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- The Road to Recovery**

**Profiles in Success:
Gary Sokoloski**

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Spring 2021

Vol. 26 No. 2

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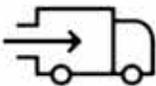


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northeastcarwasher.com

When I graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in journalism, I wanted to be the female version of Charles Kuralt. For the younger generation, he was an insightful journalist who traveled the country in search of unique stories about colorful people. He was known for his "On the Road" segments on the CBS Evening News and as the first anchor of Sunday Morning, also on that network. I wanted to meet really interesting people and tell their stories too.

Fast forward through the circuitous journey I took to get to where I am today and I get to do that albeit my "journeys" are limited to the Northeast and an occasional trade show (back when those things were possible). Over the last 30+ years in this industry, I have gotten to meet a lot of exceptional people, and for me, the quirkiest, the more layered and colorful, the better.

*Over the last several months, we have lost some truly unique and inspirational carwashers who are noted in our *Newsworthy* pages. William "Red" Lewis, the kind, innovative and self-made man who struggled to get through high school but became the industry's frictionless inbay innovator, passed away in January at 78 years old from natural causes. His impact on the industry is obvious, but his impact on his local community might have been his personal greatest accomplishment. Despite accolades from the industry, his passion for automobiles led him to founding The Automobile Gallery & Event Center in his hometown of Green Bay, WI, where his love for cars was celebrated. Please read more about Red and his journey on page 24.*

Herman Berk of Berk Supply was another great loss to our industry. He also passed in January, at 85, from COVID. Herman was one of the first advertisers in this magazine 26 years ago. He was an old-school salesman, maybe a lot "New York" on first impression, but he had a heart of gold. I attended my first Shiva when his lovely wife, Shirley, passed away in 2003. Connecticut operator Fred O'Neill and Herman's daughter, Tesa Baum, share their thoughts and the condolences of many, on page 20.

Both individuals touched many in this industry over their long and significant careers and many of you knew both men. For those of us who did, we are the better for it.

Throughout this issue you can read about other operators who are working tirelessly to leave a legacy all their own. On page 30 we have an interview with Centerline Carwash Sales and Services' Gary Sokoloski, one of our Profiles In Success honorees. Gary has also dedicated his life's work to this industry with a unique perspective and stories to share you will enjoy. He too has been a long-time contributor to this magazine and a wealth of knowledge. I thank him, admire him and consider him a true friend.

After the year we have all endured, I am even more aware of what it means to be part of this family. Yes, that's what it is. Whether it be in your own regional microcosm of carwashing, or if your reach spreads out a bit further to operators across the country, we are all family. We reach out to each other, we help each other and we grow from knowing other operators and suppliers. Please reach out to me and continue to share your stories, challenges and successes as that is what makes this magazine the gem it is.

Sending good health and much gratitude out to the carwash universe.



Suzanne L. Stansbury
Editor/Publisher

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Creative “Sticker” Advertising

If you are looking for a neat advertising idea that incorporates premier positioning consider trying a “Sticker” or “Front Page Note,” according to Tracy Paige, with *The Daily Gazette* in Schenectady, NY. The premier positioning, and eye-catching offer, is sure to bring customers in. The cost will depend on the number of zones and publications you use to get your word out, but according to Paige, who is Colonial Car Wash’s rep, this medium is a good bet no matter your industry. **NC**



WASH VOLUME INDEX

Our Wash Volume Index through January is extreme. There’s really no other way to say it. With a high in the metro Boston market of +20 to a low on the Jersey Shore of -44, weather seemed to play a big factor in the reporting. Also down was operator Steve Weekes in upstate New York, off by 3.8 percent, followed by a downturn in the Mid-Atlantic with carwasher Dave DuGoff being off by 19 percent. Here’s hoping for some stability in the coming months and a heavy, lengthy pollen season!



Thanks to operators Dave DuGoff (MD), Doug Rieck (NJ), Steve Weekes (NY) and Dave Ellard (MA) for their numbers! **NC**

Northeast Regional Carwash Convention

October 4-6, 2021

NRCC

Northeast Regional Carwash Convention

A Bright Idea



When CLEAn Express Auto Wash in Cleveland, OH, CEO John Roush and his team kick off a grand opening of one of their new washes, they identify and partner with a non-profit to help them raise awareness and much needed funds to further their mission. To learn about the company’s most recent philanthropic endeavor in South Euclid, OH, see page 12. **NC**



Seth Woodard posted this photo of an H.E.B. Car Wash and its icy manmade mitter on TalkCarWash. H.E.B. is a grocery store chain that also operates washes in Texas and New Mexico.



Thankfully, scenes like this are behind us for another year!



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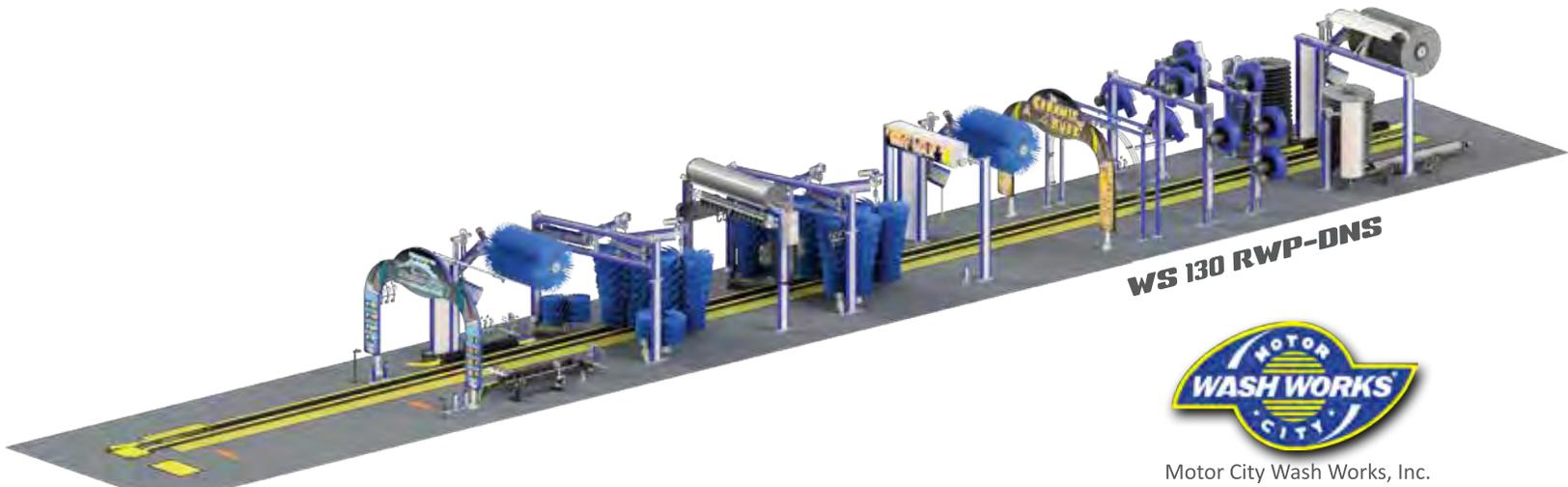
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8 Operators' Take on 2020 Book Sales

Carwash book sales used to be a nice financial boost prior to a busy winter washing season, but given the growth of club plans is that still a reality? Here's what some saavy operators have to say on the subject.



Tony Setaro, Jet Spray Car Washes, Waterbury, CT
 "We stopped selling books when we started memberships."

Paul Vallario, Westbury Car Wash, Westbury, NY



"My holiday book sales were down 42 percent from last year. I don't think it was entirely COVID-related, though. We had a better weather month last December (2019), so the carwash was busier. The gift sales are mostly impulsive so when we are washing fewer cars, we sell fewer gift cards. On the contrary, our Unlimited wash sales were up about 30 percent this December compared to last December."

Stu Markowitz, Posh Car Wash, South Amboy, NJ



"Since we went to an express exterior model, holiday book sales dropped drastically! This is due to the customer sitting in the car and not getting out."

Gary Baright, Foam & Wash Car Wash, Red Hook, NY

"We do not push book sales at the tunnel washes any more. We push the Unlimited. At our inbay sites with no Unlimited washing we sell books. We set a goal the same as the previous year and we hit it. It seems that people were not buying restaurant gift certificates as much as in the past so wash books were a good option for many people."



Ron Slone, Hoffman Development Corp., Albany, NY



"We were down 17 percent year over year."



Jeffrey Gold, Buckmans Car Wash, Rochester, NY

"Our gift sales were down slightly. I think it was primarily due to the bad carwash weather that we had leading up to the holidays. Our online sales were strong, but without the regular traffic at the carwash locations sales lagged there. Overall, holiday gift book/gift card sales were down less than 15 percent. For 2020, I'll take it!"



Dino Nicoletta, Ashbury Circle Car Wash, Neptune, NJ

"Our book sales/gift cards were down 20 percent."

Patti Kaplan, Starlite Car Wash, North Reading, MA

"Holiday book/gift card sales were down 16.5 percent. For the holiday period our car count was also down substantially vs. 2019. The decrease in book sales percent was nowhere near the drop in volume. 2020 car counts were more in line with 2018. Book/gift card sales in 2020 vs. 2018-19 were down 9 percent. In a normal world where the weather cooperates the few days before Christmas are typically huge." NC



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DOVER, OPW ACQUIRE ICS

Dover, and its OPW business unit, has acquired Innovative Control Systems, Inc. (ICS), an industry-leading provider of technology solutions for the carwash industry, according to a company press release. ICS will now become part of OPW's Vehicle Wash Solutions platform of brands, which also includes PDQ and Belanger. "We are thrilled to bring ICS into OPW's Vehicle Wash Solutions group to provide customers state-of-the-art payment terminals and point-of-sale management solutions, wash site management software and other wash equipment technologies as part of a complete vehicle wash solutions package," said Gary Campbell, vice president and general manager for OPW Vehicle Wash Solutions.

Both companies have previously partnered to develop a retrofit for PDQ's installed base of Access payment terminals at inbay automatic sites to ensure those customers have access to EMV payment solutions and ongoing Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliance. This joint product is slated to launch in early 2021.

"By joining OPW, ICS can continue to expand its customer base and partner with the Vehicle Wash Solutions brands to



bring innovative new products to market," said Kevin Detrick, founder and president of ICS. "Those ICS customers who do not use VWS equipment will continue to see our same focus on innovation and dedicated customer support. This is a great development for our business," he added.

Detrick will remain on board at ICS as vice president of Technology Strategy and Business Development. Warren Day, formerly of Honda and Danaher Corporation, will serve as the new general manager and oversee day-to-day operations. "We've got a great team and a lot of exciting projects coming down the pipeline, and with OPW's support, we will continue ICS's strong track record of delivering quality products and services to our customers around the world," said Day.

For more information visit opwws.com and icscarwashsystems.com

CLEAN EXPRESS RAISES \$8,300 FOR ARTS-INSPIRED LEARNING



CLEAn Express Auto Wash, Cleveland, OH, has donated \$8,300 to Cleveland's Center For Arts-Inspired Learning (CAL), a non-profit organization, to help further their mission of igniting student learning, creativity and success through the arts, according to a company press release. The donations were collected from CLEAn Express Auto Wash customers at the company's inaugural Grand Opening/Free Wash Week held in September, in South Euclid.

During the Grand Opening, CLEAn Express Auto Wash offered a free signature "CLEAn-est" carwash to every customer in exchange for a monetary donation to CAL. Through the Grand

Opening period, CLEAn Express Auto Wash gave away more than 3,800 free carwashes at a retail value of more than \$68,400. "During each Grand Opening we identify and partner with a local non-profit organization to help raise awareness and much needed funding to further their mission," said John Roush, Express Wash Concepts CEO. "CAL is an outstanding example of a local non-profit that quickly pivoted programming initiatives so they could still reach Cleveland-area children, and provide arts education and programming at a time where it's so desperately needed."

For more information visit cleanexpresswash.com and arts-inspiredlearning.com

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ICA LAUNCHES LEAD



The International Carwash Association (ICA), Chicago, IL, has launched an online manager-training program called LEAD, according to a company press release. The program has been tested with some of the world's leading carwash organizations and provides consistent, high-quality and carwash-specific training. The flexible learning system is meant to help carwash managers, teams and organizations succeed.

[For more information visit carwash.org](#)

DRB ADDS EVERWASH AS CERTIFIED INTERFACE



DRB, Akron, OH, a provider of software and hardware innovations to the carwash industry, has added EverWash, Inc. as a DRB Certified Interface, according to a company press release. The new integration allows critical information to flow between EverWash's mobile applications and DRB In-Bay Solutions' Unitec® brand of pay stations.

"We're passionate about helping carwash operators grow and get the most out of their assets," said Dan Pitman, President and CEO of DRB. "The EverWash integration opens up new paths for unattended carwash operators to generate revenue and consumer loyalty. The ability to offer unlimited wash plans via a mobile application is a game-changer for this segment of the carwash industry."

The DRB Certified Interface also

enhances EverWash's ability to help carwash operators grow their businesses and manage consumer behavior in the face of growing competition, said Scott Pashley, EverWash's Chief Revenue Officer. "This integration will provide the contactless solution so many consumers are looking for now while also streamlining the experience for hundreds of our wash partners and tens of thousands of member," he added.

[For more information visit drbsystems.com and everwash.com](#)

EXPRESS WASH CONCEPTS ACQUIRES MEYERS AUTO WASH SITES

Express Wash Concepts (EWC), Columbus, OH, has doubled its current Northern Ohio footprint with the acquisition of three greater Toledo Meyers Auto Wash location, according to a company press release. The acquisition brings Express Wash Concepts' overall Ohio-based portfolio to 31 locations under the following brands: central Ohio-based Moo Moo Express Car Wash, greater Dayton-based Flying Ace Express Car Wash, greater Cleveland-based CLEAn Express Auto Wash and now Toledo-based Meyers Auto Wash. "Meyers Auto Wash is an impeccable family-run business that I had the opportunity to be involved with since Day 1," said John Roush, Express Wash Concepts Chief Executive Officer. "Mark and Nikki Meyers' overall vision, impeccable track record of customer service, community involvement and their strategic locations in Maumee, Toledo and Sylvania, provide a great foundation as Express Wash Concepts expands into the Toledo market."

Express Wash Concepts is planning multiple wash expansions and will announce additional Toledo-based development sites and locations opening throughout 2021 and beyond, said the release.

[For more information visit expresswashconcepts.com](#)

EXPRESS WASH CONCEPTS ACQUIRES ULTIMATE WASH



Express Wash Concepts (EWC), Columbus, OH, has acquired Ultimate Wash in Streetsboro, OH, according to a company press release. The acquisition brings Express Wash concepts' portfolio to 33 operating locations under the following brands: Central Ohio-based Moo Moo Express Car Wash, Greater Dayton-based Flying Ace Express Car Wash, Greater Cleveland-based CLEAn Express Auto Wash and Toledo-based Meyers Auto Wash. "We are excited to join the Streetsboro community, provide career opportunities with great growth potential, and plan to invest around \$1 million to upgrade the current building and facility," said John Roush, Express Wash Concepts Chief Executive Officer. "We look forward to offering the highest quality express wash experience, excellent customer service, and the convenience and value of our Unlimited Wash Club."

The acquisition was effective on December 24, 2020.

Express Wash Concepts opened its first of four Greater Cleveland-based CLEAn Express Auto Wash locations in July 2020. Additional operating locations include South Euclid, Middleburg Heights and now Streetsboro. CLEAn Express is continuing its wash expansion with two locations currently under construction, and several upcoming groundbreaking scheduled for spring, 2021. The company is expected to be one of the largest express car wash brands in Northeast Ohio by the summer of 2021.

[For more information visit expresswashconcepts.com](#)

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NCS RECAPITALIZES WITH BERKSHIRE PARTNERS



National Carwash Solutions (NCS), Grimes, IA, a provider of carwash equipment, services and solutions has entered into a recapitalization transaction with Berkshire Partners, a Boston-based investment firm that has made more than 130 private equity investments since its founding more than 30 years ago. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed, according to a company press release.

NCS goes to market with brands including MacNeil Wash Systems, Ryko Solutions, Clean-Touch Cleaning Solutions, Cleaning Systems Inc., TSS Car Wash Services and Vacutech. "We are excited to collaborate with Berkshire Partners in the next chapter of our growth," said Michael Gillen, NCS CEO.

Berkshire Partners is also excited about the new recapitalization,

according to Managing Director Larry Hamelsky. "NCS has built a unique and compelling position in the industry, as we share the team's vision of delivering superior value to carwash operators by providing an integrated, end-to-end suite of products and solutions."

For more information visit ncswash.com and berkshirepartners.com

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NCS PARTNERS WITH CSI

National Carwash Solutions (NCS), Grimes, IA, provider of carwash systems, cleaning solutions and maintenance services, has partnered with Cleaning Systems, Inc. (CSI), DePere, WI, manufacturers of the Lustra Professional Car Care Products line, according to a company press release. “We are constantly searching for strong strategic partners willing to join the NCS family,” said Michael Gillen, NCS CEO. “CSI and its family of brands, led by Lustra, is an absolutely perfect fit with our brand portfolio.”

CSI works with a variety of customers in commercial and industrial applications. “National Carwash Solutions was the clear choice as our strategic partner in terms of continuing our vision of being the industry leader in satisfying customer needs for clean and shiny vehicles,” said CSI CEO Dave Krause. “Only NCS has the brands, the proactive strategy, and the market leadership that will drive our business to even higher levels,” noted Krause. Added Doug Marquis, CSI’s Vice President, “The future is extremely bright, and our organization is well positioned to meet all the needs of a rapidly developing carwash market.”

[For more information visit ncswash.com](http://ncswash.com)
[and cleaningsystemsinc.com](http://cleaningsystemsinc.com)

SONNY'S NAMES INSTRUCTOR & ROOKIE OF THE YEAR RECIPIENTS



Luis Hernandez has been named 2020 CarWash College Instructor of the Year, according to a company press release. He was presented with the Shawn R. Brown Award for Instructional Excellence by Paul Fazio, CEO of Sonny’s Enterprises LLC, Tamarac, FL.

“Luis epitomizes what CarWash College is about,” said Bob Fox, VP of CarWash College. “He loves sharing the knowledge he has accumulated in his 20-plus year carwash career with newer entrants to the business. He is at his happiest when he is helping people.”

The Shawn R. Brown Award for Instructional Excellence is given annually in memory of Shawn Brown, a former CarWash College instructor whose life was cut tragically short.

The CarWash College’s “Rookie of the Year” award was presented to Mike Berlin of SLAM CarWash Marketing. “Mike was hesitant at first about teaching, but once he got his feet wet, he

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Newsworthy ... continued

was off and running,” added Fox. “His two sessions in Management Class are very popular with the students.”

For more information visit sonnydirect.com/sonnydirect/en/abt_car_wash_news or sonnydirect.com

SONNY'S TO ACQUIRE LONE STAR CAR WASH SYSTEMS

Sonny's Enterprises, Tamarac, FL,

has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Lone Star Car Wash Systems of Texas, according to a company press release. “Our proposal to acquire Lone Star was an easy decision because it allows us to scale up our ability to service clients in Texas faster than ever before,” said Paul Fazio, CEO of Sonny's. This is one of several acquisitions the company has made in recent months.

For more information visit sonnydirect.com

SPLASH ACQUIRES NEW LOCATIONS



Splash Car Wash, Milford, CT, has acquired Eco Car Wash with two locations in Plattsburgh, NY, and Williston, VT, according to a company press release, as well as Westport Wash & Wax in Westport, CT. The two Vermont sites operate as express exteriors and were owned and operated by Aaron Vincelette who will remain with Splash to assist in adding new locations in the region. “We're so excited to have a great operator like Aaron join our team,” said Mark Curtis, CEO of Splash Car Wash, Inc. “His knowledge of the area, coupled with his carwash experience, makes him the perfect person to partner with in this region.

“We're also excited to add team members Steve Gainer, and general managers Sean O'Brian and Wascar Hernandez,” added Curtis. Gainer will oversee the two locations and the additional sites Splash acquires and develops.

Westport Wash & Wax is a full-service tunnel.

Splash partnered with the investment firm Palladin Consumer Retail Partners, a Boston-based private equity firm, in November of 2018. It currently operates 27 carwash tunnels in Connecticut, New York and Vermont.

