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## Planting a SEED

New Hampshire's Drop One Portables took root from a landscaping business and is quickly on the grow

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Karen Carlin, Columbia River Affordable Portables (The Dalles, OR)

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By Jim Kneiszel

# Hybrid Street Restroom May Provide Relief in Urban Landscapes

A popular Maine city combines traditional portable sanitation with a unique semipermanent restroom to better serve the public

Photos courtesy of Downtown Portland and the city of Portland

**Y**ou don't really buy beer — you rent it.

And that's a good argument for improving restroom access in the popular Atlantic Coast city of Portland, Maine, according to Cary Tyson, executive director of Portland Downtown, a nonprofit that promotes city development.

"We are a tremendous craft beer city and have the most craft breweries per capita in the country," Tyson says, noting there the number of local beermakers numbers in the hundreds. "You can't be a great craft beer city without restrooms. Ultimately with beer, you only rent it."

Access to public restrooms became a major issue during the COVID-19 pandemic, when most of the established bathrooms closed in places like City Hall, the library and at restaurants and retail establishments. In fact, Portland Downtown counted only three remaining public bathrooms in the city center during the pandemic.

Local leaders have developed a multipronged approach to the problem of limited bathroom facilities — and portable restrooms and restroom providers have been and will remain a part of the solution. Working with provider Troiano Waste Services, of South Portland, the city maintains 20-30 standard portable restrooms placed in parks and other strategic locations to serve the public, says Alex Marshall, director of parks, recreation and facilities for the city of about 70,000 on the southern end of the expansive northeast state.

Like many urban centers, Portland leaders have found that traditional plastic restrooms — though exceedingly practical — are not the complete answer to sanitation needs. Both Marshall and Tyson say they receive complaints from residents and business owners who don't like the plastic units dropped in busy areas where they can be seen. They do also generate complaints about odors when units are not serviced regularly. And Tyson says there have been concerns over unhoused people who use the restrooms as a shield for drug use.

"This has prompted safety concerns. The units are not locked at night and people will go inside them. If they were locked, folks would get aggressive and try to break into them and you get a lot of vandalism," Marshall explains. "They go in and shoot up and use drugs. There have been some overdoses."

**"We are a tremendous craft beer city and have the most craft breweries per capita in the country. ... You can't be a great craft beer city without restrooms. Ultimately with beer, you only rent it."**

Cary Tyson

## TIME FOR CHANGE

Especially for the downtown area, city officials are looking to try something new. They are exploring permanent plumbed outdoor restrooms like the all-aluminum Portland Loo (which was invented to solve similar problems on the West Coast's Portland, Oregon). These are self-contained rugged units now placed in parkways and sidewalks in several cities. The downside is cost, which Marshall explains is about \$250,000 per Loo.

Marshall says the city has found another solution that falls somewhere between the economical cost of its portable sanitation contracts and buying something like the Portland Loo. It is dedicating part of \$600,000 in American Rescue Plan funds to construct several all-aluminum units that incorporate some of the safety and cleaning features of the more permanent facilities, but utilize a holding tank that is pumped out by Troiano Waste Services along with the standard restrooms.

The city worked with DSO Creative Fabrication, in Saco, Maine, to design and build the new units. The company delivered the first three a few months ago and is in the process of building three more after making some changes based on the city's early experience. The first units have come at a cost of \$20,000 to \$25,000 each.

The new restroom is all metal in construction, with wall panels, louvers near the top and bottom that allow for ventilation and to see if a person or persons is inside. They are built to Americans with Disabilities Act standards with a 65-inch turning radius for wheelchairs. The first units include 68-gallon holding tanks and some accessories produced by Satellite Industries. They are bolted onto poured concrete slabs. They also are fitted with solar lighting and motion sensors.





*The interior of the first Portland, Maine restrooms utilize holding tanks from Satellite Industries.*



**Above:** One of the first units was bolted to a concrete slab in a park.



**Above:** A new metal restroom is ready to install in Portland, Maine.

So far the units have been deemed a success, Marshall says, but there is constant tweaking in the works. First, the holding tanks have proven too small for the application, so DSO is going to fabricate 130-gallon aluminum tanks that will not require daily pumping. Also, users are kicking and damaging some of the lower louvers, so they are going to be built to a sturdier spec. Also, the city is looking for more rugged components like paper holders and hand sanitizers, as well as using a stouter door closing design to prevent damage from the wind.

### KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

The local PRO will remain an integral part of the process as the city adds the new units. Marshall said there will always be a place for portable restrooms in many parks, ballfields and in front of sports facilities. Troiano pumps the new units on their routes servicing the standard restrooms. In addition to the

routine service, the city has 1.5 staff positions responsible for monitoring and cleaning (but not pumping) all of these restrooms on a daily or even twice-daily basis. Troiano also pumps two 1,000-gallon vault toilets at parks.

"The goal with these units is to make them safe for folks to use and that they can withstand abuse and be aesthetically pleasing, and fit into our historical locations," Marshall said of the new restrooms.

Troiano has been responsive in handling the pumping and the city has not considered buying its own vacuum truck to service restrooms, Marshall says. The PRO has been a good partner in working with the city on the best placement for restrooms, always considering safety and security and allowing for effective monitoring of units by police.

Though the standard portable restrooms are kept clean and in good condition, it's been an uphill battle to gain widespread acceptance for them in many parts of the city, Marshall says. PROs are used to negative reactions for some placements, so we all understand.

"They've developed such a stigma over the years and it's kind of hard to break it," he says. "But we have many different uses for them and they are very practical. We will likely always have a need for them."

### MORE COLOR OPTIONS

Marshall and Tyson agreed on a few suggestions that would might make it easier for PROs to place restrooms in urban areas and historic and entertainment districts. First, they say users would like roomier restrooms where they don't feel as closed in or have to touch inside walls. Think handicap or ADA-compliant units for these municipal customers.

And they also said looking at offering units in different colors that would either blend in or stand out as needed by the customers. Tyson also suggested artistic wraps or creatively painted or decorated units would be a nice option to offer when units are placed in an arts and entertainment district.

