn how to clean showers and communicate with guests.

Volunteers also learn how to handle difficult situations. They haven't had any serious problems but occasionally see people who struggle with addictions or show up edgy or bad tempered. Olinski's solution is simple.

"We get them a shower as quick as we can," he says. "That does the trick. It's amazing. They come out a different person." If someone wants to talk or vent, Olinski tells volunteers to just listen.

Olinski believes the benefits of volunteering go both ways. He tells his volunteers they'll never take a shower for granted again and their world will be a lot bigger because they'll really start seeing people in their community.

KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

Volunteers do a quick wipe down after every shower with Vital Oxide, a nonchlorine hospital-grade disinfectant. Once or twice a month, Olinski does deep cleaning using an iSILER industrial-grade steam cleaner and CLR lime remover. He uses RID-X septic system cleaner additive and Camco TST toilet treatment packets in the waste tanks. Disposal is at nearby RV parks.

They spend about \$50 a week to launder towels. In Denton, however, towels are donated

and laundered by Embassy Suites hotel.

"A high-end hotel, if there's any spot or blemish on a towel, they can't reuse it," Olinski explains. "So,

I approached them and asked if they'd consider donating them. They're thrilled the towels are getting used, and they feel like they're getting back in the community."

WIDE-OPEN FUTURE

The company provided 559 showers in 2017 and 2,600 in 2018. Olinski offers a word of advice: The homeless need a lot of things, but don't try to do everything because you can't. He doesn't do laundering, provide clothes or offer job counseling. "I call it staying in my lane," he says. "I try to do one thing — hygiene — really well."

In the near future Olinski hopes to hire drivers and service more locations. He's also looking into less expensive alternatives to shower trailers and is testing out free-standing Satellite | PolyPo-

rtables single-unit showers. And he's coaching others who have expressed interest in starting similar companies, including a friend in Florida who wants to open up a Streetside branch office.

Olinski's labor of love has impacted many lives. "When I ask people, how the shower was, a very common response is 'I feel human again. I feel like a million bucks.' It's amazing what a shower does. And it's such a simple thing." ■

MORE INFO

Comforts of Home Services, Inc.
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Karleen Kos is executive director of the Portable Sanitation Association International. She may be reached at karleenk@psai.org or 952-854-8300.



Associate Is an Action Verb

MEMBERS OF THE PSAI WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE GOALS THAT CAN IMPROVE THE INDUSTRY AND SERVE THE PUBLIC MORE EFFECTIVELY By Karleen Kos

Every so often, I run into someone who doesn't know what an association is. They ask what I do for a living and then cock their heads to one side with a quizzical look as I try to explain. Over the years, I have boiled my answer down to an "elevator speech." Today when I recognize the "What on earth can she be talking about?" look, I say: "An association exists to promote the industry and help solve its problems."

All sorts of industries have associations. Regardless of the focus, an association is dead in the water if it isn't listening to its members and translating their concerns — and their dues — into active value.

One way the Portable Sanitation Association International listens to the portable sanitation industry is through an annual survey. Here are some highlights from this year's study, which includes data from both members and nonmembers of the PSAI:

Workforce issues top the list of immediate concerns. When we asked, "What is the biggest challenge you deal with every day?" fully 50% of the responses concerned finding, training and retaining employees.

Disposal looms as one of the top anxieties on the five-year horizon. Although the disposal industry is actually growing overall, the number of options for portable sanitation companies is decreasing and costs are going up.

Industry image problems also rank high on the list of worries. Competitors whose service reflects poorly on the industry and a lack of appreciation from the public continue to dishearten our colleagues and devalue portable sanitation as a whole.

You may be thinking, "Well, duuuuuh. You needed a survey for that?" It is true that the main concerns revealed in the results are not big surprises. What matters is how universally these anxieties are shared. The real question is "So what can we do about it?" That's where the PSAI comes in. We are, in fact, doing something about all these concerns.

In June we launched a series of virtual roundtable discussions covering workforce issues. These conversations allow attendees to learn the best ideas currently in use for recruitment, retention and training of competent workers.