For more information contact Mark Curtis at mark@splash1.org

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systems announced that RKU Standard Incorporated, under the direction of Rob and Kathleen Unterborn, has purchased Standard Change-Makers, Inc. from the McNutt family. The sale took effect on February 1, 2021.

The company was founded in 1955 by James R. McNutt, Sr. In 1992, Jim McNutt, Jr. took over as President/CEO. Rob Unterborn, the new owner, served as the company's Vice President/CFO since 2016 before becoming the COO in 2018. "It is very important to us that the company be run by an ownership group with a family focus, and not be sold to corporate interests," said Jim McNutt, Jr. "The new ownership should be people that believed in the products and wanted to continue to build on the foundations that we have always worked hard to maintain.

"I'm excited for Standard that Rob and Kathleen have that kind of focus and that the company will be in good hands."

[For more information visit standardchange.com](http://standardchange.com)

SCWA CHANGES SHOW DATE TO JUNE



The Southwest Car Wash Association (SCWA) board of directors has pushed its 2021 SCWA Convention & Car Wash EXPO date from February out to June 9-11, according to an association press release. The event will be held at the Fort Worth Convention Center in Fort Worth, TX. The decision to move the dates was made after careful consideration of the current COVID situation and evaluating the factors that will exist over the next 60-90 days, stated the release. The SCWA Board believes that getting through the winter; the flu season; and the rollout of the vaccine

will provide a safer and larger attended event for everyone to enjoy.

According to SCWA President Jeff Blansit, "We are excited that moving the Convention & EXPO dates to June 9-11 will still make SCWA the first big carwash show of the year and deliver the opportunity for exhibitors and carwash owners to connect in a safe and comfortable environment. The popular SCWA Experience is very well known and we want to make sure that unique experience is available to an even larger carwash community."

[For more information and to register visit swcarwash.org](http://swcarwash.org)

Continued...

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A REMEMBRANCE OF HERMAN BERK

It is with great regret that I announce the passing of Herman Berk on January 1, 2021. He was 85. I first met Herman more than 38 years ago as I was opening my first wash. Frankly, he intimidated me. He was very high energy and direct, in a true New Yorker kind of way. But I came to truly like him and built a long, friendly relationship. Over the next 40 years I bought countless rollers, miles of chain and thousands of other items too numerous to name from him. Herman would call me up, out of the blue, asking, "Do you need anything," "how is business?" I am convinced that if I asked him to get me a purple elephant he would have found one and claimed he was giving it to me at a great price. Herman and his brother Robert, (Robert is still operating Berk Supply in the Bronx) became fixtures in the industry. Herman spent more than 50 years in the carwash industry. I remember Herman and his beloved wife Shirley at many International Carwash Association (ICA) and local shows.

I remember that Herman was devastated when Shirley passed away. They were true life partners.

In these last few years, I became more of a friend to Herman than a customer. Occasionally, I would wander up to his home in Brookfield, CT, for lunch. I came to appreciate what a traveled, smart, complex guy he was. He was a hysterical story teller. We talked about the carwash industry, of course, but more often than not about our kids, his grandchildren, his wife Shirley, Broadway shows and life in NYC, where he lived for many years.

Herman shared with me that he became a Marine corpsman and during his time in the service, mostly because the duty allowed him, he played baseball at his base. Apparently, he fainted the first time he witnessed a baby being born but later in his corpsman career he helped deliver twins. Herman was grateful never to have had to serve in a combat situation.

Paul Fazio told me his dad (Sonny) and Herman were fierce competitors in the beginning, but they not only grew to respect one another but became close personal friends spending time together with their wives enjoying shows, dining out and most importantly talking about their love of the carwash industry.

I would tease Herman all the time about getting a computer. He refused to get one! As he put it, "I am not starting up with that." I can not count how many times my bookkeeper would bring me one of Herman's handwritten invoices with the words, "What is this? Can you read this?" I am convinced no one but Herman could read his writing.

The week before he passed away I called him to say "Hello," and to ask him a question on something unimportant but just to catch up. He told me he was in the hospital with a health issue, but that didn't matter, "Do you need anything, how can I help? Don't worry, I am still working and will get anything you need right away." Although I was surprised he was hospitalized, I was not surprised he was still working. Sadly, the following week I called him to see how he was doing and his brother Robert answered the phone to deliver the sad news.



Herman Berk lived a wonderful life. He was sharp and active to the very end. He loved and was loved by his family and friends. He truly loved the carwash industry. I am honored to have known him and to have been considered a friend. Herman was a 'one of a kind guy' I will deeply miss. Paul Fazio put it best, "Herman's passing feels like an era has passed into history. My Dad (Sonny) and Herman were men whose word was their bond and cherished their friends and family with all their hearts." Paul and I shared a laugh that Herman and Sonny are both now with their beloved wives, having a glass of wine and talking about the carwash industry. Rest in Peace Herman and bravo to a life well lived!!!!

-Fred O'Neill, Fred's Car Wash, Westport, CT

It is with great sorrow I let everyone know that my dad, Herman Berk, succumbed to COVID-19 on January 1, 2021. As you all can imagine, he put up a valiant fight but chose to leave on his own terms. He may have survived, but just did not want to fight anymore. He is now back with the love of his life, Shirley. As we all know, my dad was one of a kind and to paraphrase Frank Sinatra, he did everything his own way.

My dad grew up in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn, with his younger brother Robert, mother Rose, and father Harry. His house was always full of family and friends while he was growing up. He had a lot of friends and as you can imagine, he was always looking out for the underdog. And, even though he was not Italian, he loved the Italians in the neighborhood and many of them were his closest friends. When he was 19, my dad enlisted with the Marines and got as far as boot camp. While in boot camp he played a lot of baseball and was also assigned to be a medic. He even helped deliver twins. Everything always sounded like an adventure. Fortunately, he never had to serve because the Korean War ended before he was called into action.

Shortly after my parents got married, my grandfather and father started Berk Tool and Vacuum Company. Robert joined the business shortly thereafter. However, this was not the first time that my dad and grandfather worked together. When my father was growing up he would often be coerced to work with his father in the carnival business.

My dad gave his all to the family business. My dad would spend the next 50 years of his life in the carwash industry, literally working up until the last time he went to the hospital (and even working when he was in short-term rehab). He lived for his work and loved everyone in the industry.

My dad loved the years he spent with my mother. When she passed at 63 my dad's heart was broken. He lived in Manhattan for six years after my mother died and eventually moved to Connecticut to be near me and my daughters. My dad was a great father and grandfather. He was involved with everything my sister and I did. I remember him being the one who I confided in



Herman and his beautiful wife Shirley, who predeceased him in 2003.

for everything. He knew how to get to the heart of everything. He cared about who my friends were and always wanted to know what my daughters were doing every day.

On New Years Eve, he called me to tell me he wanted to pack it in. Unfortunately, we had to say our goodbye on a Zoom call because I was not allowed in the hospital. He didn't want to struggle anymore. He enjoyed his last meal and told us he couldn't have asked for a better life. He was very content and was filled with love. I promised him that he would be greeted by my mother and all of his relatives. He said I hope so and then quoted my grandfather and said, "See you down the line." I told him he gave me so much and he knows it. Thank you all for giving my dad a wonderful 50 years. This industry was his second family.

-Tesa Baum, Herman Berk's daughter

I was extremely touched to receive this email from Paul Fazio, the son of Sonny Fazio, after he learned of my dad's passing.

"Herman was indeed one of a kind — and an icon in the industry. Old school. A handshake with Herman was better than

Herman and his granddaughter Harley.



(L to R) Granddaughter Avery Baum, Herman, Harley Baum, and David and Tesa (Berk) Baum.



Herman, center, enlisted in the Marines at 19.



Herman and his granddaughter Avery at meal time and play time.



any contract. He had more relationships in this industry than you could possibly count. Over the decades Herman was there for his clients — carrying them through bad times when needed.

Sonny made it clear to me that Herman was family and that I was to make sure he was treated as such. I think dad knew I already knew that, but he wanted to make that clear. For me

Continued ...

Newsworthy ... *continued*

personally the call yesterday hit me hard. Herman was one of the last of the guys that I grew up under in this industry that I came to respect and love. It is guys like your father that taught me how to work hard, that your word was everything, that relationships matter, that you do what you said you would — period!

As I write this, I am looking at a picture of our dads standing together with their arms on each other's shoulders with big smiles on their faces. Like you, I believe our dads have reunited with their wives and other loved ones from the past. I also hope that Herman and Sonny once again can stand together and have another laugh as they tell more carwash stories to each other. Please know that the thoughts and prayers of the Fazio family are with you.

Mr. Berk – Thank you for helping to make me the man I am today.”

Paul Fazio, Sonny's, Tamarac, FL

I was so stunned to hear of Herman's passing. Herman was a dear friend and when I heard it was from COVID-19 my first thought was that I prayed he wasn't along when he passed. We spoke often about the next "deal," who was doing what, what could we do for each other and on and on. We shared personal stories about family, aging, business, health and anything else two older guys could chat about. I really loved him and our times together. We had spoken just days before he passed. He never said he wasn't feeling well.

I think Herman and I have known each other for all the years he has been in the carwash business. My Uncle Bill Thacher was a friend of Hermans and that is how we got to know one another. I will really miss our calls, the lack of email, the use of the fax machine and all those other antiquated ways of communicating. Even now I am smiling just thinking of the way he would always answer the phone, "Herman." It always brought a smile.

I want his family to know that Herman will be sorely missed. He was one of a kind — thoughtful, generous and a person in which I was hoping to have many more chats. Herman is up there looking down on us; you left too soon. God bless you!”

-Fred Grauer, Executive VP NBD, Vacutech LLC

Some Additional Tributes

I've had the privilege of working with Herman for several years at Sonny's. He is one of the greatest minds I've ever known. He was honest, straightforward and to the point. He took his work seriously! My condolence!! He will be missed by all!

-King Jaffe Joe

My condolences. I used to talk to your Dad often and enjoyed our talks ... I work at Sonny's. He was sharp as a tack and knew his stuff. RIP, Herman. I admire you, my friend.

-Jennifer Stewart

If you have a few years in the industry, especially in the Northeastern U.S. you probably met, spoke to, or did business with Herman Berk (Berk Sales). Herman and I became

good friends. He was unique, but I always got a more than fair deal. Great price and service. Cloth, chain and rollers. Any part, any manufacturer even at 10 at night. If the part did not work or you were not 100 percent happy he paid the freight, and would send for pick up. He would call five times to see if you were happy. Old-fashioned customer service with 50 years in the carwash industry. I was first texted by my boss Gary Dennis, then spoke with Robert his brother. And later received a text from his daughter, Tesa Baum. He loved them all and spoke of them often.

--Carlis Baker

Well said, Carlis. I am saddened to hear of Herman's passing. My first interaction with him in 1996 was just as memorable as the last time I spoke with him. Truly a unique gentleman. Always willing to assist day or night even if it meant "I am only making a small percentage, but I want your business." Thoughts and prayers to his family.

Peter LaRoe

See you later, Herman. It was an honor and privilege to have known you.

*-Chip Hackett, Luis Sanchez,
Alec Adams, Daniel McCullum*

I knew Mr. Berk for many years in this industry. He was a gentle soul. I remember his father who was active in the business into, I think, his 90's. I had great respect for the family, especially Mr. Herman. We worked well together. Rest In Peace, Mr. Berk!

-Leverne Merchant Puskar

Very sad... an industry icon lost. I've known Herman for more than 30 years. Always kind and professional. Thoughts and prayers for him and his family.

-Ron Campagna Jr.

OMG, that's so horribly sad to hear. I've done business with Herman for more than 13 years and he was always fair, and just a genuinely nice person. Other suppliers could do themselves a favor and take some lessons on how he operated his business. He will be dearly missed. Prayers for him and his entire family.

-Steve Benish

RIP herman, just a true, caring person who truly took care of his customers.

-Mike Cattell

A true icon in the carwash industry. May he Rest In Peace.

-Juliette Silver

A huge thanks to all for sharing their thoughts and memories of Herman Berk. He will always hold a special place in my heart. Sending my deepest condolences to his entire family.

-Suzanne Stansbury

Continued...

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INDUSTRY LEGEND “RED” LEWIS REMEMBERED

William “Red” Lewis, the father of touchless carwashing and Green Bay, WI, philanthropist, died on January 7 of natural causes at his home in Lawrence, WI. He was 78.

Lewis, who struggled yet graduated from Premontre High School in 1960 built an amazing legacy through hard work and sheer determination. Noted as the “father of touchless carwashing,” his first foray into carwashing began as an attendant at PDQ Car Wash in Green Bay. By 1967, he had worked his way up to manager. In 1974, he purchased the wash.

In the early 1980’s the carwash industry was struggling to develop a frictionless carwash. Lewis met up with an engineer from New Zealand, Allen Jones, who had developed the Laserwash system but needed help bringing it to market. Lewis and Charlie Lieb partnered with Jones to develop and patent key pieces of equipment that would be manufactured by PDQ Manufacturing, which Lewis founded in 1984. The rest is history. In 1998, Jones, Lewis and Lieb sold PDQ Manufacturing to Dover Corporation, its current owner.

In addition to his carwash innovations, Lewis had a passion for automobiles and founded The Automobile Gallery & Event Center in Green Bay in 2016. According to Jeff Mirkes, Executive Director of Downtown Green Bay, Inc., “Red was a wonderful philanthropist and kind-hearted soul. He



William “Red” Lewis showing off a 2020 Ford GT on display at The Automobile Gallery in downtown Green Bay, WI. Photo courtesy of Jeff Mirkes, Executive Director of Downtown Green Bay, Inc.



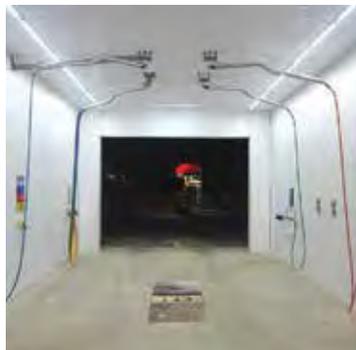
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"Red" Lewis, far right, poses for a photo with the Downtown Green Bay, Inc. staff at The Automobile Gallery. Photo courtesy of Jeff Mirkes, Executive Director of Downtown Green Bay, Inc.



will be missed but remembered always.”

In addition to many awards and accolades, Lewis served on the International Carwash Association Board of Directors and received its highest honor, The Hall of Fame Award, in 2000. According to his obituary, however, the award that touched him the most was receiving the Founders Award presented by Notre Dame de La Baie Academy, formerly Premontre High School, in 2010.

In lieu of floral arrangements, donations may be made to The Automobile Gallery Foundation for the establishment of the Wm. “Red” Lewis Scholarship (The Automobile Gallery, 400 South Adams St., Green Bay, WI 54301). A celebration of life is being planned for the summer.

In Remembrance

My friend and mentor, Red Lewis, passed away recently. I first met Red in the early 80's. We became fast friends. In 1985, Red recruited me to move to Green Bay to help him and his partner, Forrest Burton, with a new equipment company they were starting. That company was called PDQ Manufacturing. The rest, of course, is history.

Red was a visionary and by that I mean he could see the future of the carwashing industry before anyone else could. The frictionless cleaning products that PDQ built and offered, including the Laser 4000, were ahead of their time.

My memory and the stories I recall during that period could fill a book. RIP, my friend. You will be missed.

-Stuart Levy, President, CleanCar-Consulting, West Palm Beach, Florida

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COVID-19's Second Winter – The Road to Recovery

By Alan M. Petrillo

Carwashing took a big hit in volumes during 2020 because of shutdowns and limitations forced on the industry by various Northeast and Mid-Atlantic state governments attempting to cope with the Coronavirus Pandemic. Depending on the state in which you operate, business suffered for at least two quarters, and typically more. But most carwash operators are optimistic for 2021, looking to get back to volumes they saw in 2019 and earlier.

ic and self-service Hoffman Car Washes, and Jiffy Lube locations in upstate New York, says that overall, carwash volumes were off around 13 percent in 2020, with the full-service segment of the business being down slightly more. Slone pointed out that as volumes drifted lower, his company adjusted its staffing when and where necessary, but did not reduce its hours of operation.

For 2021, Slone says, “At the moment, we are forecasting our exterior volumes to return to normal with interior cleaning volumes still not back to pre-COVID levels for at least the first half of the year.”

Dino Nicoletta, owner of Asbury Circle Car Wash in Neptune, NJ, has side-by-side tunnels for conveyORIZED hand washing and express exterior washes, as well as a three-bay detailing shop and a lube.

“Last March when the state said we were not allowed to touch a vehicle, we had to close the hand wash,” Nicoletta said.

Ron Slone, president of Hoffman Development Corp., which has 30 full service, express exterior, inbay automat-



The newest Hoffman Car Wash in Latham, NY, is a 160-foot express exterior. Overall, the company's volume is down about 13 percent over its 30 sites.





New Jersey's Asbury Circle Car Wash boasts a hand wash tunnel and an express. Owner Dino Nicoletta has been able to keep all his employees on the payroll.

stagnant, probably because we've only had one snowfall thus far this year."

Mark Curtis, chief executive officer of Splash Car Washes, which has 27 hand wash, full service, express exterior, inbay automatic, self service, detailing and Jiffy Lube locations in Connecticut, New York and Vermont, says the full service side of carwashing took the brunt of the lack of business.

"Full-service carwashing continues to struggle to get back to where it was, although it is improving," Curtis observed. "The second quarter of 2020 really hurt us, then in the third quarter things started coming back, but the fourth quarter saw another surge in the virus which affected full service again."

Curtis noted that January 2021 volume looks to be similar to that in January 2019.

Continued ...

"Once we were able to reopen, customers were leery about us getting into their cars, so we did strictly exterior and towel dried at the exit. By June, when the state allowed full-service carwashing, we found a disinfectant spray that we put into paint guns and fogged a car's interior before allowing our employees to clean the interior."

During the shutdown, Nicoletta kept all 23 of his employees on the payroll for a minimum amount of pay, and didn't do any layoffs.

While Asbury Circle isn't disinfecting interiors any more, a lot of his customers switched over to exterior washes. "Those customers not comfortable with letting us in their cars are going through our exterior tunnel, so much so that our exterior business jumped up about 15 percent," Nicoletta observed. "I don't think that 2021 volumes will be close to our 2019 winter volume. The early numbers are definitely down and things have been pretty



Magic Wash in Manahawkin, NJ, is suffering from a three-legged stool, according to owner Doug Rieck - consumers sheltering in place, a fear of spending money and a lack of good carwashing weather.



Splash's Mark Curtis says his January 2021 volume is comparable to that of January 2019. He remains bullish on a strong recovery.



The newest Triple Play Car Wash in Massachusetts was able to open during the Pandemic. See related feature on page 76.

“I think we’ll be a little bit behind in January, a little bit less in February, and a little less again in March, then see an improvement for the rest of the year,” he predicted. “We continue to see an increase in the use of our unlimited program, and think more people understand its value and that’s increasing our numbers.”

Doug Rieck, owner of two Magic Wash Car Wash locations in New Jersey, thinks that every carwash in the state finished 2020 down in volume compared to 2019, estimating that his business dropped 25 percent.

“It’s like a three-legged stool that’s combining to hold carwashing down,” Rieck said. “People sheltering in because of COVID-19, people afraid to spend money, and the weather. The numbers for January 2021 are still down, and I think 2021 volumes will mirror those of 2020, and may even be lower. However, we are adding vacuums and an inbay automatic this summer, so I think we will be able to bounce back.”

Dave Ellard, co-owner of two Triple Play Car Wash locations, a 150-foot flex-service tunnel, a 50-foot touchless in bay automatic, six-bay detailing center, three-bay quick lube center, Mobil gas station, and convenience store, and a new 120-foot express exterior tunnel, said that while the full-service portion of the business is down in volume, his overall business continues to be healthy.

“We have seen a drop in gasoline sales, in detailing, and full-service carwashing, but exterior carwashing has had the least impact,” Ellard noted. “We expect things to continue to improve in 2021.”

Todd Davy, senior vice president of sales for DRB, Akron, OH, believes that advances in contactless payment, pay stations, and not having to interact with customers was a big help in assisting carwash operators through the pandemic shutdowns and limitations.