The need for more sanitation in general is a goal of Portland Downtown. Tyson explains. The city's near-term goal is that pedestrians will find a public restroom in a minimum five-minute walk from wherever they are. In the future, they'd like to cut that to 2-3 minutes. In a fantasy world, officials could offer an interactive online map linking people to restrooms wherever they are in the city, Tyson says.

"In a downtown where visitors double or triple the population in summer, we want to have a more permanent solution," he says. "I've learned more about portable restrooms than I ever thought I would."

And in the spirit of the craft beer capital of the Northeast, I'll drink to that! ■



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If you want to improve brand awareness and increase your restrooms' curb appeal, consider wrapping your portable restrooms, or even your service trucks. This online article helps readers weigh the pros and cons of investing in vinyl wraps for service equipment.

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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

# Satellite Operations Present Opportunities for Efficiency

But opening a secondary yard requires a solid plan for inventory and supplies, as well as careful communication with remote workers

**QUESTION:** We are in a small metropolitan area and are considering establishing a remote location 35-40 miles away from our office to provide storage for units and other equipment. If our growth continues, perhaps at some point, we could consider this as another fully functional location. What can you share concerning remote locations?

**ANSWER:** To begin with, congratulations on your growth! As is also evidenced by your question, planning is a part of your business philosophy and for that, you should also be commended.

“Remote locations” is a term that covers a variety of scenarios. Each situation is unique from one PRO to another. We will share some of the most common issues that must be addressed when operating apart from your company headquarters.

## REMOTE STORAGE YARD

Depending on your span of operations, establishing a second yard some distance away from your main location can present a logistical advantage. Many PROs have shared that having a remote yard to store equipment saves time and fuel. Additional advantages include the following:

1. Reducing the time to return to the yard in order to pick up additional equipment to handle a customer emergency.
2. Access to additional supplies needed in that particular area, again, not having to return to the main yard to restock.
3. A holding tank capable of accepting waste when a route truck is near capacity is also an effective strategy. Depending on the circumstances, having an alternative after-hours means of temporarily holding waste can save time and allow for route service to continue. Investigate the zoning policies to make sure this is permissible.
4. Some PROs also store a supply of special event units and equipment at remote yards to serve customers in that area.
5. With the current price of fuel, saving mileage saves money.

As with all of the remote options we will present, securing the proper insurance for the location is important. A locked and gated area is probably necessary as employees will not be there on a daily basis.

Accurate records for numbers of units and equipment at the remote yard are critical. Supply levels are also vital. In addition, any visits to the

Make the remote employee feel connected to the rest of the company. ... We have heard of some PROs having a phone conversation each morning to discuss the plan for the day as well as another call at the end of the day to review and summarize

remote location should also include the inspection of all rental equipment to ensure cleanliness and readiness to deliver when needed. Keeping the holding tank empty, or very near empty, is another effective strategy in maximizing the effectiveness of this location.

## REMOTE SERVICE LOCATION

Each company and each market are unique; however, a remote service location can be advantageous in many situations. In this scenario, a route is initiated and completed from this location. This could be beneficial for a few days of each week’s route, or it could be a permanent location whereby routes are run from there on a daily basis.

Planning, communication and employee well-being will determine the success of this service option. Key considerations from a service perspective:

1. Access to water for filling the truck as well as cleaning and preparing units.
2. An adequate inventory of units, sinks and other equipment for delivery.
3. Toilet paper, paper towels, hand sanitizers, deodorizers and other similar items in good supply.
4. A supply of parts for repair of units both in the field and when returned to the remote location.
5. Extra service equipment including an extra pump hose and water hose.
6. Disposal of waste. Is a wastewater treatment facility close by that your company can be permitted to use?
7. Disposition of trash. Is a dumpster an option?

Communications issues to be resolved include the following:



1. Assignment of daily route details and other company messages. Today's software advancements provide for route data to be sent electronically from the office to the driver. Communication from the route service technician back to the office can sometimes be more challenging. Training is extremely important in this area.
2. New information, ideas and suggestions discussed in the office also need to be communicated to remote personnel.

Employee support and morale should be the highest priority in the creation of remote locations. Consider the following suggestions:

1. If at all possible, have an experienced route service technician accept the remote location responsibility. They are aware of the job responsibilities, and they have the experience to work independently.
2. Make the remote employee feel connected to the rest of the company by having daily communications. We have heard of some PROs having a phone conversation each morning to discuss the plan for the day as well as another call at the end of the day to review and summarize.
3. Depending on the geography and the distance from the remote location to the office, have the remote employee in the office for safety meetings, training sessions and company events such as birthdays and holiday parties.
4. Be aware that as a one-person operation, the remote route service technician will also have the responsibilities of cleaning and preparing units for delivery, repairing minor damage to units, stocking the truck prior to the route and washing the truck at the end of the day. Further, since they cannot walk into the office and turn in certain paperwork, additional scanning or written communications will be required.

Develop a plan to handle various emergency situations. Put plans in place to answer these questions before they occur:

1. What is the route plan when the remote service technician is absent due to sickness or planned time off?
2. Truck mechanical problems. Have you secured a mechanic in that area to do the work? If the truck is in the shop several days, is there a backup truck available?
3. How and how often are supplies and equipment delivered to the remote location?
4. How often will the route supervisor or other key personnel visit the location for interaction with the driver as well as assessment and assistance with the operation?

### LARGER REMOTE LOCATION

As further growth occurs in remote areas, additional personnel can operate out of these locations. The same principles and suggestions discussed previously still apply.

We have found that larger remote locations with multiple drivers, yard personnel and office staff and supervisors will still maintain centralized routing, customer support and other administrative operations at the main company location. Again, planning, communication and employee satisfaction are the primary objectives with remote locations.

### OTHER VARIATIONS OF REMOTE LOCATIONS

In addition to establishing their own remote locations, some PROs obtain new locations through the purchase of a competitor. The competitor could have been operating in your company's market or in new markets several miles, or states away.