Also in June, we announced our Disposal Initiative. Beginning with a comprehensive study of disposal issues and options, the PSAI intends to create a strategy aimed at helping operators identify affordable disposal strategies for their businesses.

In March we presented a session at the PSAI's Annual Convention and Trade Show describing the nature of portable sanitation's "image problem" and our long-term strategy for repositioning the industry. Through a series of initiatives and an ever-growing readiness to seize "tipping point" moments, we expect to shift the reputation of portable sanitation from one of tolerated or disparaged acceptance to that of a respected alternative.

TAKING ACTION

An association exists to promote the industry and help solve its problems. The key word there is "association," which is a form of the action "to associate." Associate means to interact, to align with others, to be part of something. It's an action verb.

Every so often, a caller will say, "Why don't you people ever do (such and such)?" The truth is there is no "you people." There's only you, and people like you, working together to achieve goals that can improve your business and serve the public more effectively. That's what the PSAI really is. A means of organizing and directing our shared energies to accomplish valuable results that raise all the boats.

Chatting about problems and challenges on Facebook might be cheap and give you a momentary "high." But Facebook groups don't really address any issue in a systemic way. For that, we need coordinated, purposeful action. For that, we need an association. ■

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Hand-Wash Equipment and Supplies

By Craig Mandli

DISPENSERS AND SUPPLIES

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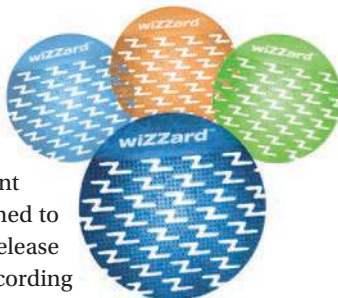
Foaming Hand Systems from CPACEX are designed to make hand washing and sanitizing easier and more effective. The foam dispenses from the top of the unit, eliminating leaks and waste, delivering an adequate amount of soap or sanitizer to kill 99.9% of common germs. The systems meet the Centers for Disease Control recommendations for hand antiseptics. The push pad at the top of the dispenser eliminates overdosing and meets ADA compliance. The refill bag system contains less plastic than hard cartridges, reducing packaging waste by 50%. **800-974-7383; www.cpacex.com.**



PORTABLE RESTROOM ACCESSORIES/SUPPLIES

SURCO PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS WIZZARD URINAL SCREENS

Wizzard Urinal Screens from Surco Portable Sanitation Products have a translucent tinted color and provide a pleasant fragrance and odor control. They are designed to reduce splashback and have a fragrance release technology that is effective up to 30 days, according to the maker. Flexible construction conforms to most urinals to trap debris. **800-556-0111; www.surco.com.**



WALEX PRODUCTS BRAVO

Bravo urinal screens from Walex Products are an odor control product featuring bacteria action that deodorizes and cleans. The fragrance release lasts 30 days. The shape and ribbed surface reduces splashing, and the product fits in all styles of urinals. **800-338-3155; www.walex.com.**

PORTABLE SINKS

ARMAL AQUA STAND

The **Aqua Stand** outdoor portable hand-wash sink from Armal is designed to withstand any weather and can be used for construction, special events and in municipal parks. Its 23-gallon water tank has a tamper-resistant lid. It has foot-pump operation and optional soap and paper towel dispensers. It is double-sided, lightweight and easy to maneuver and use. It fits inside the Armal Wave restroom and most other portable restrooms for easy transport. **770-491-6410; www.armal.biz.**



FIVE PEAKS SIERRA RIDEALONG

The **Sierra RideAlong** free-standing hand-wash station from Five Peaks has twin basins with molded-in maintenance-free spigots, recessed beverage holders, dual soap dispensers, an oversized paper towel dispenser and an extra-large recessed foot pump area. The design is suited for special events and has durability to handle day-to-day use, according to the maker. The granite color camouflages dirt and scratches. The unit conveniently fits inside most standard portable restrooms for easy transport. The lightweight, heavy-duty, rotational molded sink offers easy access for cleaning and draining. Its 49-gallon capacity (22-gallon freshwater/27-gallon graywater) eliminates the need for bladders and bags. **866-293-1502; www.fivepeaks.net.**



