

Sudzie Autowash Capitalizes on a Rainy Day Start, Focuses on Building Volume

By Alan M. Petrillo

Sudzie Autowash Inc. of Scarborough, ME, opened for business two and a half years ago in the pouring rain. But that didn't deter owners John and Christine Massengill.

"My mother told me that rain on a special event, like a wedding or other big day, indicates good luck," John Massengill said. "And that rainy day has been good luck for us because every month our business has outperformed the previous period."

Massengill noted that he and his wife have put a lot of money into advertising and marketing the business, but it has paid off.

"We have new customers in here every day," he said. Sudzie Autowash, at 285 US Route 1, is a full-service carwash with a 125-foot long tunnel and a detail center consisting of two bays. Christine Massengill operates and manages the wash and John assists her on weekends when he's off from his job selling commercial roofing and waterproofing products.

It was John's grandfather, Vance Burgess, who sparked John's interest in the business. Burgess opened Minute-Man Car Wash in 1949 in Chicago. His mother and father took over the wash when his grandfather died and then owned Eden's Car Wash where John worked as he was growing up.

John and Christine moved to Maine in 1996 and after six years in Scarborough became frustrated with what they saw as a low level of service at the washes where they brought their personal vehicles.

"After friends encouraged us to build a carwash, we explored the possibility, found land and wrote a business plan in early 2003," John Massengill said.

The result is Sudzie Autowash, which opened April 15, 2004. The Massengills set up a holding company, Burgess Holdings LLC, that owns the carwash and land, which also was developed to accommodate additional retail space on site. Two thirds of the retail space is occupied by the restaurant Chicago Dogs, and a real estate company is in the other third.

Sudzie Autowash offers customers four wash packages: the exterior-only Minute-Man wash for \$11; a full-service interior and exterior wash, the Eden's wash, for \$16; the Sudzie wash, full service with wheel brightener, undercarriage, foam polish and clear coat protection for \$20; and the Dee-Luxe wash, which adds triple foam polish and the choice of two a la carte items, for \$25.

The business also has about a dozen fleet accounts, including a limousine service that brings in three to six

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Christine and John Massengill make running Sudzie Autowash a family affair.



Owners John and Christine Massengill believe strongly in cause-related marketing as is evidenced by a successful promotion they held with the Scarborough Police. Free bicycle helmets were given away all day.



Sudzie Autowash promotes itself at the nearby Portland Ice Arena. The customer feedback has been exceptional.



NECA Welcomes Its Newest Members!

Welcome New Members! The following businesses joined NECA during Fall 2006.

vehicles a day, three car dealerships and two construction companies.

John credits the advertising that the carwash as done as a key to its success. "Initially, we did a lot of radio and some television ads to create awareness of our carwash and because we wanted to show the public that we are different," John said. "Our motto is 'a step above in service' and we thought the best way to demonstrate that was through television spots."

After the flurry of television ads, Sudzie did a lot of radio advertising, even in neighboring Massachusetts as many summer tourists vacation in their market. Print media ads also were placed and the carwash was able to get some editorial coverage in newspapers, including a profile on Christine for a "Women in Business" feature.

Sudzie also took its advertising to neighboring ice rinks. At the Portland Ice Arena, Sudzie has its logo at center ice and also on one of the rink's walls. At the Cumberland County Civic Center, where the minor league Portland Pirates hockey team plays, Sudzie sponsors a weekly interview with the coach that brings them a 15-second advertisement.

"We've found that a lot of our customers have noticed our work with the ice arenas," John pointed out. "Partnering with local businesses and charitable organizations has worked very well for us. It helps the other groups and creates awareness of our business in the community."

Sudzie Autowash has also donated many full-service carwash packages and interior and exterior detailing services to charitable organizations, including the needy-assistance group Project Grace, the Children's Museum of Maine, the YMCA and local schools. ■

Alan M. Petrillo is a freelance writer based in Tucson, AZ.



The 125-foot tunnel also features a two-bay detail center.

Operators

Dairy Street LLC, Hudson, NH
contact: Bruce Siemering

Platinum Auto Spa, Springfield, MA
contact: Michael McCarthy

Speedy Wash-Wax, New Haven, CT
contact: Dominick Magnotta

Titan Auto Wash, Medford, MA
contact: Matt Analetto

White Water Car Wash and Detail Center, Dover, NH
contact: Kevin McLoughlin

Supplier Member

Compass Fleet & Merchant Services, Portland, OR
contact: Adrienne Bachman

TREASURER'S REPORT

NEW ENGLAND CARWASH ASSOCIATION
PERIOD: 01/01/06-09-/30/06



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INCOME

INTEREST INCOME	\$ 4,776.46
MEETINGS	38,685.00
MEMBER SERVICES.....	2,591.57
MEMBERSHIP	17,970.83
NRCC	17,808.89

TOTAL INCOME81,832.75

EXPENSES

ADVERTISING/PROMOTION	105.00
BOARD EXPENSE.....	2,748.71
CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION	0.00
INSURANCE	1,873.00
MANAGEMENT FEE.....	18,869.68
MEETINGS	28,072.82
MEMBER SERVICES.....	8,431.86
MEMBERSHIP	180.75
OFFICE EXPENSE.....	1,197.04
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.....	625.00
TAX	90.00

TOTAL EXPENSE62,193.86

NET INCOME

19,638.89

CASH BALANCES

CHECKING ACCOUNT	19,854.90
SAVINGS ACCOUNT	65,171.80
CITIZENS BANK CD 1	20,910.88
MIDDLESEX SAVINGS CD	77,732.04
MIDDLESEX MONEY MARKET	45,959.04

TOTAL CHECKING/SAVINGS229,628.66

The NECA treasurer's report is provided by NECA Treasurer Treasurer Brian Messina. If you have any questions you can contact Brian at 603/379-1032 or brian@pro-wash.com.