Considerations in these circumstances include the following:

1. Maintaining the competitor's employees. They are familiar with their customers, but will these employees adapt to your company's culture and business practices? Do they want to become part of your company?
2. Use this situation as a career advancement opportunity for your experienced and high performing employees to become supervisors or managers at these new locations.

### FINAL THOUGHTS:

When operating from a single location, a company is guided by effective communications, operations, structure and control. Teamwork and training contribute to outstanding customer service.

As operations move away from a single point of control, additional planning and communication is required to maintain the same level of effectiveness. Our hope is that the information presented will provide ideas to tailor your remote operation to meet your company's needs. Remote locations of any type can save both time and money, while improving customer service and efficiency. ■



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**Drop One Portables**  
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**Owners:** Brian and Kerry Labrie

**Founded:** 2020

**Employees:** 11

**Services:** Portable sanitation

**Service Area:** Primarily a 50-mile radius from Merrimack

**Website:** [droponoportables.com](http://droponoportables.com)

# Planting a **SEED**

New Hampshire's Drop One Portables took root from a landscaping business and is quickly on the grow

By Betty Dageforde





**Above:** The Drop One Portables crew, from left, includes Zack Clegg, Ryan Larocque, Len Coleman, Brian Labrie, Kerry Labrie, Mike Shultz, Joey Fritschy and Mike Fritschy. (Photos by Adam Perri)

“I always set the expectation that I’ll definitely get a unit to them by tomorrow. But I will try to get it out that day. That way I didn’t overpromise, I overdelivered.”

**KERRY LABRIE**

In spring 2020, Brian Labrie called a portable restroom company to rent a unit while his septic system was being repaired. Before the call was over, he made the decision to get into the portable sanitation business. As the owner of several businesses, he knew an opportunity when he saw one and could see it would fit well into his 30-year-old landscaping business.

He wasted no time. His next call was to his wife Kerry who quickly signed off on the idea. Then he called PolyJohn and bought 100 units, and finally Robinson Vacuum Tanks to order two vacuum trucks. A month later, on June 23, Drop One Portables was in business.

“Owning and starting a company was nothing new to me,” Brian says. “It was a bit newer to Kerry who had never started a business from the ground floor where you file for your Tax ID, set up bank accounts, hire employees. So, she was a witness to all that as we went through it.”

What Kerry did have was 20 years of sales and customer experience so she makes sure service is the foundation of everything the company does, from how the phones are answered to how the units are maintained. Working in the landscaping industry, Brian says he was familiar with portable restrooms on job sites and knew how everything worked

mechanically but had to figure out the business aspects — pricing, marketing, service procedures, government regulations.

The company is located in Merrimack, New Hampshire. Kerry oversees office functions and handles phone answering, bookkeeping and sales, while also holding down a full-time job with Sysco Food Service. Her uncle, Mike Fritschy, manages inventory and purchasing; Brian’s aunt, Laurie Labrie, does the marketing; and Jane Schofield is their accountant and financial planner. They have six service technicians — field supervisor and mechanic Joe Fritschy (Kerry’s brother), Lenny Coleman, Ryan Larocque, Zachary Clegg-Marrama, Paul Drone and Mike Shultz.

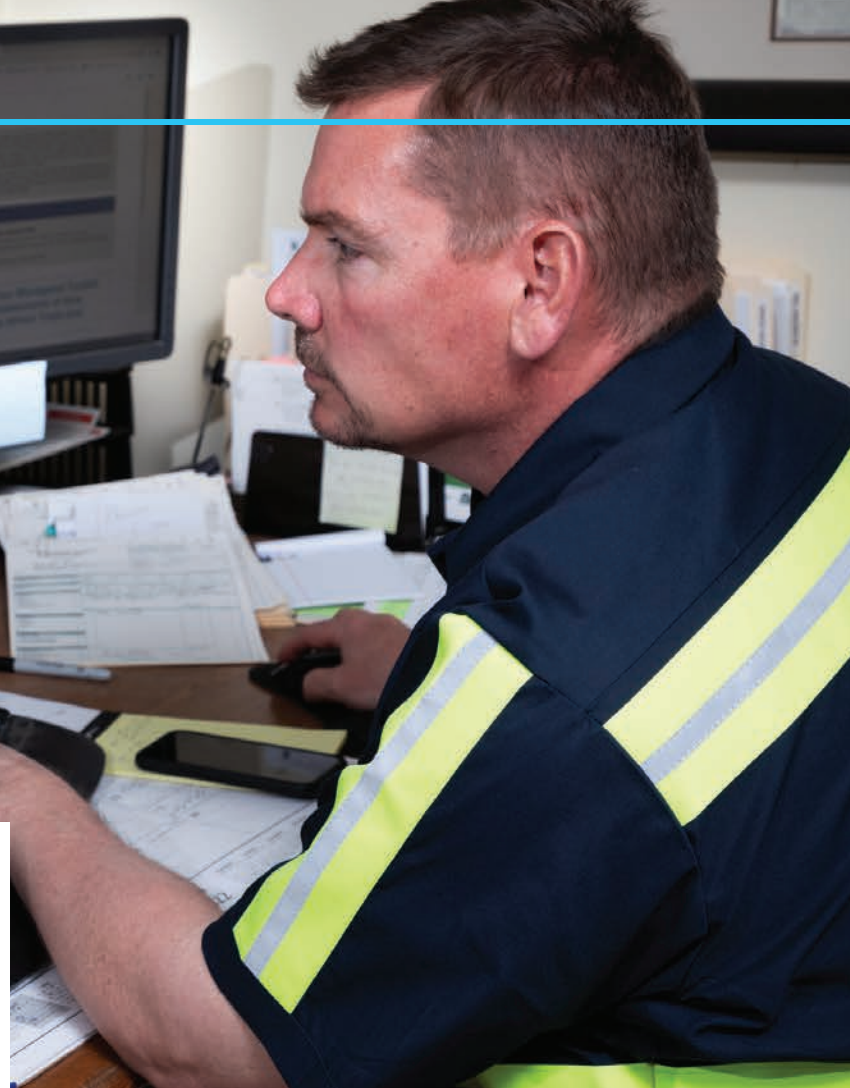
## GROWING FAST

The company started out at the landscaping office but several months later moved down the road a few miles to accommodate the growing inventory. They’re now outgrowing that location and considering another move. But Brian says prices have gotten a little crazy during the pandemic so he’ll probably wait until the market calms down. “We’re busting at the seams but we’re in a holding pattern,” he says.



