

Opportunity for Success



Dennis works on the mobile drinking water system that will be used at the city of Asheville's outdoor events this summer.



West Carolina Water Treatment works primarily with residential systems, with a few light commercial and community well projects rounding out the business.

By Kate Cline & Abby Kleckler

Quality customer service, an eye toward innovation and opportunities, and the drive to improve knowledge of water quality and treatment technologies—over the years, we have seen that these are all ingredients in the recipe for success as a water treatment dealer.

Although its owners are newer to the water treatment industry—Dennis, Kathy and Tom Warwick purchased the business in 2009—West Carolina Water Treatment embraces these qualities. They are just a few of the reasons *Water Quality Products (WQP)* readers selected West Carolina Water Treatment as the winner of the 2013 Dealer of the Year award.

A Business Opportunity

The Warwicks' entry into the water industry is unique—they had been customers of West Carolina Water Treatment for 10 years when the dealership was put up for sale by former owners Jack and Joyce Brown. The family jumped on the opportunity.

Today, the mother-son team of Kathy and Dennis runs the day-to-day operations of the dealership—Kathy covering the office responsibilities and Dennis handling sales and service.

Husband Tom acts as more of a silent partner who helped make the purchase possible. Dennis noted that as the business expands, he may need to hire another service technician.

West Carolina Water Treatment's customer base is primarily residential, but it also has worked on some community/shared well projects, as well as some light commercial applications. Approximately 90% of the customer base relies on wells for its water supply, but the company has been expanding into treating more municipally sourced water. According to Dennis, the local municipal water quality is generally good, but chlorine levels seem to have risen in recent years.

Dennis also has noticed an increase in awareness of water quality over the past few years by the public and the news media. As a result, he said, people are beginning to care more about their water, which helps initiate a dialogue between dealers and potential customers.

Positive Partnerships

Since the start, the company has operated as an independent dealership, something that is important to Dennis. "By not being a franchise, I'm not locked into a particular set of products or particular marketing strategy," he

said. "Having a wide array of products at my disposal helps me face each set of challenges individually."

Although he values the freedom West Carolina Water Treatment has as an independent dealership, Dennis has kept his eye on chances to partner with other brands and companies. Recently, the company established a relationship with Hellenbrand that Dennis sees a lot of opportunity in. It will allow West Carolina Water Treatment access to the Hellenbrand product lines, while still remaining independent.

Positive relationships with suppliers and other affiliated companies are also important to the company. Dennis noted that West Carolina Water Treatment's relationship with Preferred Pump & Equipment, which supplies the equipment the dealership uses for pump control, water delivery systems and more, has been particularly helpful, especially considering the dealership's large percentage of well-using clientele.

Growing Green

The wide variety of equipment and system options available to West Carolina Water Treatment allow it to tackle the variety of water quality issues its customers face. Dennis has focused

WQP's 2013 Dealer of the Year award winner

on chemical-free systems, noting that many customers show disdain at any mention of a system involving chlorine.

"We use air as the oxidizing agent in most of our systems instead of chlorine or potassium permanganate," Dennis said. "It's a more streamlined and simplified approach to iron and sulfur treatment."

The company has found the systems to be successful, especially in nearby Asheville. "The city of Asheville is nearby and it's a very liberal, progressive city that's otherwise in a very conservative part of the country," Dennis said. "The green movement has taken hold with a lot of folks here."

Dennis foresees the popularity of chemical-free and green treatment technologies continuing to increase, especially as customer interest in treatment methods, health and sustainability continues to grow.

One such example is an initiative

that West Carolina Water Treatment is working on with the city of Asheville: a mobile drinking water system. The system, which will be used at the city's numerous summer festivals and outdoor events, was designed by the company with sustainability in mind: Not only will it help reduce waste from disposable water bottles by allowing attendees to refill cups and reusable bottles, it also will use a solar-powered pump to send water through a series of filters. Dennis intends to use Enpress filtration products in the design, and eventually hopes to incorporate an ultrafiltration component that would allow the system to be used with any water source. The containerized system was put into action at its first event on May 16.

Staying Up to Date

In addition to keeping up with new technologies, Dennis strives to stay

abreast of the latest industry trends and regulations. He predicts new regulations on water efficiency and how systems are installed, including the licensing and permitting that will be required, coming to the forefront in the next few years.

One way Dennis stays on top of the latest trends in the industry is as a member of the Water Quality Assn. In March, both Kathy and Dennis attended the WQA Aquatech USA tradeshow in Orlando, Fla.

Dealer Recognition

West Carolina Water Treatment was featured as *WQP's* Dealer of the Month in December 2013. In early 2014, *WQP* readers were asked to select one of the dealers featured in 2013 as Dealer of the Year. West Carolina Water Treatment won by a wide margin, garnering approximately 60% of the vote. For more on the dealership, visit www.wqpmag.com/

customer-dealer to read the Dealer of the Month article and www.wqpmag.com/ videos to view an interview with Dennis at WQA Aquatech USA 2014.

If you know of a dealer who you think should be featured as a Dealer of the Month, let us know—tell us about him or her via our easy-to-use nomination form, available at www.wqpmag.com/dealer-month-nomination-form. *wqpmag*

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