J&J PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS DOUBLE HAND WASH STATION

The **Double Hand Wash Station** from J&J Portable Sanitation Products has a lightweight construction with a durable single-piece outer body with an enclosed freshwater tank. It provides a large opening at the foot pump to accommodate work boots, as well as a basin to accommodate forearms. Two paper towel dispensers hold a two-fold paper towel. The molded base prevents wear on tanks while being moved. Convenient fill and evacuation ports make service easy. It has convenient handholds for easy maneuverability. Both the freshwater and graywater tanks have a 24-gallon capacity and drains. **800-345-3303; www.jjportable.com.**



PORTABLE SINKS

MCKEE TECHNOLOGIES - EXPLORER TRAILERS HAND-WASH STATION

The hand-wash station from **McKee Technologies - Explorer Trailers** is designed as a self-contained unit that allows outdoor event or work site crowds to have easy access to warm water and soap dispensers. Options include mirrors and lighting. Stainless steel sinks and counters with self-closing, water-saver faucets are simple to maintain, according to the maker. A large polyethylene freshwater tank, paired with a galvanized graywater tank, ensures many uses before discharge and recharge. Setup is easy, and a custom-painted steel chassis with front-locking utility cabinet ensures the unit is aesthetically pleasing, while safely containing the water heater and pressure tank. The graywater tank is horizontally mounted inside the chassis with a 2-inch discharge port at the rear. Units are built on a commercial-grade trailer chassis for easy towing and placement. **866-457-5425; www.explorertrailers.com.**



NUCONCEPTS DELI UTILITY SINK

The three-basin deli utility sink from **NUCONCEPTS** is available in 50- and 66-inch sizes. Both are constructed of 16-gauge type 304 stainless steel with a No. 4 finish. They are health and safety certified and have heavy-duty commercial-grade faucets and spray-

ers running hot and cold water. They offer strong and spacious folding sideboards, a soap dispenser, sump pump, water inlet with regulator, lockable cabinet doors, a built-in 1 1/2-inch clean-out, and onboard water heaters. **800-334-1065; www.nuconcepts.com.**

POLYJOHN ENTERPRISES HANDSTAND 2

The **PolyJohn Enterprises HandStand 2** offers a self-contained, hands-free washing station, including soap and paper towel dispensers suitable for smaller special events. Each unit provides over 300 individual uses. This roll-and-go sink offers mobility and versatility suitable for industrial plants, food service locations and many other applications. **800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com.**



SATELLITE | POLYPORTABLES TAG II

The **Tag II** portable hand-wash station from **Satellite | PolyPortables** has rugged construction with a lightweight footprint that makes it simple to transport. It is designed to fit inside most standard-size portable restrooms for delivery. It has a 24-gallon freshwater and 24-gallon graywater capacity, foot-pump operation, two spray soap dispensers, an improved suction port and easy-open fill port. The freshwater compartment is easily removed for filling or maintenance. **800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com.**

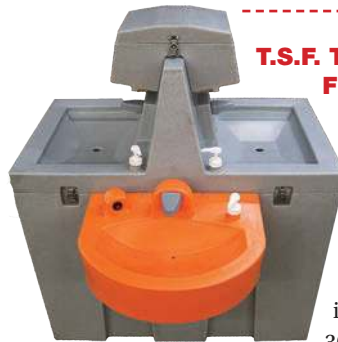
T BLUSTAR RP-TWIN

The **RP-Twin** free-standing portable hand-wash station from **T blustar** connects two single RP-Clean sinks back to back on a pedestal with two soap dispensers and two hand towel dispensers. Each sink basin has a capacity of 15 gallons for freshwater and 15 gallons for graywater. The freshwater is filled into the first sink basin and dispensed by a foot pump to both of the faucets. The graywater from both sinks filters into the second hand-wash basin. Both sinks have handy shelves to hold cellphones or keys while in use. **404-719-0715; www.tblustar.com.**