**Right:** Brian Labrie reviews maintenance logs for the Drop One Portables service fleet.

**Below:** Kerry Labrie maps out ever-changing service routes in the Drop One Portables office.



“That’s a costly endeavor — to keep a bullpen of units that you do not release to the general public and only use for events. But the events are very important to us.”

**BRIAN LABRIE**

border. “The regulations to run in Massachusetts are very different than New Hampshire,” Brian explains. “In New Hampshire, you buy one state permit and you’re good to go. When you move over the border you have to deal with every town individually. It’s just a lot of paperwork and hassle.”

## THE SERVICE FLEET

The company’s five vacuum trucks were all built out by Robinson with aluminum tanks and Fruitland pumps — 2022 and 2021 Isuzu NPR HDs with 300-gallon waste/150-gallon freshwater tanks, 2020 and 2019 Ford F-550 XLs with 600-gallon

waste/300-gallon freshwater tanks, and a 2012 Chevrolet 3500 Silverado with a 400-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater tank. Their delivery truck, a 2013 International MaxxForce DuraStar, is a 10-unit carrier with a rack body. Their two flatbed trailers (8-place and 12-place) are from Big Tex Trailers.

Technicians operate off of a 10-point checklist which includes everything from washdown procedures to making sure everything is working properly. They use deodorant products from PolyJohn. Waste is taken to a treatment plant in Allenstown, 15 miles away.

Northeast winters are challenging for the company and special

(continued)

The company’s inventory now stands at 500 PJN3 standard units, 50 Comfort XL wheelchair-accessible units, and 50 hand-wash stations, all from PolyJohn. All units are supplied with proprietary industrial foam hand sanitizer. They chose their colors purposefully. “We are very patriotic, regardless of political affiliation,” Brian says. “So we asked PolyJohn to design and build us red, white and blue units that are unique.” Unit bodies are navy blue, roofs are white, and a red pinstripe runs down the sides.

The company generally works within a 50-mile radius but will go anywhere in the state for customers who don’t need weekly servicing. About 15 miles to the south is Massachusetts but they don’t cross the





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## ▶ TAKING CARE OF THE STAFF

Employees at Drop One Portables are especially critical to Brian and Kerry Labrie, who both have other jobs. The owners want to make sure everyone knows they're appreciated.

"We believe wholeheartedly in paying all of our employees incredibly well," Brian says. "We try to make it so they don't want to go anywhere else. So, we give them these employment packages where they're very happy to stay."

The company provides 401(k) retirement plans, Christmas bonuses, cellphones, personal gas cards, uniforms, boots and jackets. They also like to have fun, whether it's bringing in birthday cakes or having an occasional summer cookout. And through her account with Sysco, Kerry buys cases of steaks, burgers and chicken for everybody.

"Just something to say thank you in the summer when it's grilling season. We want to treat them really well and make them feel like they're a part of this, because they are — they're a huge part of it," Kerry says.

The one benefit they haven't yet been able to offer employees is health insurance. It's a challenge, Brian says. They'll be looking into it, but right now they're just keeping an eye on the political situation and hoping the current presidential administration will come up with some different options.

Not to be overlooked as an important part of creating a pleasant work environment is humor, Brian says. "We have a very good sense of humor here, and you need to in this industry, I think. It's the spice of life. It keeps us going day to day here."



**Above:** Joey Fritschy sprays down a PolyJohn unit.

## PRO FILE

precautions have to be taken, Brian says. The trucks must be stored in heated garages to avoid freezing. For the portable restrooms, they've come up with a proprietary biodegradable antifreeze blend to put in the tanks.

"We are extremely environmentally friendly," Brian says, "So, although it doesn't work perfectly, it helps us to at least maintain the units throughout the winter. Coming from the landscape business, I do work with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, so I'm very aware of what chemicals do to the world around us."

### DAILY SCHEDULE

Brian is usually out of the house by 4 a.m. to prepare for the day. He gets the guys going then shuttles between the landscape business and Drop One. Meetings are held most mornings to go over issues or procedures, either one on one or with the whole crew. There is lots of communication during the day with everyone. Drivers use a routing program and service sheets supported by Google Maps and Excel spreadsheets, designed with the help of a couple of local computer programmers.

Kerry heads to the office after putting in a full day at Sysco. As a result of their schedules, she and Brian rely heavily on their employees. Three of their technicians came over from the landscaping company and enjoy the less physically demanding nature of the sanitation business. The couple also taps the landscaping company when they need extra hands for a project.

"Landscaping is viewed by Drop One as the AAA minor leagues of baseball," Brian says. "We have plenty of employees to pick from if Kerry needs them. It's worked out very well and helps a ton."

Initial customers came from the landscaping business, which also provides a foot in the door for their construction work. They gradually moved into the event market, which now accounts for about 40% of their work — weddings, school activities, foot races, fairs, fall festivals.

COVID has been responsible for some of their work. Ice cream and farm stands that in the past allowed customers to use inside restrooms now want customers to stay outside. That's also the case with private home gatherings, more of which are now held outdoors.

"Folks just don't want people in their bathrooms, especially if they have people who are compromised health-wise, and they're willing to spend a few hundred bucks to get a nice unit," Brian says.

### CUSTOMER CARE

Although Kerry works another job, she's determined to be the face of the company. She handles most of the phone calls and customer contact. "I just think having the connection with the owner helps to build that relationship," she says. "We're not a huge company where customers are dealing with multiple people. I think it's a huge part of our success."