“We are seeing a lot of operators improving the systems they have,” Davy pointed out, “by adding pay stations or focusing on improving their mobile app for a better customer experience. There’s a renewed focus on vehicle recognition, through

RFID tags, license plate scanning, or other computer vision techniques because it’s important that you know every customer who comes to your site so you can improve the experience for them.”

Al West, Northeast Sales Manager for Simoniz USA, Bolton, CT, said he has a lot of respect for the various carwash associations in the Northeast for putting in an impressive amount of work to find ways to help operators and the industry prove that carwashing is an essential service.

“As carwashes were reopening last year, the volume started coming back on express-exterior washes and in-bays, but not so much on full service,” West recounted. “People were reluctant to go back to full service, so those operators realized they had to offer express exterior washes in order to keep business rolling.”

West pointed out that the COVID-19 virus forced carwash owners to learn how to operate with fewer people, and caused many operators to stagger their employees’ hours to reflect reduced hours of operation.

“Our company expects 2021 to be a great year,” West said. “Operators have learned a lot, they found out that leaner works, and they are very resilient in finding ways to improve business while working under these new standards. Many operators are pushing heavily into technology for contact-free transactions, and we expect that trend to continue through the year.”

A Slow Ride Back

But despite the efforts to provide a contactless experience, consumers are still struggling with their “new normal,” said Nicoletta. He believes that people are just out of their routine.

“A mom would drop the kids off at school, stop at the grocery store, and then get her car washed,” he said. “Now, with things so fluid with schools and work, people are not in their routine any more, which is throwing a lot of businesses off.”

“Carwashing isn’t a priority now,” he said. “When the car gets dirty with road salt, they’re coming in, but the usual weekly or bimonthly customers are waiting.”

Slone noted that Hoffmans has not seen any concrete evidence of its customers being afraid to have their vehicles washed, however.

“Many have expressed appreciation for the steps we have taken to ensure their visit is safe,” he said. “Our customers certainly are driving fewer miles, which means they need to wash their vehicles slightly less frequently.”

Curtis thinks that between 15 and 20 percent of the population is nervous about going out, even on a limited basis. “But I’m the eternal optimist, and like to believe that gaining immunity by being infected or getting the vaccine will mean that more people will decide it’s safe to venture out again,” he said. **NC**

Alan M. Petrillo is a Tucson, AZ-based journalist, a former upstate New Yorker, and contributing editor of Northeast Carwasher. He’s the author of the historical mysteries, Full Moon and Asylum Lane, and his latest historical thriller, A Case of Dom Perignon, all available at www.amazon.com

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Profiles in Success

An Interview with Gary Sokoloski



Gary Sokoloski next to his favorite winter vehicle on Sabbattus Lake in Sabbattus, ME. He calls it his 2,000 acre backyard!

NC When did your passion for carwashing begin? Was it when you were an attendant (scrub technician) at Walpole Carwash in Massachusetts in 1985?

GS: It was a couple of years prior to starting at Walpole Carwash. My older brothers worked there but, I was not allowed to start until I was in high school. I can still remember the day the owner dropped my brother off from work one afternoon and she said, “When do I get my hand on this one?” I was all in.

NC: From there, tell us about your progression to where you are today.

GS: It started on a sunny day in June in 1985, when I started at the local carwash. I had the bus driver drop me off at the wash, so I did not miss that extra hour of work by going home and getting my bike to ride there. I rode my bike on the weekends, and in the summertime. It was a two-bay ROBO touchless automatic carwash that was built in the 60’s, an inverted L machine that did not measure the vehicle or use an aerated presoak. It just went around the bay in circles spraying water trying to rinse the car off. Hence, my start in the business as a Scrub Technician. If we were not prepping cars, we were fixing the carwash.

I distinctly recall the three different service companies that we used at the carwash and how cool it must be going around fixing and installing carwashes. One of the techs came on a Harley-Davidson with a pipe bender in the saddle bag. He was gruff, but knew his stuff. The other was an elderly man in a beat up van. Unfortunately, that man sold us a cloth rollover. We went from prepping cars and fixing the wash to prepping cars, fixing the

wash, and fixing all the cars it damaged. The last was a man in an El Camino who just came and worked.

After High School I went to work for the electrician who did work at the wash. He, unfortunately, went out of business a couple of years later when the housing market crashed. At that point, in 1990, the real estate market was bust, and interest rates were at 20 percent, so there was no electrical work to be found. I decided to open a lawn care business in 1990 to get by. Keep in mind that I was still working at the carwash on weekends and doing repairs there the whole time.

In 1994 the owner of the wash decided to upgrade the old equipment and I was charged with “getting things ready” for them to come and replace our two self-serve bays. This was my job interview. After a 12-hour day removing and replacing the equipment, the owner of the company, with chemical in the bed of his El Camino, showed up to get the equipment running. After that, I was the newest employee and forth member of this small company that was putting in these “New” touchless inbay carwashes all over New England and Eastern New York working out of “The Barn.”

In 1998, after massive growth and moving up through the company I become the service/installation manager. There just was not enough there for a service person at that time. And instead of focusing on the service that had brought us there, the mindset had changed to sales, at any cost.

That is when I started my own service company. I sold rebuilt equipment and found replacement parts through this small company called Washworld that was just getting started themselves. I then went to work with the distributor of a different manufacturer who had just come out with



The Profile in Success honoree at Bubble King Car Wash in Plainville, MA.

their own version of a touchless inbay automatic. Things went well at the beginning, but neither the partnership nor manufacturer lived up to expectations.

In 2001, after some changes in management at my original employer, I agreed to go back to work for them as a salesman. Soon after rejoining it was clear there was still much to be done on the service side of the business, and I was made the operations manager. They decided to change management again to grow the business. Then the first call came that, "We were broke and getting bought by another distributor." After four very trying years of being the biggest distributor around, I got a second call that we were going out of business.

In 2008, I went to work with the Washworld distributor in New England. We spent four years together and decided it was best to part ways since he was a tunnel guy, and I was an inbay guy. There was no sense in running two different companies under one roof.

Since 2012, I have been the sole proprietor of Centerline Carwash Sales and Service. We service, install, provide cleaning solutions, and sell equipment to the carwash industry in New England and Eastern New York (sometimes central NY and Pennsylvania). By some measures we are a small company. By other measurements we are one of the largest companies in the marketplace.

So, on a sunny day in June of 2020, I went back to Walpole Carwash and removed everything carwash from the site and threw it in a dumpster. After decades without a lease on the property, and no clear way forward to improve the site, the second-generation owner decided to retire and close this local landmark. Interesting how the circle of life forms. It all fit in two 30-yard and one 15-yard dumpsters.

NC: You are currently one of the most talented and sought after service technicians in the Northeast. What does it take to do your job so proficiently?

GS: Thank you for that comment, Suzanne. I feel like it comes down to "knowing the answer" and not worrying too much about the "question." If you made it work once, you can make it work again. Everything comes down to the order of operations, after all.

While some look at equipment as a bunch of pieces and parts that are individual, the key is to look at every bay as a whole and to know how it is supposed to run so when it decides not to, you can find that piece of the puzzle that is causing the problem.

Be it electrical, mechanical, plumbing or environmental there is always a reason why things changed. The only exception I have found to this rule is the "New Release" they send to you from the factory and hope you can make it work in the field.

Or, it might have been that day in 1995 when I was on the pay phone (before cell phones) across the parking lot from a wash in New Hampshire, in the middle the winter, that was having an intermittent issue. The person I was talking to from tech support told me, "You're either lying to me or you don't know what you're talking about." It turned out to be a faulty proximity switch that was causing the problem. That day I found out I was not lying, and I did know what I was talking about. Order of operations.

Thankfully, that individual works for Washworld now and we have become good friends over the years and even found out we share the same birthday.

Continued ...

NC: How has the job changed over the last decade?

GS: Facetime. I was in my office with our chemical rep back in the early 2000's and said to him, "If only I could see what the person on the other end of the phone was looking at, I could fix it. We can do that now and can look at the equipment as if we were on site."

NC: With the advent of more technology and computerization in the wash, is it more of a challenge or easier to maintain equipment today?

GS: Easier. They have developed software and automation that not only has the programming for the order of operations for equipment, but they can ignore inputs that previously would have caused faults. If I cannot connect to it with my smart phone, I do not want to work on it anymore.

NC: Have you ever owned a wash or have any desire to do so?

GS: No, I always felt it put the marketplace out of balance for a distributor to run a retail wash. It is in my retirement plan.

NC: What would you tell your 25-year-old self if you had the chance?

GS: Go to bed and get some rest.

NC: Looking into your crystal ball, where will the industry be in 20 years?

GS: I know this will not be a popular response to all you carwashers out there, but I see the advent of automobile technology with self-cleaning paint surfaces. We may also see massive conservation issues be it water, electricity or even natural gas and oil that will push the industry to new methods. These may include an electromechanical or steam washing system. Who knows, someone might invent a carwash that fits in your garage and cleans your car overnight as you sleep and charges it at the same time.

NC: There is good, bad, and ugly in everything. What is good, bad, and ugly with this industry?

GS: Good - The owners, operators, technicians and manufacturers who put all they have (literally) into this industry to create a business and have a great product to provide to their customers while making a good living for themselves.

Bad - Those operators who do not clean their bays. A clean carwash is a happy carwash.

Ugly - The ones who do not even know what they are supposed to do.

NC: What are your keys to success?

GS: Not trying to be everything to everyone. Be true to yourself. Know your strengths and your weaknesses.

NC: You have dedicated 15 years of your "free time" to writing Gary's Tech Tips for this magazine. (For that I cannot even begin to thank you, by the way.) Why have you done it?

GS: I was honored when you asked me at the CCA Golf Outing to be a contributing columnist. Having only a degree from the Carwash University, I was far from sure I would be able to do it or if you would publish what I wrote.

We were at a family wedding for a cousin and I brought a copy of the magazine to show my parents. To see the look in my Father's eyes that his sons' words were in print was..... He went from table to table showing the rest of the family, and I think some of the wait staff, what his son had accomplished. How could I stop after that review?

NC: Where will Gary Sokoloski be in 10 years?

GS: Hopefully, still selling some equipment on the side and keeping my toolbox from getting rusty. Primarily, I hope, it will be hanging out at my wash and reflecting on the journey it took to get there.

*Yours in carwashing,
Gary Sokoloski*

NC



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CAA Stimulus – Low Rates, Free Payments and Huge Savings

By Michael Ford

As small business owners continue the fight to survive and recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic, some significant help is available in the form of savings, payments and incentives under the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 (CAA). The CAA stimulus enhanced key elements of the Small Business Administration's traditional lending efforts. These enhancements could result in a major lift for lenders and borrowers when the time comes to invest in the economic recovery.

Incentives for Lenders

The new provisions to the SBA 7(a) loan program include a guaranty increase to 90 percent, up from 75 percent allowing financial institutions to loosen the purse strings. In the early stages of the Pandemic, many lenders stopped extending credit. If they did lend, it was only to their best clientele. We saw a dramatic decrease in lenders willing to finance new construction, start-ups, remodels and refinancing. Lenders now know, with an increase in the guaranty to 90 percent, it's virtually impossible

to take a loss. Therefore, they have every reason to extend credit under the loan program.

New SBA Loan Savings

Borrowers who take out new SBA loans by September 30, 2021, can receive the first three months of principal and interest payments from SBA. All payments provided for in the new stimulus law are subject to availability and capped at \$9,000 a month. So, new borrowers can get up to \$27,000 in free payments!

In addition, the SBA guaranty fee has been waived. The impact of the fee waiver is substantial. For example, a borrower would save in excess of \$100,000 in guaranty fees for a SBA 7(a) loan of \$4,000,000. Now that's some savings!

SBA loans almost always have higher loan-to-values and longer terms compared to conventional loans (loans without a government guaranty). However, the initial fees have been higher for SBA loans. This new fee waiver provision puts SBA loans way ahead of conventional lending. Borrowers get lower down payments (as little

In the ever-changing carwash industry, women are rapidly emerging as some of the most forward-thinking leaders.

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We look forward to seeing you virtually June 21 – 23, 2021.

For more information and to register please contact:

Andrew Klukas
 phone: 1-778-772-3057
 email: andrew@womenincarwash.com

Brenda Jane Johnstone
 phone: 1-204-489-4215
 email: bjj@womenincarwash.com

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as 10 percent down), longer terms (up to 25 years) and have fees at or below what they would find in a conventional loan.

It's Time to Pull the Trigger

Time is of the essence. Under the current guidance, the CAA fee waiver and paid payments program is available for loans approved by September 30, 2021, and only as long as the funds last. In addition, other factors, like possible conventional loan defaults and portfolio issues for banks, are reasons to start moving sooner rather than later.

I expect a contraction in the conventional loan market. This is based on the premise that banks are going to have issues with their conventional loan portfolios. With the federal government moratorium placed on evictions, mortgage holders and borrowers have very limited means of receiving payment.

It's a difficult situation for all those investors who have rental properties around the country (virtually all financed with conventional loans). At some point in time, the music is going to stop. Banks can only hold off collecting debt for so long. The end result is going to be defaults and foreclosures in the conventional commercial mortgage market.

The inevitable conclusion drawn from this situation is don't wait. Refinance NOW! Take advantage of low rates while you can. The SBA 7(a) and 504 loan programs are offering great rates for refinancing conventional mortgages. If you don't want to go down the SBA road, negotiating new terms with your conventional lender may be an option. I would suggest contacting your conventional lender to see if you can extend the terms on your existing loan.

Unlike SBA loans, conventional loans typically have renewals or balloon payments which generally come due every one to seven years. In a renewal review, the bank decides whether to continue the loan by renewing it or calling the full balance due. If the conventional loan market blows up (due to something totally unrelated to the carwash industry), you do not want to be in a position to have to negotiate your renewal. We saw this happen in the last recession. Carwash operators with conventional loans were left with very few options. Banks were calling notes due or requiring huge principal buy-downs due to a temporary drop in real property value. Don't let it be you! Refinance or negotiate now!

Carwash operators have an unprecedented opportunity to get financing at the lowest rates and costs in history. If you're looking to refinance, remodel, re-equip, buy or build, I would consider taking advantage of the opportunity while it lasts.

NC

Michael Ford is the Managing Director of Coast Commercial Credit, a firm specializing in financing for the carwash industry. You can reach him at 800/400-0365 or MikeF@CoastCC.com



Michael Ford

PROS and CONS of SBA Loans

PRO - Designed Especially for Small Business

SBA loans target small businesses. The SBA is here to help build and grow the economy. Unlike traditional bank loans, SBA loans are specifically designed for small business and do not restrict access to credit simply based on experience or time in business.

CON - Timing

In some cases, SBA Loans can take longer to obtain. A good example of this may be small dollar equipment financing. SBA loans for these types of transactions can take 30 days or more and require full financial disclosure. Whereas, conventional equipment leases and financing can take less than a week, require less down and have a simplified approval process.

PRO - Multiple Uses for the Funds

SBA loans can be used for a wide range of expenses. You can use these loans for most business purposes including; start-up projects, business expansion, acquisitions, equipment purchases, remodels, inventory, working capital, real-estate purchases and the refinance of debt.

CON - Collateral and PG's

Both SBA and conventional bank loans can require additional collateral and personal guarantees.

PRO - Favorable Repayment Terms

SBA loans traditionally offer fully amortizing loans with long repayment schedules. In most cases, SBA loans do not have arbitrary renewal dates or large balloon payments.

CON Specific Eligibility Requirements

While SBA loans allow for multiple uses, they still have some restrictions. For example: SBA loans can be used for the purchase of owner-user properties. However, they are not available for passive investments like the acquisition of strip malls that would be rented to tenants (non-owner occupied).

PRO - Reduced Lender Risk

Because the federal government guarantees SBA loans, more lenders are willing to offer financing to small businesses through SBA loans. In fact, many lenders relax their qualification criteria for small businesses that apply for SBA loans.

NC

Put a Little “Spring” in your Marketing Step

By Beth Martin

Spring is in the air! With the promise of warmer temperatures and lengthier daylight as the seasons change, you may be thinking about how to increase wash volume in the most cost-efficient way possible. Whether your spring marketing plans call for a grand opening, grand re-opening or simply a promotion or two to drive onsite traffic, below are additional key areas to help put a little “spring” in your marketing step.

Spring into Savings Campaign



Spring is a great time to implement a strategic FREE Wash and/or Unlimited Wash Club promotion.

Operators looking to build or increase unlimited wash club memberships will find great value in a spring strategic club sales push. Introductory membership promotions can range from a heavily discounted first month, a BOGO such as a buy one month/get second month free, or even a \$10 a month for 3 months incentive. For multiple locations, it may be best to try out different promotional formats to see which most resonates with your customers.

Club Car Wash operates 36 locations and is one of the largest and fastest growing express carwash companies in the Central United States. Rollie Bartels, CEO, relies on retail and club promotions at each of his locations, and measures the success of his grand openings in part by the number of club memberships obtained within the first three months. “We open each of our stores with a ‘try then buy’ campaign that

allows our customers to try our wash — fall in love with it — and come back on their own accord,” he explained. Bartels also noted that “\$1 Any Wash” single wash promotions were successful in driving wash traffic, and help build a successful retail customer and club member base.

If driving retail wash traffic is more of a current priority, consider “Spring Cleaning” happy hour or Early Bird specials for single wash customers. Print inexpensive yard signs to help advertise, create a catchy social media ad and boost on social platforms to a pre-defined, strategic target audience. Cross promotions with another complimentary local business can also be mutually beneficial — i.e. offering a coupon for a free cup of coffee during an Early Bird promotion, or discounts on a takeout pizza during a happy hour promotion.

One potential pitfall of frequent promotions is infuriating current club members who may have joined at full price — so it’s best to limit deep discounts to new store grand openings and a couple limited-time promotions throughout the year. Adding in a Member Appreciation Day several times throughout the year and offering free upgrades, an air freshener, discounts to add a second vehicle or family member can also help current members feel engaged and appreciated. For retail washers, you don’t want to create the expectation of endless discounts either — or you will set the tone that your single washes are not a value at full retail.

Onsite Signage Refresh

Stale, onsite signage (that may barely have survived yet another Northeast winter!) is an often-overlooked area many washes can improve upon. It can be easy to become complacent to your surroundings, so it’s important to periodically take the time to review your site’s overall aesthetic through a customer-focused lens.

Do you have bent signage? Barely legible signage that has spent years fading in the sun? A leaning signage post that a customer’s vehicle hit months ago? A burned out LED light or two in your wash tunnel? Negatively worded signage that doesn’t promote a friendly, positive atmosphere? Old terms and conditions that you haven’t updated, so you covered up a line or two with electrical tape? Or what about a holiday promotion sign that you just haven’t gotten around to taking down yet?

Assign a team member with a keen eye to review all existing signage and suggest improvements. Solicit customer feedback from a couple of your “regulars” in exchange for a

Continued ...

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free wash or gift card. Forecast out a year (or by quarter if you prefer) what signage you will need to refresh/replace so it becomes accounted for in your overall marketing budget.

When refreshing signage, pay attention to the tone of your instructions, directions, rules, etc. Simply adding a “please” and “thank you” can go a long way! Consider shifting negative language like “We are NOT responsible for...” to “We are responsible for...” Periodically swapping out marketing pieces such as gate arm covers is an inexpensive and a great way to advertise seasonal unlimited wash club messages, promotions and express appreciation to current club members. Don’t forget a simple “Thank you” sign at the wash exit. Now more than ever, customers want to support a local, homegrown business. If this is you, proudly display that message!

And updating onsite signage does not have to break the bank, and can go a long way with reinforcing the crisp, professional image that is so important when being in the business of clean — which we all are.

Community Donation Weekend

The carwash industry is well known for its philanthropic endeavors, and spring is a perfect time to help raise money for a local charity or non-profit organization. At Express Wash Concepts, our multi-brand spring quarterly donation campaign focuses on raising money for a local youth summer camp initiative. We have raised thousands of dollars over the years to help send kids to MDA and YMCA Summer Camp, for example.

Since springtime typically brings consecutive rainy days, consider hosting a multi-day campaign to maximize your promotional efforts and bring in the highest amount of monetary donations possible. One popular format is hosting a three-day weekend-long donation campaign where customers donate \$5 (can be kiosk driven or collected by team members) to receive a coupon good for a free top-of-the-line wash their next visit. Other ideas include selling special edition air fresheners for a fixed period of time with all proceeds donated back to a designated non-profit, or a “Spring for Change” campaign where customers donate the loose change in their cars.