T.S.F. TUFF-JON 90-GALLON FREE-STANDING SINK

The **Tuff-Jon 90-gallon** free-standing sink with trash container from **T.S.F.** provides two wash stations; hands-free, foot-operated pumps; towel dispenser; and 10-cup-capacity soap dispenser. A lifting bracket allows for easy positioning in high-rise applications. The lifting bracket has a 1/4-inch wire cable, weighs 30 pounds and is safety orange. The unit is constructed from easy-to-clean polyethylene, with 45-gallon waste and freshwater capacities, a towel dispenser, trash container, protective skid plate and freshwater drain plug. It weighs 85 pounds. **800-843-9286; www.tuff-jon.com.** ■



constructed from easy-to-clean polyethylene, with 45-gallon waste and freshwater capacities, a towel dispenser, trash container, protective skid plate and freshwater drain plug. It weighs 85 pounds. **800-843-9286; www.tuff-jon.com.** ■

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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Collapsible, stackable P-POD is a space-saver for restroom transport, storage

By Craig Mandli

A large expense PROs incur while serving special events is the transport of the dozens, if not hundreds of portable restrooms to and from the location. The collapsible and stackable **P-POD** by **Advantage Engineering** is aimed at making that process more efficient.

When the P-POD restroom is collapsed, it stands one-third the height of a traditional unit. That means companies can transport three times as many units with the same delivery equipment. The design uses a single internal bar to hold it upright. Release the bar and the P-POD folds into its compact position. At 36 inches high in its folded-down position and 160 pounds, it can fit in the box of a small pickup truck.

"It is an ingenious concept, which is what made us so interested in getting into the portable restroom field," says Steve Hengsperger, the lead engineer at Advantage Engineering. The company manufactures the units using injection molding at its Ontario facility. "We love efficiency and innovation, and this unit was the perfect fit for those concepts."

The P-POD's collapsible design allows for more efficient storage. With its nesting base, PROs can stack three units in the same space as one conventional portable restroom, meaning that if a truck or trailer currently holds 10 conventional units, it can hold as many as 30 P-PODs, provided it is equipped to handle the increased load weight.

"That means the units can be easily loaded and unloaded if a company is concerned about leaving them overnight at a particular event," Hengsperger says. "The fact that they can be collapsed and locked at night also deters vandalism."

The units have wide door openings and a spring-assisted door hinge designed for easy opening and closing. Interchangeable and sealable waste tanks are accessible through the back of the unit for no-mess transport and clean-out. Multiple colors are available to match existing restroom inventories.

"It definitely leads to a lot of cool conversations due to its design," Hengsperger says. "We believe this is an innovation that can really be a game-changer in the industry." **877-737-7535; www.p-pod.ca.**

PolyJohn Enterprises Bravo standard portable sink

The redesigned Bravo portable sink from PolyJohn Enterprises has reinforced rod hinges, an integral keyless locking hasp, improved soap dispenser plates to mix and match dispenser types, a new fill port and a new rotomolded sink base. Its compact size allows it to fit inside most portable restrooms for easy transport, and its built-in lift handles make it easy to place in the designated restroom area. Bravo sinks feature two soap dispensers and four individual paper towel dispensers. It also has an optional water heater for warm-water washing. **800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com.**



Water Cannon FL-ABB 200 surface cleaners

The FL-ABB 200 stainless steel surface cleaners from Water Cannon Inc. - MWBE have an added air-recovery design, and they connect to pressure washers and wet vacuums for many cleaning requirements. The cleaners remove dirt, paint, grime and even graffiti from a wide variety of surfaces. There is no overspray or flying debris, providing a safe and clean work area. They are available in 12-inch single-arm and 21- and 30-inch double-arm floor models. The air recovery port will accept 2-inch vacuum hose. Floor units come standard with three or four caster wheels, and all units are rated to 240 degrees F. The professional line is ready to use with no tools required for assembly. **800-333-9274; www.watercannon.com.** ■



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