Contracts are simple and easy to read. "We are very transparent," Kerry says. "When I give someone a quote, it's the full price. It's not broken down by cleaning, sanitizer, waste removal." She doesn't want customers to get progressively more upset as they see an initial number escalate with additional line items. Requests are responded to quickly.

"I always set the expectation that I'll definitely get a unit to them by tomorrow. But I will try to get it out that day," she says. "That way I didn't overpromise, I overdelivered."

Kerry makes a point of listening to customers and incorporating their comments into business practices, whether it's a suggestion, a request or a

(continued)





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**Above:** Field Supervisor Joey Fritschy unwraps a hose to service a PolyJohn restroom. The truck was built out by Robinson Vacuum Tanks and uses a Fruitland pump.

complaint. When they can't fill a request, the company refers the work to one of their friendly competitors, who does the same for them. But when that happens, they also think about whether they should make some changes, as, for example, when they couldn't fulfill a request for 150 units needed for a race.

"We learned we need to keep an inventory of dedicated units to fill these events," Brian says. "That's a costly endeavor — to keep a bullpen of units that you do not release to the general public and only use for events.

But the events are very important to us." On the other hand, they've had requests for restroom trailers but don't yet feel there's enough demand to justify the cost.

As for the future, Brian hopes to add 200 to 300 units a year over the next 10 years and ultimately phase out divisions of the landscaping business. And Kerry will eventually leave Sysco and concentrate on Drop One, ensuring the growth they're planning does not come at the expense of service levels and keeping customers happy. ■

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**Left:** Fritschy loads PolyJohn restrooms onto a flatbed for delivery.



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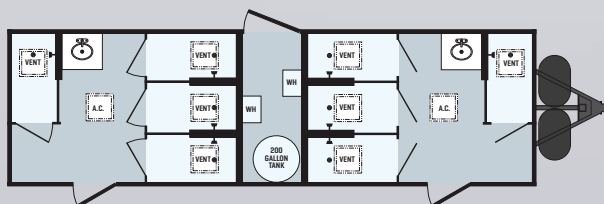


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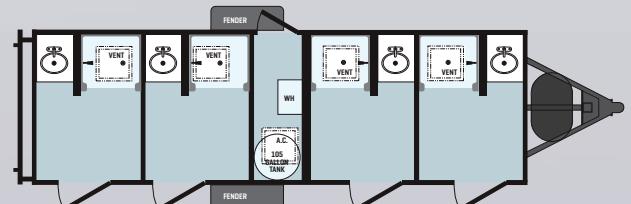
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Through economic turmoil and a pandemic, New Mexico's POTCO has always kept a laser focus on serving its customers' most pressing needs

**Above:** The POTCO crew includes, from left, James Bonnett, Patrick Gonzales, Bobby Little Bear, Joselyn Fink and Jeffrey Fink.

By Betty Dageforde

# ADAPT AND OVERCOME

**W**hen PRO first wrote about POTCO in 2007, owner Bobby Little Bear described the logistics involved in providing portable sanitation for a festival on top of a 367-foot mesa near Grants, New Mexico, as well as year-round units for mesa residents. She and her husband Jeffrey Fink had been in business only a few years, having left a busy life near Washington, D.C., where she worked as an art director, and wanting to raise their daughter Joselyn in a small town.

The following year the recession hit, construction work dried up, and the couple got a taste of what a rollercoaster ride they were on. Over the years, industries have come and gone, weather and terrain issues have challenged them, and a worldwide pandemic threw a wrench into everything.

But Little Bear and Fink have learned to take it all in stride and trust that everything will work out. "I have to find the silver lining no matter what happens," Little Bear says.

## COMPANY ASSETS

The company has 250 Satellite Industries portable restrooms, 24 EndureQuest hand-wash stations, and 12 220-gallon and 250-gallon Satellite holding tanks. Vacuum trucks include a 2007 Ford F-750 built out by West-Mark (Certified Stainless Service) with a 2,200-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater aluminum tank; two Ford F-350s, the latest built out by Best Enterprises with 600-gallon waste/125-gallon freshwater steel tanks, and a 1998 International from Progress Tank with a 2,200-gallon steel tank. All have Masport pumps.

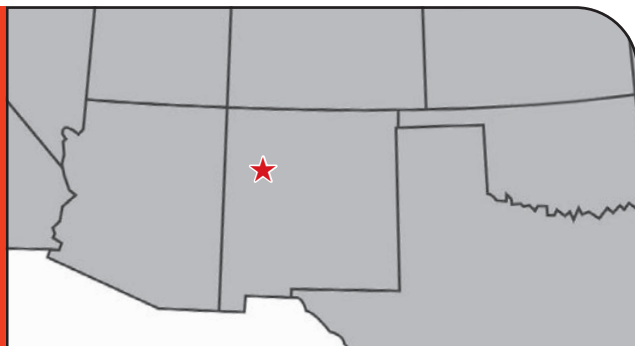
They continue to use only environmentally safe products from J&J Portable Sanitation Products and Chempace, along with Pure-Green24 disinfectant. They still store their equipment in an old carrot-packaging plant, but Little Bear now has the luxury of an office in the middle of town, away from the dirt and wind.

The team includes Patrick Gonzales (eight years) and James Bonnett (six years) who handle the portable restroom side, while Fink fo-



**"If we say we're going to be there we're there, if there's an emergency we show up. We have always bent over backwards. We're here to be a resource for the community in any way we can."**

**BOBBY LITTLE BEAR**



## **POTCO**

**Grants, New Mexico**

**Owners:** Bobby Little Bear and Jeffrey Fink

**Founded:** 2003

**Services:** Portable sanitation and septic pumping

**Service Area:** 80-mile radius

**Last Featured in PRO:** 2007

cuses on septic work. They are pros at working together on their schedules, seamlessly adding in new jobs and avoiding route backtracking. Constant communication is the key to making it all work, says Little Bear.

"The guys are absolutely amazing and we're lucky to have them. We really are doing this as a team. We're protective of our staff. They all know if the company does well they will do well. We're not millionaires, but this has been a good living for all of us."