If full-fledged donation weekends aren’t the best fit for your wash, consider partnering with a local organization for a “Give Back” day. The organization distributes pre-printed flyers driving traffic to your wash for a designated time period, and you donate a fixed amount of proceeds back to the organization based on overall volume.



Keep your onsite signage positive and replace it seasonally or as it becomes faded or damaged.

Social Media Contests

Hosting social media contests can be one of the most cost-effective promotional initiatives available. If you do not yet have a large following on your social pages, focus first on boosting your pages to encourage customers to like or follow your Facebook and Instagram pages, and Twitter feed. The goal is to post regular, engaging content that will ultimately create loyal followers who will in turn evangelize you.

Reaching thousands of followers on your social media pages is an ongoing process, and won’t happen overnight. But with consistent social TLC it is definitely achievable. Put together a spring social content calendar to help keep you on a regular schedule. Don’t just advertise your wash, include fun facts, wash trivia, team member spotlights, customer profiles, “spotted around the wash” cool car photos and periodic contests.

Spring themes to help drive engagement could include a “Bye, Winter” salty car photo contest, a “Bring Your Pet to the Wash” day, or a request to submit “Favorite Spring Cleaning for Cars” tips. Consider investing a small amount of your marketing budget to “boost” these contests. Facebook continues to refine its advertising platform, and the ability to hyper target audiences is pretty amazing.

Sponsorships

“Teaming up” (pun intended!) with a local youth, minor or major league sports organization can be a great way to increase brand awareness, further your education on the latest consumer marketing trends, and piggyback off of the marketing expertise of individuals who likely spend more time-fine tuning their marketing skills than you’re able to as a busy wash operator.



Major, Minor or Little League-based sponsorships are an excellent way to increase your marketing reach, and drive customer engagement.

If you don't have the budget for the "big leagues," seek out a minor league sports team or local youth organization and establish a promotional partnership. These types of sponsorships can provide you with instant access to a customer base with likely dirty vehicles thanks to dusty and muddy ball fields, and some may be willing to work with you on trade, meaning you give them free washes and they do the marketing legwork.

If you are not already being approached, seek out teams and offer donations in the form of gift cards, wash vouchers, gift memberships, etc. for promotions, raffles and fundraisers if a monetary sponsorship is not yet possible.

Spring Into Action

Spring is a perfect time to freshen up your current marketing initiatives and perhaps try a new tactic or two. Enjoy the creative process, make adjustments as you fine-tune what works and doesn't work for your business, and watch your overall volume grow!



Beth Martin

Beth Martin is the Marketing Director of Express Wash Concepts, the 31-location parent company of Dayton Ohio-based Flying Ace Express Car Wash, Central Ohio-based Moo Moo Express Car Wash and Greater Cleveland Ohio-based CLEan Express Auto Wash.



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What Do You Want To Be Famous For?

By JoAnna Brandi

“What Do You Want To Be Famous For?”

I know this is probably not a question you get up in the morning and ask yourself, but what if you did? What if you thought about how you want to be perceived, about how you want to be talked about and about how you want to be remembered?

What if you thought about how you want people to feel after interacting with you? Do you think it just might change your behaviors, your intentions or your actions? Do think that by intentionally and mindfully thinking about these things it might change your everyday behaviors just a bit?

When I think about it myself, I know I want to be “famous” for being inspiring, inventive and radiating positive energy! I'd like to be famous for my commonsense Customer CARE Principles and my PASSION for bringing positivity into workplaces and into the homes those workers go back to at night.

But mostly I want to be famous for motivating people — like you — to take action on what I teach. In doing so, that changes

your life and the lives of all the people you lead.

Last week I got a call from a woman who used to work for Hunter Douglas, a client of mine 20 years ago. She went on to tell me that she's had three jobs since and she's never forgotten the things I taught her. She practiced what she learned so well that it became a part of who she is and how she thinks about her work. It made her obsessed about taking care of her customers and not willing to tolerate management who never even stops by to inquire how the people (who interact directly with the customers) are doing.

Whack!

Can you imagine how invigorating that call was for me? I had a grin so large I thought my face might crack. “THIS, this..” I said to myself, “is the positive impact you can have on people's lives.”

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Continued on page 43 ...

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Plan Ahead Or Pay the Piper

By Doug Rieck

As I write this column, the Jersey Shore is on day two of a major Nor'easter, our first this winter. The weather prophets in every form of media, including Facebook (I never knew Facebook had a meteorology department) have had divergent views of what is coming. As a coastal business, preparation becomes essential as the winds (and water) can really rock our lives. At all locations, especially the self serves, trash cans get brought in, Windmasters and feather flags and all miscellaneous driveway sales paraphernalia are moved and secured. Twice I have had the Auto Sentry's raised gates break off in severe wind gusts. We leave them down now. (By the way, boat fiberglass works great for repairs.)

About five years ago, I finally broke down and bought a snowplow. It seemed like a winning idea. I have three locations and contract plowing costs are an enormous amount of money. It was conceivable that the savings could recover the costs within two years or less. Guess what? No snow, or savings. Since

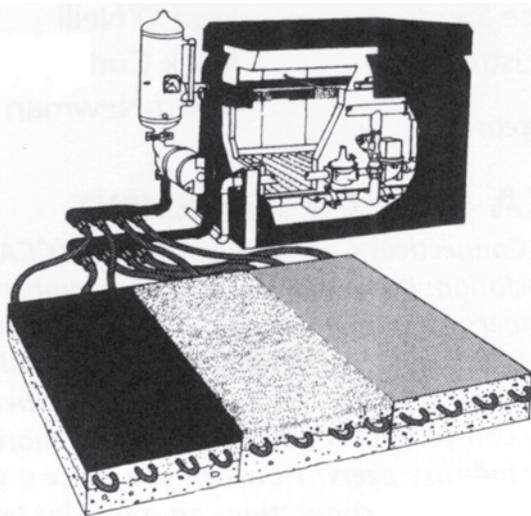
the purchase, I have used the plow twice. Not in 2019 or in 2020. Maybe this will be the year?

This fall I never checked the plow. It was new. We down-staffed with COVID and my truck was in the shop for two months waiting on COVID-delayed parts. This past Sunday afternoon, as the snow was falling, I went to put the plow on the truck before I went home. What happened is obvious. The plow was broken and the hydraulics would not let me mount it on the truck. Monday I called the dealer, but at that point the five inches of snow had turned into inches of rain, with the wind still blowing. I was saved by the weather change (typical Jersey Shore Nor'easter with snow changing to rain). We did get a serious two-footer — once. I had to hire a Bobcat to plow and stack the white gold.

One of the Jersey Shore's most famous storms back in March of '62 started with feet of snow ending up days later with Long Beach Island cut in half with a new inlet that subsequently has been filled

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in. Legendary damage and beach loss was the final outcome. The beaches were so damaged they brought junk cars to put on beaches to catch sand. Life was less politically correct in those days.

The point I'm trying to make is about thorough and extensive planning. Pilots use checklists for a reason. The step I forgot this fall was mounting the plow and checking it prior to the season. Prior to the storm, I did get everything else right, but I forgot an important part — the plow. I was saved by the typical undecided coastal weather in my neck of the woods. In the next few days, I will service the plow and get it ready. The weather media are calling for snow and ice this coming weekend. This time, I better be ready. I had my warning.

Don't Discount a Flex

In my column last month I was writing about the new competition in our industry. The express model works very well for conveyors and is tremendously attractive for new investors. My gripe is about the quantity and abandon with which they are being erected. The norms and spacing established by trial over the past 50 years are being ignored by many investors. With at least a \$5 million investment, a lot of cars need to be washed. That becomes harder in a smaller market. Carwashing is not like the restaurant industry. Our customers have to eat, they may not need or be able to afford a carwash — especially in COVID times.

As I have mentioned before, the full-service market has been difficult and likely will suffer even more with rising labor costs and the call for a national \$15 an hour minimum wage. What might be a bright spot is a well run flex-service facility. I have seen in past months that some customers will pay a considerably higher ticket to get the interior done, as long as they get personalized, exceptional service. That kind of operation is much more difficult to run than an express, but miles ahead of a traditional full service. In looking at trends, unfortunately, I expect to see rapidly rising gas prices at the pump. In the 30+ years I have been washing cars, I have seen this cycle happen. Pump prices go up and our wash volume goes down. Simple cause and effect, family budgets are not flexible and a clean car is not as big a priority as other items. Fortunately, there will always be some better positioned customers and increasing numbers of electric cars.

February is a good month. It has promise. Carwashing can be busy with winter weather and the holidays are over, leaving more discretionary money available again. Spring is coming, and along with it pollen season. Normally, it is a relief to see spring and even more so this year as we continue to grapple with the Pandemic. In New Jersey, the Governor is pushing vaccinations because it is an election year. Restaurants are up to 35 percent capacity at the time of this writing. Schools are still weird and on hybrid and virtual, but show promise of easing up as the school year's end draws closer. My daughter, who is a High School senior, has heard rumors of going back to a five-day-a-week in-person schedule, and two neighboring districts are already doing so. I believe one of the keys to start reaching our new normal is for schools to get back to five-day-a-week

instruction. This simple but complex act does many positive things to our local economies and demonstrates hope. I got my first vaccination a few days ago and I am more positive now. **NC**



Doug Rieck

Doug Rieck operates Magic Wash in Manahawkin, NJ, and is the President of the Car Wash Operators of New Jersey. He was the recipient of the 2018 Northeast Regional Carwash Convention's Most Distinguished Person Award. You can reach him at 609/597-SUDS or dougrieck@gmail.com

JoAnna's Gems ... continued from page 40.

be, if you haven't found fuel for the continuing reinvention of your business and life, try this experiment. (If you are already raring to go, this will help refine your thinking about it so go for it anyway.)

Every quest begins with a question. For the next three days get up and write your thoughts about this question, "What do I want to be famous for?"

Think about how you want to be perceived, about how you want to be thought about and talked about, and about how you want to be remembered.

Think about how you want people to feel after interacting with you. Energized? Inspired? Valued? Cared about? Appreciated? Motivated? This is the opening question I use for all my CEO groups. The answers are enlightening.

After you have carefully considered your desires, send an email to info@northeastcarwasher.com and let us know your intentions.

Let's hear from the community on this one. How do you want to make people FEEL and how do you want to be remembered? Remembering my great times with you – JoAnna. **NC**

JoAnna Brandi is a certified Chief Happiness Officer and Coach helping you keep employees and customers happy by creating more positive cultures and practices. She is the author of three books including the illustrated "54 Ways to Stay Happy in a Changing, Challenging and Sometimes Negative World." Available online. Find her at ReturnOnHappiness.com and PositiveLeadershipCoach.com and if you are interested in her online leadership course, "The Practice of Positive Leadership" you can sign up at PositiveEnergizer.com

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JoAnna Brandi



*Dear Venus and Mars,
With COVID still rearing its ugly head, where is your volume compared to January of 2020? And, what do you anticipate moving into the spring?*



Venus Says

Heather Ashley

Let me start off by saying that we are fortunate. We live in a rural valley of Virginia and we have three self-serve locations. Our wash numbers have been down (and they never were as big as most), but we are still able to manage day-to-day operations. We expect the recent vaccine rollout will help our numbers increase.

You will recall from earlier columns, that COVID restrictions did not hit us as hard in Virginia regarding self serves. There was no direct verbiage and since it is difficult to shut down self-serve washes, we did not. We have remained open with no employees. Our washes are unattended, but between the two of us they are checked a couple times a day while we are en route to our other jobs.

We are seeing wash activity, though it is very socially distanced. It almost happens naturally. For example, if the wash bays are full, then instead of parking behind as though to wait in line, the next customer heads to the vacuum station and does that first. Our typical customer appears to be a man who is bored or looking to get out of the house for a while. They are keeping us in business.

Looking ahead, we all hope with the new vaccines rolling out that people will slowly get back to the less risky parts of life. We hope they see that self-serve carwashing is intune with social distancing. I anticipate seeing more women and families come to clean up cars that have been forgotten in all of this. I also anticipate a lot of trash as we see a normal volume increase when the temperature rises. Add that to a bunch of fast food trash in the car and I am believing that it will be a big problem in 2021.

I see the spring and summer revenue numbers increasing. People are going to want to travel. Whether we should or not remains a debate. When you travel you want a clean car or RV. Folks want to be outside and for many either begin or end their day with a wash.

Mars Says



Paul Vallario

As January comes to a close, we are now almost one full year into the Pandemic. I think everyone welcomed the New Year and is hoping for better things in 2021. In the early stages of the New Year, I can see that this industry is going to bounce back pretty quickly in terms of volume. There are, however, other factors that have come into play in the New Year that are not as promising.

On the positive side, as I compare my numbers from January 2020 to January 2021 volume is up around 5 percent. It's always hard to make comparisons in the carwash industry, however, for such short time frames. So many variables come into play but in the carwash, weather is the biggest variable. January 2021 was dry and cold with very little precipitation. That's good and bad as we like dry, but we also like a little bit of snow more and we didn't get any snow on Long Island this January. But overall, our volume is up so I am happy.

I operate two flex-serve sites and although our overall volume is up our interior sales are down about 20 percent. We've made up for that 20 percent loss with an increase in express exterior sales and unlimited wash club memberships. I think there is going to be a shift in 2021 and beyond to more of an express model throughout the industry. In New York state, the start of the New Year brought a pretty big hike to labor costs for many operators but in particularly full-service operations. Many operators in the state have utilized the tip credit for many years when paying their staff. For employees in an industry where tips are customary, employers have always been able to deduct a certain amount per hour from the worker's hourly wage as long as the tips they receive make up for it.

Early last year Governor Cuomo and the Department of Labor phased out the tip credit. For many this was a pretty hefty increase to their payroll costs and decrease to the bottom line.

Venus and Mars, aka Heather Ashley and Paul Vallario, are carwash industry veterans. Heather Ashley is a past President of the Mid-Atlantic Carwash Association. She is also co-owner of Virginia Car Wash Industries, Inc. and Shenandoah Valley Coin Laundries, and Ashley's Shenandoah Valley Rental Properties in Toms Brook, VA. You can reach Heather at mhashley@gmail.com, as well as LinkedIn and Twitter @hrashley or www.thecarwashblog.com. Paul Vallario operates Westbury Personal Touch Car Wash in East Northport, NY, and is the President of Urban Avenue Carwash Distributors and Consulting. He is also a New York State Car Wash Association board member. You can reach Paul at iwashcars@optonline.net.

**If you have a question for Venus & Mars please send it to: Media Solutions,
2214 Budd Terrace, Niskayuna, NY 12309 • Suzanne.Stansbury@icloud.com**

Venus ... continued

I forecast the need for vending supplies. Cars that have not been wiped down inside for months will now need several cleaning wipes.

My look ahead is positive with more activity and we hope more revenue. Too bad the trash comes with it! **NC**

Mars ... continued

The added expense is resulting in rising prices in labor-intensive services. Mostly affected are full-service and to some degree flex-service washes. Due to the rising prices, more customers are choosing the less expensive exterior options. And with the increasing popularity of express exterior washes offering free vacuums and monthly memberships, we are going to see fewer and fewer full serves in the months and years ahead.

As we head into spring with COVID hopefully on the decline, and more and more people being vaccinated, I foresee things starting to get back to some form of normalcy. As for the full-service operations, I don't really know what to expect as far as volumes go. Full-service operators are going to have to figure out ways to cut expenses without giving up quality. The great thing about the carwash business is you can automate many parts of it. It is fairly inexpensive to borrow money right now from the banks. Do your research and some investments into your business and in the long run profits will only go up. **NC**



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Can You See Me Now?

By Gary Sokolowski

Hopefully, all of you were able to read the interview I did in this issue of the magazine on page 30. Doing that interview and recalling the changes through the years in this business sparked an idea for this article. Remembering back to where we started, not only in the time but in technology, was quite a trip. If you will, please indulge me on this journey from where we were, to where we are, and maybe a look forward to where we are headed.

In the beginning, we had only the basics in communication to trouble-shot equipment remotely. It cost more in long-distance charges on your phone bill than getting in a vehicle and driving to the wash. It usually went something like, "Come quick, my carwash is broken." So, we would get in a vehicle and drive 50, 100, 200 or sometimes 300 miles to find out it was something that took longer to drive there than to fix. I can remember driving from Massachusetts to New York to put a key in a ma-

chine, moving it one foot back to the home position and then driving three hours back home, on a Saturday in February.

So, we started by someone calling the office and then, if needed, we dispatched a technician from the office to go on a service call. When we got back at the end of the day, we would play the answering machine and start calling back all the people who had called earlier. As time passed, we were given calling cards so we could stop at pay phones and put our 12-digit calling card number in before calling the 10-digit phone number to try and get in touch with someone. Keep in mind that this is before

"call waiting" so there were a lot of busy signals and callbacks.

On occasion, someone might have an answering machine so you could leave a message, but for the most part the phone just rang off the hook.

“

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with our own eyes
and resolve issues quicker.*

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Then we were given the foolproof pager that could receive a numeric text message letting us know to call a number. You did not know why you were calling the number or whom you were calling but it was better than nothing. We used to make a game of getting off highway exits looking for a pay phone (another device some may not remember or even know about) to make the mystery calls. Then, we got the BAG PHONE. A 3 lb. cellular phone with a 2-hour battery life. It was hard to snag it away from the owner, but on long trips we could take it. I think it was a month or two after I started using the bag phone when the first bill arrived. There was \$1,400 in calls for one month! I told the owner it was better than standing at a pay phone for seven hours. At least I was driving to another service call or installation and not standing in a parking lot. I am not sure they understood my rationalization on that one, though.

Do we get more productive or do we keep doing things the old way? Luckily for me, Nextel came out with their “Push to Talk” network in the late 1990’s and we could talk for free on the walkie-talkie feature. This was an amazing leap in communication for a growing business that had multiple technicians in various states. The only drawback was that everyone else could hear your conversation. A full circle in communications. We went from a party line to a party line.

Then they introduced the Blackberry. A computer in the palm of your hands. The only problem was it relied on a network that was not ready for all that traffic. It was nice to look at but did not do what it was supposed to do. Then it happened. In 2004, the world of communication changed forever with the introduction of the iPhone. Even though it was on a sketchy network, it just worked. Imagine that! With increasing Internet speeds and reliability occasionally, someone would email a video clip of some sort of movement with no sound. Then in 2014, my dream of seeing what people were telling me they were looking at came true with the advent of FaceTime. Now, I can see what people were saying.

Just before writing this article, on a sunny Saturday in mid-winter, we were ice fishing with some friends. I received a call from an operator who we installed a machine for six months or so earlier. He had never had to touch the equipment and done nothing but count the money since we installed it. An oversized vehicle had gone into his bay and the machine got dragged down the rails by the truck and would not reset automatically because of the severity of the fault. Once he calmed down and realized he had no idea what to do he said, “Let me FaceTime you.” I literally led him to the remote control for the machine, explained what buttons to push and could see and hear what was happening. In a matter of a few minutes, his machine was back in service and washing cars. I’m not sure what else I can say about that. Even though the fishing was not great that day, it beat getting in a truck, driving to his site to spend a minute resetting his machine.

Communication is Key

Communication is the most important part of any job. The more you know the more you can do. The issue in a lot of cases is the information you receive is not accurate and you draw faulty conclusions. One way to make sure you have the most accurate information is to see it for yourself. As of now, that is possible. No fuzzy video clips without audio. No hearsay or conjecture on what others think may have happened. Today, we can see it in real time with our own eyes and resolve issues quicker. And in some cases, we can prevent a small problem from becoming a big issue by seeing and hearing what is going on at a site. I cannot wait to get fitted for my monocle and earpiece.

NC

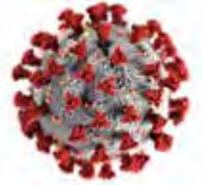


Gary Sokoloski owns Centerline Carwash Sales and Service in Wales, ME. He can be reached at gary@centerlinecarwash.com or 208/375-4593 or 774/248-0171.

