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Station adds gas-pumping call service

Disabled can buzz for a fill-up

By DAVE BACKMANN - GM Today Staff

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WAUKESHA - When David Schmidt decided to add a remote call system for customers of his Mobil station who have physical disabilities, he thought he was adding a community service to his 36-year-old business, not a profit center.

Schmidt yet may be proven wrong.

On Friday morning, Janet Praeger, City of Pewaukee, pulled up her green van to pumps No. 5 and 6 at Dave's on Silvernail and as Schmidt filled her tank, she said, "I've sent about 12 people over here. I told them that they will pump your gas here if you have a handicapped sticker."



Dave Backmann

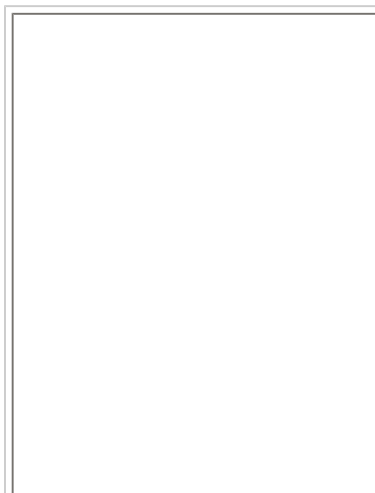
Janet Praeger, a disabled woman, calls for assistance to fill her gas tank. The service is offered at Dave's on Silvernail station through a new remote call system.

Actually, Schmidt and his staff will answer the call system and pump gas for whomever appears to need assistance, not just vehicles with a handicapped sign dangling from the rear view mirror. Posted hours for the specialized service are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

"I mean, if a 70-year-old woman who has lost her husband pulls up, we're not going to say, 'Where's your handicapped sticker?'" Schmidt said.

At pumps 5 and 6, motorists approaching from either direction can reach out from their vehicles and push a button that sounds a door bell-like ring inside the station/ convenience store at 1808 Silvernail Road. The sound alerts staff of someone's need to have gas pumped.

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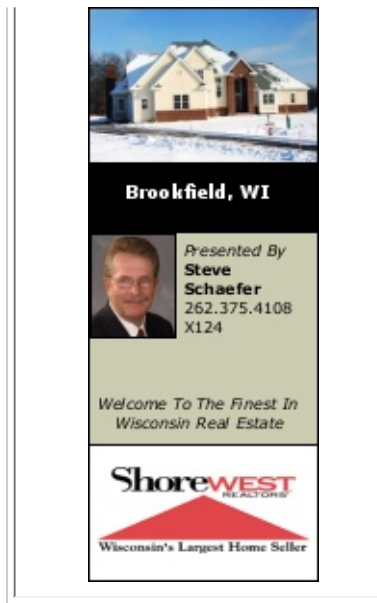


Schmidt bid on the system, valued at \$800, at a golf outing for convenience store owners. The outing was held to benefit Midwest Athletes Against Childhood Cancer.

Oil Equipment Co., Madison, donated its services to install the system at Schmidt's station.

Prior to the installation, regular customers of the station who are disabled typically called from their vehicles on cell phones for assistance at a pump, Schmidt said. One of them is a man who lost both legs in an auto versus train accident.

Inclusion Solutions, a Chicago-based company that markets products to make businesses more accessible to the disabled, donated the call



system to the golf outing Schmidt attended.

Patrick Hughes, president of Inclusion Solutions, said the American Disabilities Act technically requires gas stations to provide pumping service to the disabled at the same price as self-service. Hughes acknowledged the law is somewhat grey, especially if only one clerk is on duty when a disabled person requests the service. "ADA requires the customer to guess at how many employees there are in the booth/store and the employee is supposed to guess if someone actually needs assistance and often times they are unclear as to their own obligations as well," Hughes said.

No other gas stations in southeastern Wisconsin offer the handicapped call system, Hughes and Schmidt said.

Schmidt owns the station along with his wife, Mary, and son, Jeff.

The remote call system was installed within the past two months.

A universal sign advertising services for the handicapped is affixed to the station's exterior price sign.

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