### **CUSTOMER CHALLENGES**

The company works in an 80-mile radius of Grants (population 9,000), a high-desert town surrounded by the Cibola National Forest. Their clientele is diverse — Navajo, Zuni and Acoma Native American tribes; solar and wind farms; prisons; industrial plants; hunting camps; firefighting command stations; construction companies and event planners.

Many customers, whether in the mountains or on the desert floor, are reached only by dirt roads, often narrow. Drivers have difficulty accessing properties and are often without cellphone service in the more remote areas. The rough conditions take their toll on company trucks.

Being the only portable sanitation company in the area, they don't need to advertise. So when their webmaster went out of business, they weren't too concerned and just let the website go. But losing their email address when the internet service provider they'd had for 17 years shut down was a nightmare. "Luckily I caught wind of it and printed off my entire contact sheet," Little Bear says. "It's the only thing that saved me."

### **A REVOLVING DOOR**

When their first major construction job ended, Little Bear had a brief moment of panic. "We had everything new and shiny and branded, we were figuring out our identity, building our reputation, then that job ended and my first thought was, 'Now what do we do?' But, lo and behold, the next project opened up."

That turned out to be a recurring theme. The mesa work ended, but then they got a call from an oil refinery. Now the refineries have closed — along with

**Below:** The POTCO fleet of vacuum trucks were built out by West-Mark, Best Enterprises and Progress Tank, and all carry Masport pumps.







**Above:** Patrick Gonzales uses a Case skid-steer to move Satellite Industries restrooms, while James Bonnett looks on.

**Below:** Gonzales and Bonnett service a handicap restroom.

the power plant and coal mines — but there's talk about a hydrogen plant, a glove plant, and cannabis growing facilities. The huge bike rally is gone but the 7 Trails of Gold ATV/four-wheeler event came in. When portable restroom work declined, septic work increased. "Over the past 20 years, the one thing I found is every time we lose something, something else comes up," Little Bear says. "It always balances out."

### **TRIAGE, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION**

In 2007, septic was about 30% of the company's work, but eventually grew to 50% — until the pandemic hit and then increased to 65% as sheltering-in-place taxed people's aging systems.

"I was fielding five emergency calls every morning," Little Bear says. "I had to get enough information from everybody to triage and figure out what grandma is home with the five grandkids. They had to go first. I had to triage for the health issues and make sure we did our part to help keep everybody safe."

Not wanting to slight her maintenance customers, she was upfront with them about the situation, asking for their patience. For the first few months they worked seven days a week, eventually cutting back to six, and after two years they're finally getting their weekends back.

Little Bear beefed up customer communication during COVID. Some customers didn't want to be around people and were afraid to see them; others needed service and were afraid they wouldn't see them. All were given assurances that, yes, they were still in business — they were considered essential workers — and yes, they worked in a manner that kept everyone safe.

"The guys were so courteous and careful being on people's property and interacting with them, not upsetting anybody or getting anybody nervous," Little Bear says.



(continued)





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**Below:** POTCO created this patriotic fire truck as a parade vehicle to honor veterans, including Bobby Little Bear's father, who served in Korean War. The graphics were designed by Little Bear and painted by Jeff and Joselyn Fink.



"We really are doing this as a team. We're protective of our staff. They all know if the company does well they will do well. We're not millionaires, but this has been a good living for all of us."

**BOBBY LITTLE BEAR**

Educating customers on their septic systems also became essential, says Little Bear. "I would literally say, 'I'm going to annoy you right now but you need to hear this.'"

She sent out announcements describing the products they used and their cleaning and disinfecting process. The problems caused by wipes that people started using during the bathroom tissue shortage were so severe she changed her answering machine message to explain what should not go into a septic system — which annoyed a few people, but most were glad to learn something they didn't know.

### GO WITH THE FLOW

The company no longer works on the mesa as composting sanitation facilities have been installed. Their daughter is now working her way toward becoming an orthopedic surgeon. And Little Bear finally has some time to continue teaching a few college classes and was recently accepted into graduate school in an advanced problem-solving program.

What hasn't changed in the last 15 years is the company's commitment to providing good service and being an asset to the community. "Our stuff is clean, it's maintained," says Little Bear. "If we say we're going to be there we're there, if there's an emergency we show up. We have always bent over backwards. We're here to be a resource for the community in any way we can, not just for the restrooms or the septs."

The couple's positive attitude and adaptability have gotten them through the ups and downs over the years.

"It seems to work out for us that when one door closes, another opens," Little Bear says. "And who knows what's around the corner? You've just got to believe things are going to work out — and for 20 years now they have." ■



**Above:** James Bonnett, left, and Patrick Gonzales secure restrooms for delivery.





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# Introducing the 2022 Scholarship Winners

By Veronica Crosier



Veronica Crosier is executive director of Portable Sanitation Association International. For more information, visit [www.psa.org](http://www.psa.org).

The Portable Sanitation Association International is proud to announce the 2022 recipients (and the industry companies they represent) of the PSAI annual scholarship awards:

1. **Austin Amelse – Satellite Industries**
2. **Mendota Castonguay – Paul's Portables**
3. **Aiden McMahon – United Site Services**
4. **James Morton – Walex Products Company**
5. **Ryan Root – Luxury Restroom Trailers by Privy Chambers**

These students demonstrated achievement in academics and extracurricular involvement. They also shared thoughtful essays on the public perception of the portable sanitation industry. While this essay topic has appeared on previous scholarship applications, the responses this year were particularly interesting as applicants were able to view portable sanitation in light of a pandemic.

*"A unique occasion for the portable sanitation industry to elevate its image as a respected, necessary service became evident during Covid ... Hand-washing stations and portable restrooms became a necessity for the public ... [They] increasingly had positive daily interactions with the industry of portable sanitation."*

— **James Morton, PSAI scholarship recipient**

This mission to elevate the public image of portable sanitation has been a priority to PSAI for many years. While plenty of public campaigns have taken place to increase awareness and appreciation of portable sanitation services, one of the most successful approaches has been to influence the image from within the industry.