Gary Sokoloski

The advertisement features a blue background with a white outline of a car in motion at the top. Below it, the text "Carwash CONNECTION" is displayed in a stylized font. A film strip graphic curves across the middle, showing two frames of Gary Sokoloski speaking. At the bottom, the text reads: "An exclusive video series that focuses on best practices and market trends for car care professionals." Below this, it says "Engaging Content. Powerful Platforms." and provides the website "www.carwash.com/category/original-video". Logos for "Babcoax" and "Carwashing" are visible in the bottom corners.

COVID'S Effects on the Towel Industry



By Valerie Sweeney

It's been more than a year since COVID came into our lives. The good news is that spring is upon us, so we can start to enjoy the outside again. Hopefully, the nightmare will be over in the near future, but it still continues to wreak havoc in many different areas. One major area that continues to be a thorn in the side of many industries is the import market.

As you know, terry towels and microfiber towels for the carwash industry are imported from overseas. These towels are manufactured in places such as China, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Typical turn-around from the time an order is sent overseas to the time it comes into port is roughly 90 days. We are now seeing lead times as long as six months. This longer lead time has been very tricky for buyers, and inventory planning.

Why are the lead times so long? There are a few different factors in place. Just like the United States, sometimes factories overseas experience outbreaks of COVID, and need to operate with less personnel resulting in reduced produc-

China is exporting more to the U.S. than the U.S. is exporting back to China, so China doesn't have as many containers as they need to keep up with the demand. This has driven up the cost of overseas freight considerably, while also delaying the shipment of containers. We have found that once the containers land in the U.S., they are not cleared by customs as quickly as they were in the past. What used to take a few days, can now take several weeks.

Most likely all of your towel vendors are stocked up, and have adjusted to the change in lead times to service the industry. Just know that if your typical color becomes out of stock, now might be a good time to be a little flexible. Like everything else we are dealing with during these crazy times, there are some things like overseas lead times that are beyond our control. **NC**

“Another major factor affecting the lead times for product is the overall global shortage of shipping containers.”

tion. They also experience the same challenges we do — balancing work with taking care of children who are not in school full time. Having fewer employees available can really slow down turn-around times.

Another major factor affecting the lead times for product is the overall global shortage of shipping containers. There are containers out there, but they are not in the places that need them. There is a worldwide demand for many products, so it has definitely created some logistical issues.



Valerie Sweeney is a towel consultant with ERC Wiping Products. You can reach her at 800/225-9473 or erc@ercwipe.com

Valerie Sweeney

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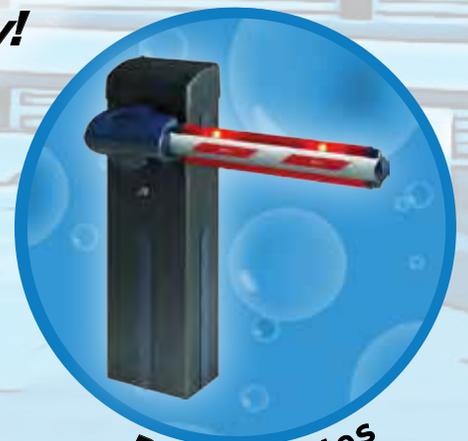


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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The first quarter of any new year brings with it a hope for change, advancement, and growth. Combine this with the fact that 2020 was not the clean start to a new decade that we were anticipating, I think we can all say that we look to 2021 with a renewed hope of progress while also celebrating the great obstacles we overcame amidst a global Pandemic. While we are mindful of the limitations that still lay before us as far as in-person events and activities, the Carwash Association of Pennsylvania (CAP) is moving forward with the expectation that we will enjoy various networking events this year. Our annual dinner and tabletop show will look a little (or a lot) different than in previous years, but while we work to determine the best venue and format for this event, we will be sure to keep our membership informed. We also plan to bring together carwash professionals to enjoy a baseball outing this summer, and golf in the fall for our Annual Golf Outing Fundraiser.

Specific dates will be confirmed soon, so please stay tuned in to our communications, visit our website at www.pacarwash.org, or email executivedirector@pacarwash.org to receive updates. We really hope to have you join us at one or all of these events — families and spouses are always welcome!

Join Up Today!

If you are not a current CAP member, we invite you to join our growing network of operators and vendors from across the Commonwealth. We have hit the ground running in 2021 with plans to invest additional resources into our membership this year, resources that will help all carwash businesses, both operators and vendors, better connect, collaborate and contribute to our industry. Please visit us today at www.pacarwash.org to learn more and get involved.

It is with great pride that I say that the carwash industry proved its resilience and commitment to being a helpful community in 2020. Now several months into a new year, some of us will enter the industry while others will exit, some of us will grow or expand, while others may look to downsize or sell. The common denominator is our passion for serving others, in whatever form that may come. Thank you all for serving our industry well and being a part of this very special community.

Best wishes for a safe, healthy and prosperous 2021!



Keith Lutz
CAP President

**For all the latest
CAP news visit:
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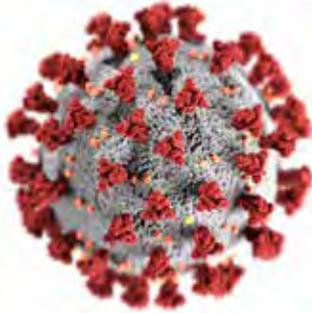


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An advertisement for JSCM Group. At the top, it says "DON'T BE LEFT VULNERABLE!". Below this is an image of a person in a hoodie sitting at a laptop with the JSCM Group logo on the lid. The background is dark with vertical lines of code. At the bottom, there are five icons representing different services: Security Assessments, Penetration Testing, Point of Sale Security, Email Security, and Firewall Management. The website address www.jscmgroup.com is at the bottom.



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CCA MISSION STATEMENT

The Connecticut Carwash Association (CCA) is a member-driven association: it exists solely to serve members' needs, protect members' best interests, and to be responsive to members' requests. The list of tangible CCA membership benefits is long (and growing), but the list of intangible benefits is even longer. How can you put a price tag on the camaraderie you enjoy with your industry peers? How can you place a value on having the ability to make connections on a regular basis with other carwash operators who can help you through tough times? What price would you be willing to pay to have the chance to learn from our industry's most successful operators? Stay active in your local industry trade association.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

We're a year-plus into this Pandemic and despite the upheaval it has caused on so many levels, I am still blessed to be in the carwash industry. And, luckily, consumers have found visiting the carwash during COVID a welcome distraction, almost as popular as heading to Lowe's or The Home Depot (well, almost).*

It's now up to all of us to keep them coming back and thinking of our carwashes as "experiences" that make their life better and happier. To accomplish that we need to think out of the box to get our sites to the next level. What do your customers want to see more of? What makes them think of your wash as more than a carwash? How can we keep them coming back for more and more frequently?

To accomplish this you first need to take a really hard look at what you are doing and how you are doing it. Remember, first impressions are worth a thousand words so really inspect your operation's appearance. Is there a sign that needs to be repainted or replaced? Are your employee's uniforms dated or are they sparkling with color and on trend? Is it time for a new street sign, logo or branding? Although an investment, just changing your signage can make a huge impact on your bottom line.

Are you doing something that entices more frequent visits like adding lighting to your tunnel that the kids love and beg their parents to see on a weekly basis? A trip to the wash can be a contactless way to get out of the house and away from virtual learning. It can be an adventure. Change up your tunnel lighting colors to reflect holidays and seasons. Think out of the box to keep them coming back.

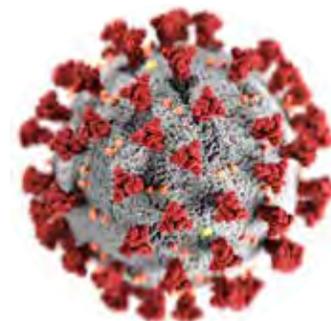
The new season brings with it new life and hope that our lives will soon begin to return to a normal we can all embrace. Be thankful that we are all in this together and that with any luck our industry, and ourselves, will become stronger and more resilient moving forward. I look forward to a spectacular pollen and bug season and the opportunity to reinvent my wash to meet the demands of today's consumer.

Stay well and optimistic!



Bob Rossini, CCA President

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40-Year-Old Splash Gets Reno

By Alan M. Petrillo

Mark Curtis says he's an eternal optimist, which is why he's persevered with his partner Chris Fisher for the last 40 years building a 27-location chain that spans three states.

Their Greenwich location, which Curtis and Fisher, a former banker and investment banker, respectively, purchased in 1981, was at the time an exterior tunnel called Carl's Auto Bath. Two years later the duo began to provide vacuum services in a flex-wash environment, and changed the name to the Carwash of Greenwich. A year after that, they changed the name of the carwash again to Tahiti Auto Spa.

"When Chris and I first opened the Greenwich location, we made every mistake possible," Curtis said, "usually three times to make sure they actually were mistakes."

Curtis pointed out that when the partners changed the name of the wash to Tahiti Auto Spa, they decided to give a free lunch to every customer who came in on the day of the grand opening for the name change.

"What better name for a carwash in the Northeast, right?" Curtis noted. "We figured we would have 500 customers at the opening, and decided to give a free hot dog with every carwash. What says Tahiti better than hot dogs?"

But Curtis was worried that they might run out of hot dogs because some customers might want more than one, so he bought 800 hot dogs for the big day.

"Well, our numbers were on target because we washed 490 cars that day," Curtis said. "However, I didn't anticipate that people would not want to eat a hot dog at 8:30 am, or 10 am, or even



Splash partners Mark Curtis and Chris Fisher determined the Greenwich wash was in need a renovation 10 years ago and worked with an architect to accomplish a fitting redesign that includes a faux wave at the front of the building.

11 am. At the end of the day, we had given away only 84 hot dogs."

Curtis added, "We ended up with the rest of the hot dogs filling my freezer and Chris's freezer, as well as those of any friends who humored us. We ended up having a lot of parties where we served hot dogs, and asked people to try to ignore the freezer burn."

Curtis and Fisher operated the express tunnel until 1994, when they added a second tunnel for hand washing, and changed the name to Splash Car Wash.

"We thought there was a demand for washing cars in a more upscale environment," Curtis said, "so we added the second tunnel with a seamless glass wall and Italian marble along the entire tunnel, and four guys in wetsuits washing cars on the conveyor. Customers loved it, the concept took off, and Splash started to grow.

Fast Forward to 2010

Curtis said that he and Fisher determined that the Greenwich location needed a renovation about 10 years ago, had an architect come up with a redesign, and went to the town of Greenwich with the concept.

"They rejected it," Curtis said. "The town kept us going back and forth to them for some time about the redesign. But the lo-

After a lot of back and forth with the town of Greenwich, the finished product is picture perfect.



The site, the partners first, includes two faux towers and in addition to an exterior renovation there was also work done to the impulse store.

cation was a great performing store for us and was doing really well, and we knew it was too good a site to let it get outdated.”

Eventually, after an extremely long negotiated process, the town approved the redesign plans, Curtis said.

“The renovation wasn’t just a facelift,” he pointed out. “We wanted to make it new again and do it right. There were a lot of challenges with the building that we were facing, but we overcame them.

Curtis continued, “We put a faux tower on the front of the building, as well as a wave. Customers enter the wash from a side street, so we put another faux tower there. In addition to the exterior of the building, we also renovated the store, but didn’t have to do anything with the exterior tunnel because we had redone it with new equipment a few years back. We spent about \$500,000 in renovation costs for the aesthetics.”

Splash’s Greenwich location also offers what it calls Five Star Detailing. “That’s our name for our top-end detailing package,” Curtis said. “We named it that because we wanted to differentiate it from our express detailing, which we had focused on for some time. However, we learned that people still want that top-end detailing, so that’s what we gave them. We find the Five Star Detailing and the hand wash blend very nicely together.” **NC**

Alan M. Petrillo is a Tucson, AZ-based journalist, a former upstate New Yorker, and contributing editor of Northeast Carwasher. He’s the author of the historical mysteries, Full Moon and Asylum Lane, and his latest historical thriller, A Case of Dom Perignon, all available at www.amazon.com



An architectural rendering of the finished product at Greenwich Splash.

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CT General Assembly Convenes For 2021 Session



By P.J. Cimini

Newly-elected members of the Connecticut General Assembly met on January 6 to convene the 2021 Legislative Session, elect leadership and take their oath of office. However, the Connecticut state capitol complex remains closed to the public.

Legislative leaders have announced that due to the ongoing public health emergency the Connecticut Capitol and Legislative Office Building complex will remain closed for the majority, if not all, of the 2021 Legislative Session. To provide public access to the legislative process, all business of the general assembly will be conducted virtually. This is reflected in the 2021 Session joint rules adopted by both chambers.

Legislative committees will meet virtually on assigned committee days. Some meetings will be broadcast live via the public broadcasting channel CT-N. Meetings will also be broadcast on YouTube channels. Links to all broadcasts are posted on the calendar on the CGA website.

Like committee meetings, all public hearings will be conducted on a virtual platform. Members of the public wishing to testify virtually on legislation will be able to sign up in advance of public hearings. All registered individuals will be entered into a lottery system to generate the order in which individuals will testify. As is procedure, the first hour of public hearings will be reserved for elected officials wishing to testify. Details on how to register for specific hearings can be found in the daily bulletin.

When the House and Senate convene to discuss and vote on legislation, legislators in both chambers will watch the debate from their offices. Based on procedure followed during the 2020 Virtual Special Sessions, we expect that legislators wishing to speak on a bill will be allowed into the chamber to ask their questions of the proponent(s) and provide their thoughts. When they have finished speaking, legislators will return to their offices to watch the remainder of the discussion. When discussion of legislation has concluded, legislators will vote on legislation remotely from their offices.

Lamont Extends COVID State of Emergency

Governor Ned Lamont has signed a declaration extending Connecticut's state of emergency in response to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic to April 20, 2021. The extension applies to both the civil preparedness emergency and the public health emergency. The Governor originally declared the emergencies on March 10, 2020, explaining that they were needed in order to enable the state to provide its residents with an adequate response to the pandemic. Initially, they were scheduled to expire on September 9, 2020, however, due to the

ongoing nature of the Pandemic they were renewed late in the summer and given a new expiration date of February 9, 2021.

Governor Lamont said that while the recent development of several vaccines provide great hope that the Pandemic will soon be under control, the virus continues to rapidly spread and emergency measures are still needed to help mitigate its impact. Ending them now, he said, would pull a safety net from under the citizens of Connecticut.

Phase 1b Vaccinations Get Tiered Approach

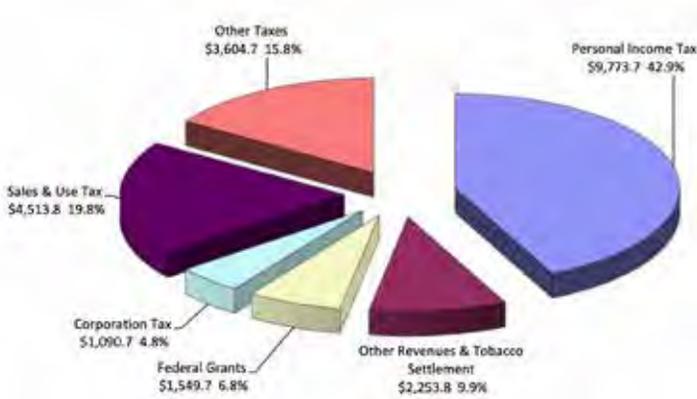
With nearly 1.4 million individuals included in Phase 1b of Connecticut's COVID-19 vaccine rollout, and an anticipated 45,000 doses of vaccine per week from the federal government, Governor Lamont is directing the Connecticut Department of Public Health to proceed through the remaining groups in the phase with a tiered approach based on risk of adverse health outcomes from the virus. The Governor is directing the implementation be done in an equitable way, with vaccine distribution points focused in areas where residents and communities have barriers to access and care.

The tiered approach to Phase 1b will proceed as follows:

- Individuals over the age of 75
- Individuals between the ages of 65 and 74
- Scheduling soon (likely late February or early March): Frontline essential workers and individuals with underlying medical conditions who have an increased risk for severe illness.
- The rollout of the vaccine to staff and residents of congregate living settings will be phased in throughout Phase 1b. More information about the definitions of frontline essential workers and the list of eligible underlying medical conditions will be made available over the next several weeks. For the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 vaccination distribution plans in Connecticut, visit ct.gov/covidvaccine. Additional information for employers can also be found at: portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Vaccinations.

No Tax Hike Pledge

Governor Lamont, in early February, announced his two-year, \$46 billion budget proposal. The proposal closes a projected \$4 billion deficit while increasing state spending by 2 percent in fiscal year 2022 and 3.5 percent the following year.



Gov. Lamont's proposed budget projects fiscal 2022 revenues of \$20.7 billion.

The budget proposal makes no changes to the state's income or sales and use taxes and relies heavily on two revenue sources — increased federal stimulus funding and delays to previous tax policies. “We don't need more taxes, we need more taxpayers,” Lamont said in his budget address. “With our continued success in streamlining state government, we have reduced projected deficits to less than \$1 billion annually, which will be balanced by either a gradually growing economy, state and local aid from Washington, or a partial drawdown from our \$3.5 billion rainy day fund.”

The budget relies on \$775 million in federal dollars in fiscal 2022 and \$975 million the following year. Federal stimulus funds are expected to be less restrictive than prior rounds of funding, allowing the Governor to maintain education and municipal funding. Should the federal government withhold all or part of this funding, Lamont intends to use a portion of the state's historically high \$3.5 billion rainy day fund.

Tax Changes Coming

The budget proposes several tax policy changes impacting businesses, including permanently extending the 10 percent corporate surcharge originally imposed as a temporary measure in 2009. It also delays and extends the elimination of the capital base tax until fiscal 2028 and limits the carry forward of new research and development tax credits to 15 years.

The budget includes two notable new tax policies — the legalization of recreational cannabis, and sports betting and online casino gambling. In fiscal 2023, the proposed first full year of sales, marijuana is forecast to generate \$33.6 million in tax revenues. The Governor's proposed budget protects employers' rights, allowing them to maintain drug-free workplaces with the ability to take employment action against any employee impaired at work.

Transportation Fund Challenges

The Special Transportation Fund remains a challenge for lawmakers who continue to grapple with the fund's pending insolvency and the state's aging infrastructure. The Lamont administration proposes two policies to generate revenues for the fund: The Transportation Climate Initiative Program and the

Highway Use Tax. In December, Lamont joined his counterparts in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and the mayor of Washington, in signing a memorandum of understanding supporting TCI-P. The program is forecast to generate \$24.3 million in fiscal 2023 from allowances from fossil fuels, which would then be used to fund clean transportation projects.

Highway Use Tax (HUT) is a mileage-based tax on heavy-weight vehicles and would be used to fund safety, traffic congestion and various projects. That tax is estimated to generate \$45 million in fiscal 2023, its planned first year.

Workforce Reconfigurations

Spending proposals are anchored in five primary concepts: defeating COVID-19, making Connecticut more affordable, investing in the state's future, modernizing state government and expanding economic opportunities.

The budget prioritizes the streamlining of state services by implementing broad-based technology solutions and cutting duplicative functions through the Cliff Retirements adding Efficiency, Accountability and Technology to Economize State Government Program.

The CREATES program is projected to save the state \$20 million in fiscal 2022 and \$115M the following year through agency expenditure reductions and the closure of certain units and facilities.

Lamont will also submit legislation that tailors workforce development programs to in-demand sectors. The budget provides approximately \$465,907 annually to the Office of Workforce Strategies led by Kelli Vallieres, Connecticut's first Chief Workforce Officer. In addition to anticipated bond funding, this office is designed to focus on aligning state programs with the economy's labor demands of the state.

Lamont will also submit legislation that tailors workforce development programs to in-demand sectors as outlined in the Governor's Workforce Council 2020 Strategic Plan.

State Adds New Tools to Business Site

Connecticut is expanding its online business site with more features designed to make it easier for entrepreneurs to find information and services that help them start or manage operations. Gov. Ned Lamont said the additional features were based on initial feedback from people using the portal, first introduced in July 2020.

The new features include:

- A customizable resource center that centralizes 170 different programs for businesses. These resources are from multiple sectors and disciplines, providing financial, technical, and equity-based support programs for business owners in any stage of their business. Users can receive personalized recommendations for resources based on their business and then save them into a tailored collection that stays in their account.

Continued...

Lobbyist Update ... *continued*

- A new dynamic, content-rich dashboard that cuts down time needed to find crucial business information, link companies to state compliance needs, and equip business owners with vital, time-sensitive alerts that can impact their business.
- The latest updates on the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic right from the dashboard includes point-of-time data with direct access points for deeper exploration of vaccination numbers, positive cases, business and employer resources and official state guidance.

'Digital Solution'

"Our goal with the state's online business portal is to provide a seamless digital solution to current and potential business owners with full-service, personalized guidance about planning, starting and operating a business in Connecticut," Lamont said. He added that the new updates to business.ct.gov move Connecticut closer to its goal of having entrepreneurs spend less time dealing with the state and more time on their businesses.

The business portal also fulfills one of Lamont's promises — to streamline state business processes, putting more information and forms online to reduce paperwork.

More than 2,500 new businesses have launched with the help of the new portal, said Josh Geballe, the state's chief operating of-

ficer and commissioner of administrative services. He added that the recent portal update "shows our commitment to continuous improvement so that our residents can spend more time growing their business, with their families, and enjoying our great state, rather than wrestling with government bureaucracy."

Lawmakers Review Workers' Comp Expansion

The Legislature's Labor and Public Employees Committee is reviewing several measures expanding the state's workers' compensation system.

The committee's February agenda included four bills extending benefits for mental and emotional impairments suffered by workers. Any expansion of workers' compensation coverage increases premiums on businesses of all sizes. The most robust of the four bills is SB 660, which extends workers' compensation benefits for mental or emotional impairments to cover all workers.

Additional Bills

The other three workers' compensation measures are more narrowly drawn.

- **SB 665** allows emergency medical service providers to obtain benefits for certain mental or emotional impairments.

Continued...

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- **SB 666** requires workers' compensation coverage for certain mental or emotional impairments caused by on-job actions, removes restrictions that limit coverage to injuries related to nonphysical injuries, and provides coverage for all Department of Correction job classifications, emergency medical staff and dispatchers.
- **HB 5952** assesses a daily \$250 penalty on the losing party in a workers' compensation action.
- **SB 141** makes cancer a presumptive line of duty injury, granting professional and volunteer firefighters diagnosed with cancer eligibility for workers' compensation and other benefits.
- Employers also have concerns with **HB 5952**, which assesses a daily \$250 penalty on the losing party in a workers' compensation action when they are found to be in violation of nonpayment due to undue delay.

Federal Assistance

Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)

This federal program prioritizes millions of Americans employed by small businesses by authorizing up to \$349 billion toward job retention and certain other expenses. Small businesses and eligible nonprofit organizations, Veterans organizations, and Tribal businesses described in the Small Business Act, as well as individuals who are self-employed or are independent contractors, are eligible if they also meet program size standards. For more information and to apply, visit sba.gov/ppp.

SBA Assistance

On March 16, 2020, the U.S., Small Business Administration approved Governor Lamont's request to begin offering disaster-relief loans to Connecticut small businesses and nonprofits. Companies in the state can now apply for loans of up to \$2 million through a special page, sba.gov. This site includes valuable information for businesses.

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State Resources

DECD's COVID-19 Business Emergency Response Unit

The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) created a COVID-19 Business Emergency Response Unit dedicated to assisting businesses navigate resources and develop new resources. A dedicated phone line is available at 860/500-2333 to aid Connecticut's small businesses and carwashes for this purpose.

Unemployment assistance

Workers directly impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic no longer must be actively searching for work to qualify for unemployment assistance. And employers who are furloughing workers can use the Department of Labor's shared work program, which allows businesses to reduce working hours and have those wages supplemented with unemployment insurance.

Business Interruption Insurance

A business interruption insurance policy should list or describe the types of events it covers. Events that are not described in the policy are typically not covered. It is important to review the policy exclusions, coverage limits, and applicable deductibles with your agent, broker or insurer. The Connecticut Insurance Department has an FAQ that provides more information.

Small Business Owner's Guide to the CARES Act

On March 27, 2020, the United States Congress approved the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide the country with relief from the impact of COVID-19. For a guide about how the act will impact small businesses visit home.treasury.gov.

Safe Workplace Rules for Essential Employers

Effective April 7, 2020, every essential workplace in the state is required to take additional protective measures to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Executive Order No. 7V requires the commissioner of DECD to issue mandatory statewide rules prescribing such additional measures. Such rules will be mandatory throughout the state and supersede and preempt any current or contemplated municipal order. DECD published the Safe Workplace Rules for Essential Employers on its website, outlining guidance for essential workplaces.

Reimbursement of medical leave costs

The Connecticut Department of Insurance reminds small and medium-sized employers of recent guidance from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on COVID-19 - related medical leave at portal.ct.gov.

Other Federal Resources

COVID Loan Tracker:

www.covidloantracker.com

NC

P.J. Cimini, Esq. is the CCA's Lobbyist and a partner in Capital Strategies Group, LLC, in Hartford. You can reach him at 860/983-2581 or pj@csgct.com



P.J. Cimini



Keep watching our website for updates on the 2021 CCA Golf Classic:

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Here we are in early February waiting on the winter weather to cooperate and give us some volume. The reason that New Jersey is called the Garden State seems to be our rain and moderate temperatures which are better suited for produce than carwashing. This year, though, there has been some significant snow in parts of the state, but not on the shore where I operate, unfortunately.

Your association continues to aggressively work with our lobbyist, Al Gaburo, of Princeton Public Affairs Group (PPAG) on your behalf. Currently, several carwash tours with state legislators have happened, and some have been rescheduled due to weather. Hopefully, these activities will bear fruit in the coming months, and are important so that our legislators better understand our industry and see the value in keeping us open if things start to shut down again.

Our association's normal in-person meetings and activities, such as the annual Children's Specialized Hospital Golf Outing and Carwash Tour, are not happening because of COVID. What we are trying out is a ZOOM meeting format. The Northeast Regional Carwash Convention participating associations (NRCC) had one virtual meeting on Zoom and the CWONJ has our first Zoom meeting for later this month. It's a painless way to connect with us for an hour from your home office, wash or phone. If you don't make the February Zoom, please try to make future ones.

The good news is that the NRCC, October 4-6, is still on schedule. Just think how great it will be to look at shiny, new carwash equipment, and catch up with friends. Yes, we will be wearing masks and things might look a little different, but so what. The date seems right and by the end of the summer it is probable (fingers crossed) that most of the population will have been vaccinated. Our state government seems to be working hard on vaccinations. We now need for everyone to get them.

Still Building Back

In talking with carwash friends and looking at my own stores, the Pandemic is still affecting volume for many of us. 2020 was not a good year, obviously, and like the rest of the world I welcomed 2021 thinking the change of a date would automatically change business fundamentals. But, no such luck. The most basic part of carwashing is dirty cars. Obviously, with offices closed and work at home still in effect, total trips in a car are significantly down. What I never considered was the effect closed schools would have on our volumes, as well. With schools being closed or in a hybrid format, the community dynamic is thrown out of sink. Every High School and school system represents several thousand people and hundreds of cars moving around daily. The good news for all is that finally schools are starting to reopen on a five-day a week basis. Since I have a high school junior and senior at home, I am not a disinterested party.

Let's all stay safe and wash some cars and keep looking optimistically toward a brighter 2021.



Doug Rieck, CWONJ President

A Holiday-Winning Wash

Magic Wash in Manahawkin, NJ, has received two awards

recently by the Stafford Township Recreation Department for its creativity and community support. In October they were awarded "Best Carved Pumpkin" in their Jack-O-Lantern Jubilee/Business Division and over the holidays they were touted "Best Gingerbread House," also in the Business category. Congrats to pumpkin and gingerbread architect Kathleen Rieck for her creativity and community spirit. **NC**



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CWONJ Scholarship Recipients To Be Announced in April



The Car Wash Operators of New Jersey's annual Scholarship winner(s) will be announced after the April 2 deadline for submission. Two, \$1,000 scholarships can be awarded.

This exceptional member benefit is open to employees or direct family members of an employee of any CWONJ member. The recipient must be an employee, full or part time, for at least one year and have graduated high school or the equivalent. The can-

didate must also be enrolled or plan to enroll at an accredited two- or four-year college or university. The recipient cannot be an owner, or direct family member of an owner of a carwash facility, manufacturer or retail supplier to the carwash industry. **NC**



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PPAG Takes Legislators On Wash Tours

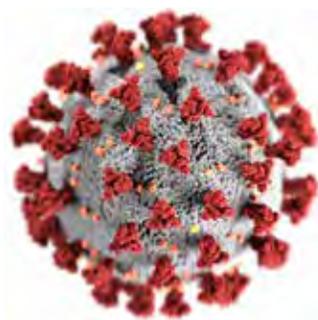


Princeton Public Affairs Group (PPAG) Lobbyist, Al Gaburo, has begun to conduct tours of members washes to better educate key legislators about the industry, according to Car Wash Operators of New Jersey President Doug Rieck. "These tours are critical for us to showcase the safe and necessary businesses we operate in New Jersey to legislators who make the decisions in Trenton. Our lobbyist, Al Gaburo, is helping us to ensure we keep washing cars no matter what direction this Pandemic takes. His efforts are critical and a significant commitment on behalf of our membership."

According to Gaburo, "Getting key legislators in front of your members and their operations will help us demonstrate the industry's importance. It's a great way to educate them." **NC**

For more information on PPAG visit ppag.com

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Greeting from the Mid-Atlantic Carwash Association (MCA)!

Like many of you, MCA members have been riding out the Pandemic as best we can. Wash members faced a lot of challenges early on during the COVID lockdown in March of 2020. MCA was there to support them, added some resources to the website, www.mcacarwash.org, and held well-received Zoom calls for members to share concerns.

During this Winter season, MCA is in a holding pattern which is kind of symbolic of life right now. I imagine vendor members and wash owners/operators are doing the same. We all hope that bonus points are given for those still in the game! And I would add that you cannot necessarily change a situation, but you can control the way you react to it. Don't let it ruin who you are as a person.

We remain in virtual mode as do most organizations, but you can still reach out. Several of us have called each other, sometimes just to chat about life in general. Remember, our lives are not all about carwashing. The great thing about MCA is that we all seem to like each other. We have some great memories of all the different activities we used to do as a group and look forward to doing them again. Why not share a great memory by email today? Or better yet, call. It might be just the pick me up that a friend needs today.

I have been a part of valuable friendships which continue to aid me in parts supply. When deliveries are slow or that certain part is not in stock anywhere, I have found a carwash friend might have just what I need on their shelf. Reach out and if nothing else, share some out-of-the-box thinking about your current dilemmas.

With vaccines starting to roll out, we all hope to see an increase of business and a return to a new normacy by summer. MCA will soon be making loose plans for 2021 meeting dates with a back-up plan to at least see others via Zoom. Other creative thoughts are always welcome.

If you know of an important matter or would like to share something our members would be interested in, please shoot me an email at mhashleyjr@gmail.com or give me a call at 540/975-3354. We are looking for ways for everyone to feel connected right now. I look forward to the day we resume our face-to-face activities. Until then, keep on keeping on!



M.H. Ashley

Mike Ashley, MCA President



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

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I hope that by this time we have made substantial progress on vaccinating the nation and the world. Maintaining our vigilance, to protect ourselves and those around us, is very important and, of course, I hope this message finds you well.

The New England Carwash Association (NECA) had another successful virtual meeting this winter that included two panel discussions. Ceramic vs. Carnauba wax covered the differences in chemical make-up, application, importance to the operator and to the customer. Drying efficiency included placement of blowers, flip nozzles and heated blowers. We ended the meeting with a wine and cheese tasting to add some fun.

The NECA board recognized the outgoing board members; Kevin McLoughlin, Jeff Arimento, Micah Smith and Mat Paisner for taking the time to volunteer and continue to make our industry stronger by supporting the NECA with their experience, expertise and energy. I am confident they, like the many before them, will continue to be very active in our industry.

The NECA continues to be very fortunate as new members volunteer and create new progressive initiatives. Molly Messina, whose family owns Royal T Car Wash, noticed the NECA's LinkedIn and Facebook pages needed some overdue attention. She will be taking the lead with a committee to update our social media and bring fresh perspective to our Association. This will work well with our new Digital Reputation Management campaign that the NECA launched in 2020. The campaign has focused on the Coronavirus but will pivot to more carwash industry knowledge for our customers as soon as the Pandemic is mitigated. The new www.carwashsafe.com website lists the coordinates of every NECA member carwash, which allows for the targeted advertising to reach all member locations equally.

I encourage you to read the companion article on our January event for even more details about the Digital Reputation Management program, the January 26 panel presentations and other activities of our great association.

Stay safe and stay well.



Patrick Mosesso, NECA President

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NECA's Winter Event in Three Parts

Part I: Welcome, Reports, Updates

Newly-installed President Patrick Mosesso welcomed more than 80 people to the January 26 Annual Winter Event, made possible with the efforts of a hard-working committee and through the support of generous sponsors AutoWash Technologies, DRB Systems, Maintenance Technology, Simoniz USA and Washify Services. Plus, Fernando and Fabiano from Washify again worked behind the scenes to pull off this virtual event.

Mosesso recognized outgoing board members and introduced Operator VP Jeff Katseff and Treasurer John Shalbey, who presented association business reports.

During the past year, the New England Carwash Association (NECA) has been working on a Digital Reputation Management and Marketing Program which was launched last fall. Scott Bernstein, COO of Mittcom, the agency working with the association to deliver the program, reported statistics indicating the program's initial success with more than 182,000 individuals having been introduced to NECA and our carwashing messaging through www.carwashesafe.com. There has already been nearly 1,000 location searches for local area carwashes; and more than 158,000 individuals have watched the videos, some more than once. This data is being used to re-target interested individuals. To drive business to member washes, every member carwash has been geo-targeted by zip code to create a distance radius around each wash, the size of which is determined by population density. As more people visit the site and click through, the cost to NECA decreases, and the benefit to our members and the New England market grows.

Part II: Education: Panel Presentation: Carnauba vs Hot Wax

Moderator: Chris Ouimet/Fitzy's Car Wash

Panelists: Frank Yonker/Qual-Chem, John Shalbey/RoJo, Stu Hulsey/ZEP, Chris Zona/Fresh Auto Wash, Al West/Simoniz

The discussion began by differentiating between Carnauba hot wax, a natural occurring hard wax, with a high melting point that is rubbed in and sits on the surface and ceramic clear coat, a sealant composed of self-curing silicone polymers that harden over time and bond to the vehicle's surface. Although they do similar things, according to the experts, ceramic has some added water repellency.

The panelists agreed that if space and budget allows, offer as many options to the customer as possible. These are value-added services that work to increase the average ticket. They suggested situating your Carnauba application in the first half of the tunnel and the ceramic application toward the end.

Ceramic is all the rage now in the detail industry and experi-



encing increased customer demand, according to the panelists. Each finish tends to last for around 30 days but variable conditions such as weather, the type of wash, etc. affect Carnauba shine and ceramic durability.

Panelists pointed out that there is an additive effect over time. Applying a drying agent with ceramic is advantageous since the more layers, the greater the depth of beauty. In addition, a drying agent will help rinse out of cracks and crevices.

The products work so well together but there might be some challenges in older inbay automatic configurations. You may not be able to put up another arch although equipment manufacturers are adding more relays and injectors to accommodate more applications. It was advised that it's important to balance the spacing between applications to get water off the car.

Operators are marketing to consumers through on-site signage and Facebook. Some are offering the applications a la carte at the point of sale, some are bundling the applications in their higher-end packages, and some are customizing expanded plans on customer request.

Panel Presentation: Maximizing Drying Efficiency

Moderator: Mat Paisner/ScrubuDub

Panelists: Mike Snow/Maintenance Tech, Matt McNamara/PECO Car Wash Systems, Travis Yaconis/Motor City Wash Works, Chris Zona/Fresh Auto Wash and John Shalbey/RoJo

To start, the panelists agreed that assuming standard tunnel length and chain speed, chemistry has a greater effect on drying than equipment and heating. They noted that flash drying can slow down the movement of water droplets but all factors need to be in balance for the most effective wash.

They discussed whether heated drying makes sense all year long, or in winter only. They noted that this is very well accepted in the colder areas of the country since it will evaporate micro droplets. It can be included in higher wash packages or sold as an a la carte service.



The panelists agree that when it comes to blower nozzles, length not shape, and placement, make the difference. The shape and size also depends on application. In addition, customer perception should be considered.

There were mixed opinions on whether dryer flips are worth the investment. They seem to be very effective in drying the backs of SUVs. It was suggested that if used, install them on the last drying arch.

Elephant ears also work well and you can get good results by adjusting the drying angle of your drying equipment. Operators were advised to keep in mind that the more “stuff,” the more problems, and that simple is often better.

There was no one answer to the optimum length of drip space before drying because of the variety of factors to consider: chain speed, chemistry, equipment configuration, even vehicle sizes. Everyone agreed, since there is no substitute for gravity, that they would like more drip space.

There were some suggestions on how to determine the

best drying equipment configurations. It may depend on space with a preference for 10-12 feet of drip space, which is not always possible. Space, again, and line speed are important. It was suggested to use three arches (more is overkill) and 10-12 blowers, and if possible a mechanical towel drying system. Customers react positively to the quiet, pillow-like effect of mechanical towel drying after the noise of the wash.



Part III - A Taste of Napa Valley

The reward! Pre-registrants received packages that included half bottles of Napa Valley Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, and blocks of paired cheeses from Vermont. Cassandra, wine expert from Julio’s, provided a history of wine making in America, an explanation of why Napa Valley produces such fine wine, and notes on what to notice in the wine tasted.

NC



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Triple Play's Second Site Could Be One of More to Come



By Alan M. Petrillo



The site's attractive exterior boasts a line of big windows along its tunnel and the eye-catching Triple Play baseball logo.

The second Triple Play site in Attleboro was purchased in 2019 by partners Terrance Elder and Dave Ellard.



The owners of Triple Play Car Wash and Quick Lube in Attleboro, MA, saw an opportunity for expansion when a competitor's site four miles away went up for sale. Although the site was in a bit of a run-down state, and had some amenities they weren't interested in, the partners purchased the land and business in January of 2019.

Triple Play's original site on US Route 1 in Attleboro consists of a 150-foot flex-service tunnel, a 50-foot touchless inbay automatic, 15 vacuums, a 1,100-square foot waiting room, a six-bay detailing center, and a three-bay quick lube center, all on 3.3 acres in the heart of a regional shopping area. It also has a Mobil gas station with 14 fueling locations and a 4,500-square foot Mobile On the Run convenience store that has Dunkin Donuts and a New England Hot Dog Company location within the store.

"The new site at 348 E. Washington St., North Attleboro, had an existing gas station, exterior tunnel, and self-service wash bays, said Triple Play co-owner Terrance Elder, "but we didn't want another convenience store or self-service bays, so we tore it all down and put in a full-service gas station, a 120-foot ex-

press exterior tunnel and 20 free vacuums. We wanted to focus on washing cars and putting in a big vacuum section, so we dropped the six self-service bays to put in the free vacuums on a half-acre section of the property."

Co-owner Dave Ellard pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic, luckily, did not impact the construction of the carwash and gasoline station. "COVID didn't impact us at all," he said. "We had all our plans approved before COVID hit, and had our contractors all lined up to execute the job. Actually, construction in the area slowed down when COVID first hit, so our contractors were eager to get started on our project. They got it completed in 15 weeks."

Ellard and Elder kept the baseball theme and the carwash prices at the new location the same as those at their US Route 1 site four miles to the north. A Double Wash is \$16 and includes an undercarriage wash, wheel bright, Simoniz Rain Shield and Diamond Polish. The Triple Wash costs \$20 and adds Triple Foam, Rain-X, Lava Foam, and extra wheel cleaning and polish. The Home Run Wash, at \$26, adds Simoniz Hot Wax Shine.

Continued ...

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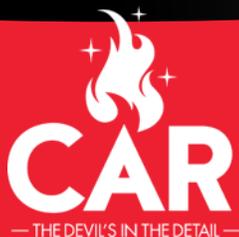
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Triple Play's Second Site ... continued

The DRB-equipped site boasts two gates, an attractive red awning and lots of colorful, readable signage.



The wash features a \$29.99 monthly unlimited plan.

The 120-foot express tunnel includes 20 free vacs and a full-service gas station.



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Elder notes that he and Ellard achieved their original goals at their first Triple play site, and are more than optimistic about their second and have their sites set on future Triple Plays.