It is cliché but true that today's youth are already becoming tomorrow's leaders. To encourage reflection from those who see their family making a living in portable sanitation, or who are already employed in the industry themselves, is to strengthen advocacy for a vital but underappreciated necessity in public health.

The PSAI Scholarship Program made its debut 25 years ago. Since then, PSAI has awarded \$412,400 to 124 students. Education has been a core value of the association since its inception, and one of the key ways individuals benefit from membership. Employees of member companies and their

children may apply for a PSAI scholarship of up to \$5,000. Applications are submitted and scored by a professional review board from Scholarship America. Today, recipients may apply their award toward undergraduate, vocational or technical school.

PSAI hopes that whether or not scholarship recipients pursue a career in portable sanitation, they will carry a respect for what the industry offers to public health and for the impact it has had on their life and to spread that positivity to others. Indeed, it is possible the essays these students write today may have a greater impact in their life than they could even imagine.

More than a decade ago, a student wrote an essay on the global impact of portable sanitation while deciding between a degree in environmental science or geography. Today that former student is the new executive director of PSAI! Needless to say, the association eagerly looks forward to seeing where this year's recipients find themselves down the road.

Read this year's student essays and learn how to apply for the PSAI Scholarship Program by visiting [www.psa.org/scholarship-program](http://www.psa.org/scholarship-program). ■



Austin Amelse



Mendota Castonguay



Aiden McMahon



James Morton



Ryan Root



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## UPCOMING EVENTS



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# HAND-WASH EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

By Craig Mandli

## DISPENSER AND SUPPLIES

### POLYJOHN E SANISTAND

The **E SaniStand** from **PolyJohn** assembles and disassembles quickly and stores flat when it's not needed. It can be outfitted with most dispensers and is compatible with the company's PSD1-1000 liquid soap/hand sanitizer dispenser. **800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com**



## HAND SANITIZER



### SURCO PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS AIR-SCENT PURE CARE

**Air-Scent International Pure Care** hand sanitizer from **Surco Portable Sanitation Products** comes in spray, gel and foaming formulations, all of which exceed the 60% alcohol threshold. The strongest variety, **Stat80**, is an 80% alcohol spray solution, while **IPA70**

is a 70% alcohol gel solution. **Stat62** is a 62% alcohol gel solution, while the foaming variety is a 62% alcohol solution. All are available in a variety of fragrances, and contain a topical antiseptic that reduces germs, viruses and bacteria that can cause disease. They are available in 1-gallon jugs, 5-gallon buckets, 55-gallon drums and 275-gallon totes. **800-556-0111; www.airscents.com**

## HAND WASH TRAILERS

### JAG MOBILE SOLUTIONS SMART SINK TRAILER

The **Smart Sink Trailer** from **JAG Mobile Solutions** provides multiple hand-wash station access styles as well as no-hands faucet operation. They can have one to 32 hand-wash stations and can be configured to operate in temperatures from -20 to 100 degrees F. They maximize freshwater and wastewater capacity, so each trailer provides up to 7,200 hand-washes between services. Water heater operations include tankless propane, electric tank-type or both to provide hot water up to 140 degrees F in all environments and allow it to be configured for off-grid usage. **800-815-2557; www.jagmobilesolutions.com**



### RICH SPECIALTY TRAILERS 12-SINK TRAILER WITH SLEEPER ROOM

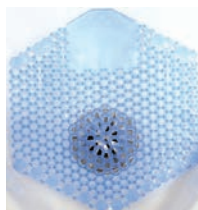
**Rich Specialty Trailers** offers a hand-washing trailer with 12 sinks and sleeper room. The 20-foot trailer has six sinks on each side to maximize room for each sink, and the mechanical room access door on the rear of the trailer. The standard 300-gallon freshwater tank allows for plenty of uses for the sinks, but if that's not enough, a 400-gallon tank is available as an upgrade. The double doors on the rear allow for plenty of room to access the mechanical room, maintain all the components of the trailer, and store electrical cords for when the trailer is not in use. Each sink has a mirror, a soap dispenser, a paper towel dispenser, and a push metered faucet or a double-handled mixer faucet. The sleeper room allows for a full-time attendant to monitor and maintain the handwashing trailer, and includes a nightstand with a full charging station. **260-593-2279; www.richrestrooms.com**

### SATELLITE SUITES SINK SUITE

The **Satellite Suites Sink Suite** serves groups of all sizes with an open, functional design and large water capacity to meet customer needs without infringing on a driver's daily routine. The 16-foot reinforced chassis allows trailering with a full fresh or graywater tank, making it easy to set-up and take down. Bulk soap and paper towel dispensers, along with push-button metered faucets, assure full days of service. It is available in three models — the Sink Suite, Sink Suite Plus and Sink Suite Deluxe. **800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com**



## PORTABLE RESTROOM ACCESSORIES/SUPPLIES



### CENTURY CHEMICAL WAVE 3D

**Wave 3D** urinal screens from **Century Chemical** offer improved splash protection while keeping odors to a minimum. Each screen controls odors for 30 days and releases more fragrance to keep the restroom smelling fresh. The design eliminates installation error and can be mounted in multiple ways without sacrificing splash-reducing performance. They have a

more open design with an increased height. Long posts on both sides and a hexagon lattice design help eliminate splashing and reduce cleaning time. Each case includes 60 screens and is available in various fragrances to match to any liquid. Individual weekly and monthly tabs help the operator know when it's time to change the screen — pull off the week and month tabs to set the reminder. **800-348-3505; www.centurychemical.com**

### J&J CHEMICAL J-LIGHT

**J&J Chemical** offers two solar-powered motion-sensor lights designed for portable restrooms. **J-Light 45** offers five bright, cool-white LEDs emitting 45 lumens with a 3.2-volt, 600 mAh rechargeable battery. **J-Light 65** has 10 bright, cool-white LEDs emitting 65 lumens with a 3.2-volt, 1,200 mAh rechargeable battery. They are easy to install and fitted with a motion sensor to activate the light and day/night sensor so they will not activate in the daylight. They switch off after 45 seconds of inactivity. **J-Light 45** requires a 1.5-inch hole, while **J-Light 65** requires a 2-inch hole. **800-345-3303; www.jjchem.com**