"Our projections were pretty close on our first site," he said, "where we did a good volume on the carwash and the quick lube, higher than we had projected. So we're confident that although we're only a couple of months into operation at the new site, we are optimistic."

He continued, "We are thinking of southeastern Massachusetts for other express exterior carwash sites. We would like to be a regional chain. We think the carwash industry will continue to grow because investors and existing carwash operators are looking to build new carwashes and rehab older ones, so we believe the carwash business will continue to remain healthy for some time to come."

NC

Alan M. Petrillo is a Tucson, AZ-based journalist, a former upstate New Yorker, and contributing editor of Northeast Carwasher. He's the author of the historical mysteries, Full Moon and Asylum Lane, and his latest historical thriller, A Case of Dom Perignon, all available at www.amazon.com



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- Not have won a scholarship from NECA in the last year

Recipients will be evaluated and chosen based on their high school/academic standing, leadership capabilities, community involvement, strength of character, personal achievement, plan of study and future goals. Financial need also may be considered.

Please be sure that applications are faxed, or postmarked, by April 30, 2021.

NECA will notify applicants by mail on or before June 4, 2021.

**For more information and a scholarship application,
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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I've been a life-long fan of soccer. I played, my dad played and his dad played, and so on, and so on. All three of my kids picked up the game at an early age and I had nothing to do with that, well, maybe a little. I was drawn to the game mainly because every game is different, unlike other sports like basketball that call time-outs, football that has a two-minute warning and an opportunity to call every play from the sidelines, or groups made up of offensive/defensive specialists as in lacrosse, soccer has none of those things. Don't misunderstand me, I enjoy all of those sports, in fact, each of my kids also played them in high school and beyond, but there is something special about the "beautiful game" that I truly love. That love for spontaneity and fluidity (and the fact that my body just wouldn't let me play anymore) lead me to coaching more than 25 years ago. I've coached all levels and age groups and have enjoyed each season more than the last.

This past September was supposed to be my first year as our high school's freshman soccer coach. The varsity coach whom I've coached with for years offered me the opportunity early in 2020 to coach the team. Then COVID hit and everything changed.

My first season was canceled, a bright spot was my youngest son, who is now a senior, got a chance to play soccer for his high school team in the fall when football was postponed to spring. He switched from soccer to football in the 7th grade, so it's been a while since a "Hartl" has worn a Shaker High School varsity soccer jersey. I was a little more than excited to be part of the coaching staff and watch my son play.

Fast forward to this past Christmas where the theme for dad was everything coaching. I opened boxes with new shirts, hats and jackets with our school logo and "Coach Hartl" embroidered on them. I also received a couple of books on coaching techniques and strategies from my oldest son — who is coaching now too.

One title grabbed me right away — a book on mental toughness and while the book leans toward an athletic setting, it has real messages for all of us. Let's face it, 2020 was tough but the start of 2021 has been better, but not by much. Hopefully, by the time you are reading this President's Letter things will be much improved. We will all be washing more cars and making plans to attend the Northeast Regional Carwash Convention (NRCC), October 4-6 at the Atlantic City Convention Center (ACCC). I look forward to having a beer, or two, in person at the new Hard Rock Hotel & Casino with friends old and new.

The first few pages of the book set the tone with sections titled, "Love the Pressure," "Fixate on the Long Term," "Use the Competition," "Reinvent Yourself," "Celebrate the Victories" and "The Will to Win." The authors constantly push an underlying message of being passionate in all areas of your "game" — physically and mentally. As we head out of the COVID-19 tunnel, and things start to resemble normal, we need to maintain our mental toughness. It's easy to give in or give up, like teams down by double digits in the final minutes of a game, or quit running when the legs are heavy and the lungs are burning, but those are also the times when those who want to excel and become the best of the best remember why they started and they reignite their passion. It's been a long year and many

of us have done what we needed to do to survive. Now it's time to reignite the passion, be mentally tough and not just survive but thrive. Start by making plans to attend the 2021 NRCC and reconnect with the industry, some old friends and strive to make some new ones. For now, my new shirts, hat and jacket are hanging in the closet. The coaching plans are piling up in my notebook and I can't wait to get back to the field. As they say in the soccer community, "See you on the Pitch," and I'll also see you in October in Atlantic City at the 2021 NRCC!



Walter Hartl, NYSCWA President

New York State Car Wash Association Profit and Loss



January - December 2020

Income

Interest Income	6,307.24
Meetings Income	660.00
Membership Dues	16,270.00
Northeast Convention Income	51,334.21
Promotional Fees	630.00
Vendor Sponsorships	375.00

Total Income **\$75,576.45**

Gross Profit **\$75,576.45**

Expenses	
Advertising/Promotional	178.20
Bank Service Charges	20.00
Credit Card Fees	399.00
Director Fees	23,356.74
Dues & Subscriptions	125.00
Entertainment Expense	50.00
Insurance Expense	1,495.00
Legislative Fees	21,000.00
Office Expenses	1,026.28
Postage Expense	611.91
Printing/Graphics	526.65
Professional Services fees	800.00
QuickBooks Payments Fees	517.81
Telephone	242.06
Website Host	359.40
Website Maintenance	122.50

Total Expenses **\$50,830.55**

Net Operating Income **\$24,745.90**

Net Income **\$24,745.90**

Checking Balance **48,815.50**

Money Market Balance **76,041.46**

TOTAL CASH ON HAND **124,856.96**

Wednesday, Jan 27, 2021 05:21:01 PM GMT-8 - Cash Basis

More on the Newest Hoffman Wash Coming in the Summer Issue



Hoffman Car Wash, Latham, NY

Our summer issue will feature intel on the newest Hoffman Car Wash location on Troy-Schenectady Road in Latham. The 160-foot express exterior has used some clever marketing methods to successfully build up volume. We'll tell you more about the state-of-the-art wash in our summer issue. **NC**

Finding & Retaining Employees In A Pandemic



Look for information on a Zoom event slated for late spring!

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It's a Knockout!

By Suzanne L. Stansbury

When Richard Hameroff decided he had one big project left in him, he didn't realize that it would end up being the hardest thing he has ever done. He also didn't realize it would be impeded by a Pandemic and just about every other obstacle you can imagine (and some you really can't). But that didn't stop the 53-year-old who opened his second business, Knockout Car Wash, a \$6 million express exterior on Route 20 in Guilderland, NY, an Albany suburb, in September.



The \$6 million express exterior opened in September 2020.



The vac drops include a compressed air feature to help customers get into hard-to-reach areas.



Hameroff, who also owns Broadway Auto Clinic in Menands, NY, an auto repair, lube and dog wash that also includes two in-bay automatics (one friction and one frictionless), has been in business with his wife, Sandra, for 25 years. Sandra operates the Menands location while Richard is hands-on in Guilderland. They are 50:50 partners in the new wash. "It was very expensive, and a winter build, and of course I was under the impression that we would be able to open before the winter," he recounts. "I didn't plan on COVID. I didn't plan on a lot of things."

But three years ago he thought it was time for a change and Hameroff jumped in feet first. The success of Broadway Auto Clinic afforded him some of the funding to dig deeper into his carwash passion and after missing out on a property in North Greenbush, his sights were set on building a carwash that was like nothing else in the market. A market, by the way, that already boasts one of the best operators in the country and another established operator, Dave Fusco of Colonial Car Wash, just two miles down the road. "Quite honestly, we found many properties but the problem was that the Hoffmans (Hoffman Car Wash) pretty much have a carwash everywhere," he said. "It was difficult to find a piece of property that wasn't right next to them."

But he did finally decide on the Route 20 site across from a regional grocery store chain, a number of other retail establishments and residential condos and single-family homes, but that's when the "easy" part ended.



It's a family affair at Knockout Car Wash. (L to R) Noah, Rick, Hunter and Sandra Hameroff.

Zoning Hurdles

The first obstacle to overcome was getting the property rezoned from local business to general business with a special-use permit, as well as a variance for setbacks. "One of the properties wasn't even for sale on the site, so we ended up having to purchase it," said Hameroff. "It was only a fraction of an acre and dilapidated. The owner did very well because he knew we needed it to move forward."

Convincing the town of Guilderland that the site should be rezoned was time consuming. "Spot zoning was not an option," recounted Hameroff. "But by having two parcels of property we were able to get them to change it to general business zoning. They were receptive to us, but they said what we wanted to accomplish would take some time, and it did, five months."

Because of the zoning issue and the site's disrepair, Hameroff had hurdles ahead of him, according to Guilderland's Chief Building & Zoning Inspector Jacqueline Coons. "It's not that the site was an eyesore as much as it was a parcel of land that people knew would be challenging to develop," said Coons. "And the longer it sat undeveloped, the further in disrepair it would become. But Mr. Hameroff is a persistent individual. He had to go up against a lot of opposition."

Continued ...

The massive American Flag is hard to miss from either direction on Route 20 in Guilderland, NY.



Wash Name Packs a Punch

There's more to the name of the new Knockout Car Wash at 2123 Western Avenue in Guilderland, NY, than meets the eye, according to owner Richard Hameroff, who opened the express exterior in September of 2020. "Part of the property on the site belonged to Patty Becker, whose father trained Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) for the Olympics," he said. "When we first went into that house we saw a picture of Muhammad Ali and learned the story and loved the history of the site."



"We had a different name picked out that was suggested to us by our marketing company, Suds Creative, but I wasn't convinced," he said.

It was Hameroff's mother, Sylvia, 93, who pushed for the wash to be named Knockout. "A year ago in November my mother was in a severe car accident," said Hameroff. "She was pretty much told she would die. Prior to the accident, she had mentioned 'boxing' and how about 'Knockout?' She thought because of the Cassius Clay story and what had to be done to this property and it's history that it would be a great name. So, in honor of my mother we named it 'Knockout.'"

Despite some pushback from one motorist who was offended by the name after enduring physical abuse, Hameroff says the name made sense. "When we say 'Knockout,' aside from the boxing glove, we want to blow people away with our wash product as well as our customer service." **NC**

Ben Becker, a former principal of Albany's Philip Schuyler High School, was one of Ali's Olympic team coaches in 1960, the year he won a gold medal in Italy.

Opposition to the Wash

After overcoming the zoning issues, a number of opposition groups expressed concerns over the wash's impact on the environment, community and local wildlife. For example, Guilderland Coalition for Responsible Growth (a grassroots group that strives to ensure that residents have an equal voice in the town's growth to that of developers) had and still have concerns about water use and discharge to a nearby creek; noise, traffic and safety at the intersection, the change of zoning and questions how the carwash fits the character of the town, according to a statement released by the group. In addition, the Coalition feels that the town failed to determine that the carwash was banned by the comprehensive plan and there was never any disclosure for requests for tax relief during any of the town meetings to get approval of the project. There were also concerns that the owners did not disclose their lighting scheme which, according to the Coalition, is extreme and distracting to some drivers. The group also had concerns over the site's large flag pole, which they claim is out of character with other Guilderland businesses and the town as a whole. The Coalition also believes that the town of Guilderland should have been more

protective of the historical significance of the pre-existing buildings on the site, one of which dated to the early 1800's.



The MacNeil-equipped tunnel is 190 feet and features G & G Industrial Lighting, a Captive Air unit, a PurClean/PurWater reclaim system, Vacutech vacs and DRB controls.



Another unexpected aspect of possible concern revolved around the area's rare Karner blue butterfly population, said Building & Zoning Inspector Coons. "Where the carwash site is within an area of study for the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, but their property ended up not being a major area of concern for the butterflies' protection."

Luckily, the Karner blues were not a huge issue, but Hameroff noted that since the wash was in mock wetlands, some of the trees were not allowed to be cut down because of the existing bat population. He also needed to be aware of the surrounding historical district that includes a cemetery. "I didn't use a lawyer," said Hameroff. "I handled it all on my own and spoke on my behalf. I countered the opposition with facts and logic." And eventually, the opposition settled down and the next hurdles were tackled and they were pricey.

DOT Challenges

The site had a three-way light at its entrance and exit, but busy Route 20 traffic (42,000/day traffic count pre-Pandemic; down 35 percent today, according to Hameroff) necessitated the addition of another turning lane and light. "We took care of any safety ramifications by installing a brand new four-way traffic light," said Hameroff. "This meant that we had to add new poles to hold the lights up, all new lights and we paid for it all ourselves. We also had to widen the road by six feet which required moving utility poles back about seven or eight feet and widening the road about 400 feet." According to Coons, the work at the traffic light cost approximately \$1 million.

In addition to that, Hameroff had to build a road for the Center for Nursing at the Foundation of NYS Nurses, Inc. which sits just off his property, to the right of three-quarters of an acre he sold to Sunmark Credit Union, per the encouragement of the town's planning board. "It was expensive, but not a deal breaker," said Hameroff. "A path of least resistance."

Site Reconstruction

So, done, done, done and done, right? Well, not so fast. Next, Hameroff had to address a significant drainage issue on the site that originally included a single-family home that was converted to a photo studio, another single-family home and a carriage house all nestled into a hill below Propsect Hill Cemetery. Initial soil boring tests, however, did not indicate subsurface soil issues. (And, by the way, three of the four structures required asbestos abatement.) "The original property was much higher than it is now. We had to remove 10,000 yards of dirt," recounted Hameroff. "We thought originally it was all sand and would be easy, and the majority of it was until we got closer to the road and it became clay and that changed the equation quite a bit. So, overall, the site was extremely wet."

Hameroff said the site is not technically a wetland, but that



Extensive drainage work was done on the site including a large, deep curtain drain around the entire perimeter of the property. The removal of 10,000 yards of dirt was also necessary.



The wash features three auto cashiers for ease of entry.

it includes a water source coming off the hill that emulates a wetland. As a result, the wash is 20 feet higher than Route 20 and required a grading plan that used as much of the soil from the property as possible. The end of the property is two feet lower than the road. Luckily, from a visibility standpoint, the wash hits you in the face as does a massive American flag. “We ended up putting a large, deep curtain drain around the entire perimeter of the property to dry the site out, otherwise it would have been unusable.”



One of the many site challenges was the intersection onto busy Route 20 that required widening the road and an additional turning lane and light.

Then Came COVID

You can never anticipate every obstacle when building a carwash, or any business for that matter, and a worldwide Pandemic, well, no one saw that coming. But still, Hameroff forged ahead. “Ok, we won’t be open in December, we’ll be open in February and then COVID hits in March and I figured we’d be open in June, but it was one thing after the other, after the other,” he said. “We missed pollen season, we missed the winter prior, we opened at the worst possible time of the year, but September turned out to be a great month with no rain, so we got lucky with that.”

But as you might guess, the reality of being behind on the timeline and the impact that COVID had on the fledging wash was significant. “COVID was the most heart-wrenching, expensive part of the build,” said Hameroff. “We were afraid that if they shut down the borders we would not get our equipment from



The wash name stemmed from a tie in at the site with Cassius Clay. Playing off the wash’s boxing theme, the wash options are fittingly named.

Continued...

Canada (MacNeil Wash Systems in Barrie, Ontario), and there was a rumored price increase, so we needed to take delivery sooner than later. We had equipment sitting on that hill for months and months and paying interest on it," he recounted. "As it turns out, that price increase would have been a pittance compared to what we had sitting on the hill. The only saving grace is that interest rates went down during that time so our carrying costs were extended a little bit."

Since the wash hadn't opened yet, it was not eligible for any loan from the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) or any other relief, and from late March to late May, New York State halted any non-essential construction. "It wasn't hard getting the money to build the wash," said Hameroff. "Securing a good interest rate was harder. The banks knew we had a good location and traffic count, and that we've been in business for 25 years and that we don't need to feed ourselves from this business, but I didn't sleep much during that time. I was running on nervous energy for over a year. It's the hardest thing I have ever done."

The First Winter

When construction opened back up, Hameroff was eager to get his wash completed and operational and on September 16, 2020, he opened the tunnel. Fast forward to mid-January and Hameroff remains optimistic and energized. "I never really saw myself doing something like this, but I like the carwashing business," he said. "I never saw myself building (one of)* the longest tunnels in the Northeast, but I did it."

The site is a MacNeil-equipped 190-foot express exterior. It features an array of G & G Industrial Lighting applications in the tunnel, as well as a high efficiency custom-designed Captive Air unit, a PurClean/PurWater reclaim system, a custom unit to clean the row of windows lining the tunnel, two 60-hp vacuum producers with 20 spots and 40 Vacutech drops, NCS' Clean-touch chemical and DRB controls. The vacuums also include a compressed air unit customers can use to blow out between hard-to-reach nooks and crannies. "We have plenty of room in the tunnel if we decide to shuffle some things around," he said. And since our initial interview Hameroff has added additional high pressure and hot water to his wash process.

The lighting option used, G & G's DMX LED fixtures, affords Hameroff the ability to change the arch lighting, wall-mounted mood lighting and white ambient lighting frequently. The newest version of this lighting, called ColorWash, can be controlled with the use of an app. "We can change out the lighting for holidays and special events and at night it's really impressive. People come here with their kids to see the lights in the tunnel," he said. "Children are training their parents to come at night because of the lights are really cool. That's what gives me pleasure, watching people enjoy something that my wife and I have accomplished."

Hameroff relied heavily on his equipment distributor, Jim Arvin, General Manager, East Region at National Carwash Solutions (NCS), the parent company for MacNeil Wash Systems, to help him lay out the wash and evolve the site. "I had a vision and

I knew what I wanted to do," said Hameroff. "I wanted to buy the best equipment and I researched the hell out of it. When I need support I also want to be able to call on one person and Jim's my friend and I trust him."

Arvin, who lost the inbay sale when Broadway Auto Clinic was being built, has since become Hameroff's best friend and biggest cheerleader. "Rich is someone who perseveres through extreme challenges," said Arvin. "It's been a long road, but he followed our guidance to the letter, even if it went against his own instincts."

As volume picks up the site's egress may pose some challenges on high-volume days. The wash can stack between 25-30 cars at the exit onto busy Route 20. "We have the ability to do 180 cars an hour, but the only limiting factor is the traffic light," said Hameroff. "We needed an organizational process to get people out on busy days, and get them used to also using the west-bound exit onto Route 20. That will take some education."

At the time of this writing the wash has experienced some 1,000 car days and has only requested DOT to make minor tweaks to the traffic light's timing. "We are doing well and will start spending more time and money on our marketing efforts moving forward," said Hameroff. "We used word of mouth and the newness of the site to get us off to a great start, but now we plan to do more including Facebook, local charity promotions and radio," he said. "My wife and I like to give back to the community that has helped us be successful. But our first and most important goal is to produce a really clean car before focusing on profitability. I am a firm believer that if you have a good product people talk about it and word gets out."

Customer Experience Key

It's been a huge learning curve for Hameroff going from operating two inbays to an express tunnel, but at the end of the day, just like with their first business, Broadway Auto Clinic, the Hameroffs, have one guiding principle and that is making sure their customers' expectations are exceeded. "All you have to do is treat people right," said Hameroff. "If people are unhappy, you have to make them happy. If there's an issue you have to deal with it and you have to treat people with respect. It's all about the experience," he added. "It's about offering presentation and value and a customer experience like no other, and that's what we have been concentrating on."

Could there be a second Knockout in Hameroff's future? Arvin is not discounting that prospect. "If you asked him today there's probably not a good chance, but knowing Rick and Sandra once they experience some of the joy and financial success of this site, the answer might change." **NC**

Suzanne L. Stansbury is the Editor/Publisher of the Northeast Carwasher magazine.

**Note that the longest tunnel in the Northeast is operated by Chris Vernon of Valet Auto Wash in Lawrenceville, NJ. It comes in at 245 feet.*



Still No Tip Credit for Carwash Workers

By William Y. Crowell, III

A pocket veto of legislation from 2019 has created some confusion in the carwash industry about tip credits. To clear up this confusion, as of December 31, 2020, tip allowances are not permitted in miscellaneous industries, which includes carwashes. Carwash operators are not permitted to keep or retain any portion of a tip that an employee receives. Carwash attendants are entitled the full minimum wage from the employer and to retain all tips.

The minimum wage increased on December 31, 2020, in Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties to \$14 per hour. In the remainder of the state, with the exception of New York City where the minimum wage remains at \$15 per hour, the minimum wage has increased to \$12.50 an hour.

A number of carwash operators raised questions about the effectiveness of the tip credit repeal based on a press report that the Governor pocket vetoed S.4030A (Ramos) A.6364C (Crespo). This bill abolished the tip credit in New York City, Westchester and Long Island for carwash workers specifically. The bill passed both houses of the legislature in 2019. The bill was delivered to the Governor for action on December 31, 2019. When the legislature is in session, the Governor has 10 days to approve or veto a bill. When the legislature has adjourned at the end of a year or earlier, which never happens anymore, the Governor has 30 days to approve a bill. If the Governor does not act within the 30-day period, the bill is pocket vetoed. The Governor did not act on this bill within the 30-day period so it was pocket vetoed. The pocket veto was reported by the press in early January of this year, despite the fact that it was vetoed months earlier. When the news of the pocket veto was released some operators were confused about the tip credits status.

In fact, the Governor's pocket veto was in recognition of the fact that the Department of Labor (DOL) through an Order of the Commissioner was eliminating the subminimum wage (tip

credit) for miscellaneous industries including carwashes. This Order of the Commissioner effectively made the legislation moot. The Order of the Commissioner was based on a DOL report. The Department of Labor held hearings on the tip credit. The majority of the positive comments for elimination of the tip credit were made by carwash attendants and nail salon workers. The Governor in his press release on December 31, 2019, stated, "Today, I am directing the Labor Department to put an end to the tip credit in industries with the highest risk of wage theft to help restore fairness for workers, many of whom are critical to the service industries that keep our economy moving forward."

NC



William Y. Crowell, III

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What if ... Ideas, things you never thought about, are waiting for you to discover them?

By Ray Justice

What if . . . you could enhance your Imagination and creativity to work for you?

What if . . . you learn to include your gut feel and your intuition so

that it opens up even more possibility?

What if . . . you could learn to trust your intuition more often than your thoughts?

And by the way, most of your thoughts are not enhancing your life, they are harming it.

Pause once in a while, anytime during your regular day, and notice what you were just thinking.

Chances are those thoughts were not very pretty, not encouraging, supportive or confidence building.

It is not easy to change the habits we have with our daily thoughts since we are not openly aware of them.

Let me tell you about “one of the ways” I limited my critical thinking while increasing my confidence and creativity, using the gifts of personal writing.

News from 1994

The following article was written for a Chamber of Commerce newsletter column in the mid-1990’s, that was my first occasion to write something that others may be reading. They originally asked me to write a regular column to share some of my insights on life. I refused several times as I had not written before and, in my opinion, had very weak grammar skills, and my spelling was, and is, awful. That also goes for my limited vocabulary and difficulty with pronouncing many words due to a hearing problem that was not known until later in life.

I finally said, “Ok,” because they told me I could write anything I wanted to and in any style I desired. They were not going to edit or alter anything I wrote, so how could I say no when they trusted me with whatever I wrote?

The following is my first article. Not knowing what to write about that would also fit into the business world was not clear. I had found writings that were very enlightening from Cicero over 2000 years ago.

So, for my first attempt at writing I copied some of his teachings and then added my own questions to follow. At the time I did not have the ideas or confidence to write about my own insights and philosophies. This system of using another’s quotes, followed by my questions, continued for the next several newsletters.

I share this story of how I started writing, to bring up the point that I had very little, if any experience, to express the skill of writing and storytelling. It was absolutely not in my belief system at all.

Many writing teachers and coaches encourage writing about anything you choose. They want to make sure you write, often, until you have a habit of doing so every day.

So this became a “What if...” for me. **What if I tried?** I was very confident talking about life situations but not writing, again the perceived weaknesses of grammar, and spelling held me back.

This is my first article in my hometown Chamber of Commerce newsletter.

Think Twice

By Raymond Justice, August, 1994

2000 years ago, Cicero made a list of the six basic mistakes:

Thinking that individual advancement is made by crushing others,

Worrying about things that can not be changed,

Insisting that something can not be done simply because you can not do it,

Refusing to set aside trivial preferences,

Failing to develop and refine the mind by studying and reading and

Compelling others to believe as you do.

If every decision we make, every choice we have, either makes things better

or makes them worse then...

What are we doing the same as 2000 years ago?

What do we need to look at?

If we are afraid of change, how will we learn? How will we grow?

If we can’t change the world or others, what can we change? OURSELVES?

What do we want to make better? Can we risk a change to catch the rewards?

Start now, start small. “A thousand mile journey, begins with one step.”

What will you change? When will you start?

Why I Chose This Topic

My purpose for this article is to encourage you to write, regularly, and if possible, in a journal.

I encourage using a journal, vs. writing on scrap paper or a

pad, because it feels better and helps our confidence as we grow. I suggest, strongly, to write privately, feeling very safe that your words will not be seen by anyone. When finished you can save, shred, or burn at your choice while understanding that no one will read your thoughts unless you so choose.

Totally private allows you to be open and more vulnerable instead of being careful to not write something that will be judged or criticized. Write for yourself only, keep it private. Later you can then decide what parts you may want to share with your best friend or even the whole world.

Writing opens up a side of you that you may not have paid attention to before.

Writing gets us into the present moment, more focused, more calming of our thoughts.

This allows awareness of our subconscious mind and our intuitive self.

If you actually put some practice time in you will amaze yourself while creating a habit of daily writing. You may need or want a catalyst to start your writing until you get into a rhythm. If so, write about something that feels good, or you feel grateful about. It can be about now or years ago, or it can also be about something that you did not feel good about or maybe something that you saw yesterday. It can be about almost anything including how you can't think about what to write. The initial purpose is to get the pen moving or the keyboard clicking, which by the way very few people do. They miss this opportunity to inspire themselves and miss many "aha" moments. The creativity, ideas and insights that show up will amaze you.

If possible, choose a location, or environment, to write in that does not have distractions and is calm and quiet. If this is not possible, write anyway doing your best to focus in the moment.

Pay special attention to the included photo quote about writing that says,

"Think with a Pen & Paper

The Pen has the Ideas & the Paper Remembers them for you

This following article titled "Up a Notch" is an example of what I was writing after several issues.

I am including it here, as it was written, more than 20 years ago. It still fits, it is still useful and may get you to thinking about what you can **Up a Notch in your life, maybe with writing.**

I added a few updated thoughts to go along with it at the end.

Think Twice

By Raymond Justice, April, 1998

Up a Notch

If I can't hear the radio, I turn it up a notch.

If the light is not bright enough to read, I turn it up a notch.

If it's cold in the house, I switch on the heat and turn it up a notch.

If I'm out of shape, my exercise gets stepped up a notch.

What if we took some of the other areas of our life and turned them up a notch?

Just a little bit?

From criticism, to compliment

From "bye now," to "thank you for coming."

From interrupting, to listening.

From looking away, to making eye contact. From saying, "I'll call," to really doing it.

From complaining, to willing.

From willing, to wanting to.

From wanting, to loving to.

From complacent, to sensitive.

From unemotional, to smiling.

From smiling, to laughing.

From being OK, to being nice.

From thinking about, to making a commitment.

From mentioning what's wrong, to acknowledging what's right.

From giving with strings attached, to sharing.

From turning away, to helping others.

What would it be like if we all stepped up our attitude, our compassion, just a bit?

From pleasant, to downright friendly.

Just one click, just a bit, a degree or two, up a notch.

You will make a difference, and guess what – it feels good.

Here are a couple thoughts to add on.

What if . . . we stepped up a notch on being friendly? on being **kinder** than you need to be?

What if we practiced having **happy thoughts**?

Or stepped up a notch on environmental conservation? On helping others, even those we do not know.

The idea is that you do not need to change your while life-style but by turning it up a notch you may become a role model for others as you improve your own life.

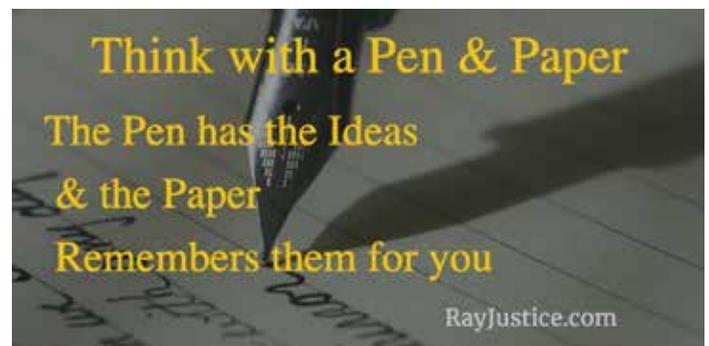
What if ... you UP it a Notch today?

NC



Ray Justice

*Ray Justice is an entrepreneur, poet and creativity explorer. He is a former carwash operator and past president of the NYSCWA. Visit him at ThoughtCompass.com where he offers two Free courses, *Ideas to Wonder* and *A Good Night's Sleep*.*



The Why's & How's of Building A Staffing Infrastructure



By Dave Snyder

In any business where staff is added to the mix, dynamics instantly change. How we incorporate staff can mean success or failure on many levels. Staffing can lead to a thriving business or help close its doors if not properly managed. Improperly managing staff can create a toxic work environment that is not a place in which customers or staff want to be. Many people out there think it is easy to run a business and do not think about what it takes to run daily operations on the back end. Unfortunately, many business owners also think this way. They end up paying more money in daily expenses for not taking the time to set things up correctly in the beginning, and not managing properly on a day-to-day basis. Many owners don't take the time to update policies, procedures and training. We can all watch staff walk out the door, be it on their own accord or through termination, and can quote all of the reasons they did not work out, while the whole time pointing the finger at them being the problem. They looked good when we hired them and they shined for a while, but then their true self came out. Did it, or did we fail them?

Don't Overlook HR

In the service industry there is always turnover. We all know that is a variable that is never going to change. However, how owners and managers set up staffing and pay rates can help slow down your attrition rate. Owners and managers often treat staff like they are just another piece of equipment, brought in to do a specific job and feel they should not have any emotions. Just like creating a wash that your customers want to come to by putting all the latest and greatest equipment into place and creating a show they will remember, you need to do the same for your employees by creating policies, procedures and training. Human Resources is often missed or brushed off as not a big deal. But if the proper structure is not in place, staff will fail eventually. Shooting from the hip daily will lead to many frustrations, injuries and accidents on site, all while flushing profit away.

For example, not having everything in writing and set up properly can lead to mishandling damage complaints, equaling unwanted claims. The lack of proper documentation can lead to bigger issues ranging from unemployment and labor practices, to Occupational Safety And Health Administration (OSHA) issues. Looking at the bigger picture and adding proper Human Resources can strengthen the business and create a stronger workforce. Think about this, when you need something from another business on a regular basis and you have several options to choose from to go get it, where do you go? I bet you lean toward the establishment where you are treated

well when you get there, and the staff smiles while engaging with you as you shop. Look at those places and think about all that could be happening behind the scenes to create this culture by the staff and management.

Management of staff must be treated as risk management. Right up front you need to look at everything you need in place, and you want to be proactive and not reactive every time something comes up. With all the competition popping up, now is not the time to just hire the first person who comes in off the street looking for a job. You want to build an application process, interview and hiring process, an initial orientation, and structured training times for new hires. Make sure each position you hire for has a complete job description so potential candidates can read it and understand the position's expectations. Don't be afraid to have more than one step in your interviewing process. Start with a phone interview and follow up in person if they pass phase one.

As part of the in-person interview walk them around the property and let them see how things operate. By having a multi-step process, it helps weed out the less serious candidates. Some will look and decide this is not for them and save you a headache of them quitting on day two or three. It takes time to build this kind of staffing infrastructure, but it will pay off in the end. If you currently do not have all of this in place, it can be worked in and existing staff will have to get onboard and change with the times. This can be done with the right spin and for many they would like to see changes that will lead to consistency and an even better workplace. We need to create a culture that will keep the great employees and lead to referrals for new staff when needed. We should also not be afraid to clean out those who do not want to be a positive part of the operation.

Work a Plan

As I have worked with many great wash operations over the last few years, I have seen wonderful things happening out there in the industry. I have also talked to some frustrated operators who are struggling with declining car counts and high staff turnover. Unfortunately for some of those operators, while evaluating their operations you can see many of the root causes to their issues. Many of them stemmed from not being set up right from the get go, and over time it has taken its toll. Many have not moved forward, changing their business model with the times to attract new customers and a better workforce through training and a positivity. They did not have much in writing for staff to work from and just hired anyone with a pulse because they had no other options.

Moving forward I am going to highlight some items to

help provide structure with staffing initiatives that should help with employee retention and enthusiasm. The list will start with things that need to be done on the front end before the hiring process can begin and move through hiring and getting staff started.

- **Job Descriptions** – Have a complete, detailed written job description for each position in the business. Be sure to list the title and what qualifications are required. Next, list the expectations and duties of said position, spelling them out completely. Be sure to list to whom the position reports, scheduled times/days of work and if overtime is permitted. Be sure to make this detailed so you and the employee(s) can refer to it as needed.

- **Employee Manual** – Every business needs to have an employee manual or handbook. It contains important documentation and forms employees need to complete as soon as they start their job. A word of caution, it needs to be maintained and kept up to date or it can be just as bad legally as not having one. The basic contents should include the following:

- A signature/disclaimer page to acknowledge that it was received and reviewed (the handbook is not a contract and the manual is subject to change),
- An Employment At Will Policy,
- A Statement of Equal Opportunity and Anti-Harassment,
- A Work Authorization – this involves the I-9 form as proof of eligibility to work in the United States,
- A policy on employment classification: this spells out the types – full time, part time, exempt and non-exempt employees,
- The Overtime Policy,
- A Leave of Absence Policy – the numbers of employees you have can determine this,
- Parental Leave – may be required in some states,
- Workplace violence and workplace safety,
- Conflict of interest,
- Non-Compete Clause,
- Code of conduct,
- Unemployment compensation,
- Payroll deductions,
- Direct deposit information, if available,
- A list of holidays and other time off,
- Health and welfare benefits and
- Employee assistance.

This list is a general outline. A final draft, just like any other policy manual, should be reviewed by an attorney to confirm everything is accurate and up to date.

- **Training Manual** – An Employee Training Manual is designed to help an organization provide a pathway to consistency in every aspect of the daily operations. It should provide the framework for the expected use and care of the equipment. It can help layout how much time is expected to complete certain tasks. It can also serve as a guide to annual training schedules so items do not get missed. It can be used as a tool to show the content of staff trainings, combined with attendance records which

should be maintained as part of the business compliance files. This is another document OSHA will look for if they come in for an inspection. They will also be looking for documentation to prove training is being completed.

- **Employment Ads/Postings** – How are you portraying the position you are trying to fill? Does the ad draw you in while also spelling out what the position is? Ads filled with a negative spin of who should or should not apply usually do not get many results. This paints a pretty good picture of what it's going to be like working there.

- **Application for Employment** – Be sure the information you are gathering is allowed by law. What you ask or how you ask it can be a violation of an individual's rights. If you don't need to know, don't ask.

- **Interview Process** – Have a formal process in place to screen new hires. Be consistent even if it means adding a few more days before filling a position. Consider having a phone interview to start, then move to a formal interview where you have a good set of questions to go through and can see how the candidates does in person. Perhaps even add a peer interview into the final step before an offer is extended. Consistency is the key, along with giving the candidate your undivided attention unless an emergency comes up. Spend some time getting to learn a bit about them and let them see you run a professional, respectful operation.

I went through an interview a few years back that lasted 10 minutes and the owner of the company never once looked me in the eye while we talked. I figured there was no way I would get a second interview and was not sure I even wanted one. The next day I got called back to meet with the manager. I almost did not go based on the first encounter. At my second interview the manager had lost part of my resume and application, and that interview was also about 10 minutes and very disorganized. When offered the position the next day I declined faster than I could say my own name based on how my 20 minutes with the leadership went. With all I observed in that short time, I learned the job was not worth the frustrations I was envisioning in the future.

- **Onboarding & Orientation** – This is where you have a chance to mold new staff coming through the door on day one. Have a system in place to give them a warm welcome and get them started on the right foot so they see they are joining a great team. Take the time to go through all the required paperwork and the employee manual with them, making sure they understand it and can ask questions as needed. Do another walk through of the property with them. This time bring safety into the discussion and start identifying those areas where they can run into an issue. Be sure to discuss expectations of PPE use and that there are no exceptions to the rules — ever.

Review what the timeline is for training and how they will learn about every aspect of their job. Build in education on what every component does and how it works, what chemicals are used and what they do to produce a clean, shiny and dry car. Educate them on how carwash equipment will not damage cars and why. The more knowledge they have on how the system

Continued...

works the better they will be working with customers. Don't be afraid to build in some quizzes and tests to their onboarding. Create a culture of educated and empowered staff who will take pride and ownership in the job they have taken.

- **Steps to Promotions** – Have clear steps to show staff what other positions are available and what steps they need to take to rise to those levels. Great employees will often leave if they get to the point where, "I am not able to go any further." Some people are fine reaching a certain level and will maintain themselves there for years and are happy with the status quo. For those who want to climb the ladder, however, help them see how to rise to reduce their frustrations. It also gives you a benchmark to refer to when they ask why they are not getting promoted.

- **Performance Reviews** – Have a procedure in place where management meets with each staff member in a scheduled time frame. Keep the lines of communication open so staff know how their end-of-year review is going to go for them. Look at meeting with them two, three or four times a year and have discussions on how everything with the job is going. See if they have any suggestions for the company on how some things could be done more efficiently. Remember, great ideas come from communicating with the folks who are doing the job daily. Sometimes they see things from a little different angle. This can also be a great time to give constructive feedback on changes they need to make for that raise in the future. Whatever schedule you set up, stick to it, and try to be on time. When reviews are late and no discussion is held as to why if there is a valid reason, people tend to get upset and will start to feel the business does not care about them.

- **Scheduled Staff Meetings** – Meet with staff on a regular basis to look at operations and have discussions on how things are going. Look at setting goals for sales, safety, reducing damage claims or any other topic that needs to be addressed. This is a great time for reminders about safety or to address a certain type of car you are seeing issues with and how to address them. A lot of valuable information can be passed on to help keep the operations running smoothly.

Be sure to keep the meeting consistent by having a formal agenda you follow each time. Research some team building activities and build them into the mix so staff learn to work with each other, and problem solve together. Keep meetings on track and stick to ending it at a specific time. Also consider scheduling frequent tailgate talks with shifts either pre-opening or post-closing for 10 or 15 minutes to touch upon any issues of the day or week that arise. Once again, success is all about communications. Be sure to keep sign-in sheets for all meetings, and catch up with those who were not in attendance.

- **Scheduled Trainings** – Staff training and development is always something to keep going. Be sure you are adding any required compliance trainings mandated by your state such as Sexual Harassment & Workplace Violence Prevention. Be sure not to forget OSHA trainings and include annual Hazardous Communications for chemicals used on site. Look at holding role-playing sessions on how to upsell packages or monthly

plans, or how to deal with the irate customer, or the customer who is claiming damage. Time spent on training will have long-term positivity on the profit margins on the back end. The dollar amounts can be hard to measure, but as a Risk Manager I can tell you from watching claims rates from businesses that do work hard at training versus those who do not, the claims rates reflect the difference in the pathway chosen. It does, in fact, pay off in the end to invest the time to engage your staff.

- **Open Door Policy** – Have an open-door policy where staff can approach you any time to discuss concerns or ideas about improving operations. By working with them between team meetings, safety trainings and performance reviews, they will not hesitate to share with you the good or bad because they feel there is access to management when they need it.

There are many components required when you have staff while some are optional. I hope this has given some fresh insight into the age-old problem of how to retain employees. We must get creative in these changing times, so we keep the interest of staff high and they do not move on to what they perceive as greener pastures. We also need to learn how to weed out those we know are not going to work out either from the application and interview process or early on if they are not performing as expected and are not willing to conform. Remember positivity, structure, consistency, ongoing training and communication will help retain your staff and help keep higher profits going into the coffers so you all can gain from them as a team.

MC



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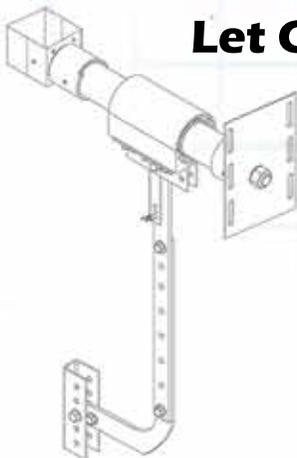
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