(continued)





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### LUNARGLO SOLAR LIGHTS

**LunarGlo** solar lights are designed to improve the user experience and make units easier to clean after dark. Life expectancy is 3-5 years. Lights provide consistent brightness from dusk to dawn and the ability to take a pressure washing day after day with

no impact on the performance. **574-294-2624; [www.lunarglo.com](http://www.lunarglo.com)**

### WALEX PRODUCTS OVATION

**Ovation** air fresheners from **Walex Products** contain odor control technology and freshening capabilities designed to last more than 30 days. The product can be used in portable restrooms, vehicles, homes, storage rooms or anywhere a boost of fragrance is needed. They are lightweight, 3.5 inches in diameter and available in three fragrances and colors: fresh/blue, citrus/orange and lavender/purple. To use the disc, tear open the package, remove the disc and pin it or hang it anywhere. If it's being placed in direct contact with surfaces that can be damaged by this contact, such as finished wood, polished surfaces and certain plastics, packages should be torn open, and the disc left in the package and placed near the source of foul odors. **800-338-3155; [www.walex.com](http://www.walex.com)**



### PORTABLE SINKS



### NUCONCEPTS HAND WASH SINKS

Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, **NuConcepts** has designed much-needed Hand Wash sink options. Besides a Deli Sink, they offer various models from 12 to 62 gallons. Sinks have a 110-volt pump, storage options, warm water tanks and solar options. **800-334-1065; [www.nuconcepts.com](http://www.nuconcepts.com)**

### T BLUSTAR RP-TWIN

The **RP-Twin** freestanding 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 filter into the second hand-wash basin. Both sinks have shelves for cellphones or keys. **404-719-0715; [www.tblustar.com](http://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; a towel dispenser; and a 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](http://www.tuff-jon.com)** ■

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## ➤ **PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT**

### **Decals provide an effective marketing tool for PROs**

By Tim Dobbins

Roeda understands the graphics you place on your restrooms, trailers and trucks are a direct representation of your business to any passerby.

"A decal is the face of your company for both current and potential customers. It's a metaphorical handshake to others," says Dom Lopez, marketing manager for Roeda. "The right decal will not only get a company recognized continuously, but also convey the right look and feel of your company."

Roeda focuses on making sure their decals look great, even after a long period of time by using long-lasting, vibrant UV inks. "Our wide range of adhesives make the decal options ideal for all uses, no matter what the decals may be going on," Lopez says. "Tough, permanent vinyls keep your decals going for as long as you need them to."

The range of vinyl options, adhesives and inks make Roeda decals suitable for portable restrooms, restrooms trailers, hand sanitizer stands, outdoor sinks and vehicles. For added protection against outdoor elements, a UV clearcoat or lamination is added.

There are two avenues customers can take when selecting their decals — custom ordering or choosing from Roeda's ready-to-ship stock decals. Products include service record decals, restroom indicators, hand sanitation decals, handicap indication and more.

Roeda decals come in a wide variety of stock UV inks but can also be printed to custom match a specific color. "Customization is incredibly easy," Lopez says. "Any custom size or shape imaginable is at the customer's fingertips."

Lopez says customization options include custom artwork, colors, sizes and shapes to best fit your company needs and the location where the decal is to be placed. "Our team of designers will work hand-in-hand with customers to create the perfect decal to represent a company how it should be," he says.

**800-829-3021; www.roeda.com ■**

### **WtW Hose Tool hose assembly tool**

The Hose Tool from WtW provides operators a safer, quicker and more efficient way to assemble hoses without pneumatic assistance. Operators have the leverage to safely and expertly repair or replace damaged collars on site locations. Serrated teeth provide extra grip, and it has fold-up arms for easy storage. Angled arms give better leverage, and it is compatible with most industrial hoses, including 3- and 4-inch hoses. **833-989-8665; www.hosetoolusa.com**



### **AirVote new generation QR smileys**

AirVote announced its new generation of QR smileys that incorporate both customer feedback and service logging. Initially, AirVote released a separate Service Log QR code for custodial teams to check off their work. Based on customer feedback, the new release combines both the customer feedback QR code with the service code. When an employee enters a PIN, the system will log the portable restroom's maintenance service activity. The same QR smiley code scanned by a different device will gather the user's feedback, pairing the service logs with customer input. **425-314-3334; www.airvote.com ■**

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## LRS acquires Wisconsin's The Country Plumber

LRS announced it has acquired the portable restroom business from Portage, Wisconsin-based The Country Plumber, a family-owned provider of portable restroom services. Financial terms were not disclosed. Founded in 1963 by Bill and Cindy DeMars, The Country Plumber has served central Wisconsin as a provider of portable restrooms, plumbing, septic installation and repair, septic and holding tank pumping, and sewer and drain cleaning. All Country Plumber employees will stay with LRS as part of the company's LRS Portables line. ■



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New Imperial 980 U.S. gallon, portable toilet service unit mounted on a 2021 Ram 5500, gasoline cab and chassis with a Masport HXL3V vacuum pump package. (Stock # 14028) [www.VacuumSalesInc.com](http://www.VacuumSalesInc.com). (888) VAC-UNIT (822-8648). (TBM)

New Imperial 1,300 U.S. gallon, portable toilet service unit mounted on a 2021 Ford F550 cab and chassis with a Masport HXL4 pump package. (Stock #13990). [www.VacuumSalesInc.com](http://www.VacuumSalesInc.com). (888) VAC-UNIT (822-8648). (TBM)

Pre-owned 1,500 U.S. gallon (500 water – 1,000 waste) carbon steel, portable toilet service unit tank with rear toilet carrier. (Stock # 1500V). [www.VacuumSalesInc.com](http://www.VacuumSalesInc.com). (888) VAC-UNIT (822-8648). (TBM)

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