

Magnolia Pump and Equipment



(Pictured left to right:) Earl Voss III, and father Earl Voss Jr. Magnolia Pump and Equipment maintains a large inventory.

For three decades, Earl Voss Jr. worked in equipment sales, so he's familiar with day-to-day problems facing rural water systems. He knows that small systems can fall behind without adequate support from parts suppliers. He has seen operators wait long periods on parts or struggle to have their warranties honored. There's a more basic problem, what if equipment, repaired and in good working order, still fails to meet a system's needs?

Two years ago, Earl started his own equipment distributorship to offer some solutions. Located

in Pelahatchie, Magnolia Pump and Equipment is a full-service distributorship, where the goal is providing small water systems with the attention that is needed and deserved. "We have more focus and personal service than big out-of-state companies," said Earl. "We started the business to help people with cost-effective solutions to their problems."

A desirable location increases a property's value, and Earl said that his company's location speeds service and delivery to customers. A large inventory is kept on site. "Most cities used to have spare pumps, but smaller

towns can't afford to keep them around now."

Magnolia Pump and Equipment represents 20 manufacturers and has grown into a full-service distributorship. "We stay focused on pumps and controls. Eighty percent of our sales are in wastewater equipment and 20 percent are in water systems equipment. We sell Power Flo and Homa pumps for wastewater systems and Hydro Flo vertical turbines, among other products."

Magnolia Pump and Equipment is a family affair; Earl's wife, Karen, serves as the company president, and

24-year-old son Earl III joined the company as an engineer. "Customers encouraged us to go into business for ourselves, and we had calls from equipment manufacturers asking if we would represent their product lines. It's fun to work with family," noted the elder Voss.

Earl III, a student in applied engineering at Mississippi State University, encouraged his parents to expand into rebuild and service work. He is certified to do warranty work on most equipment sold at Magnolia Pump and Equipment; mechanic Mike Votta is trained to do service and warranty work as well.

"Our son's help has enabled us to grow into a full-service distributorship, and we're moving into design work."

"My dad loves sales, and I love service work. My goal is to have a big service department. In this economy, people don't want to replace it; they'd rather fix it."

Earl III worked on a recent project with the City of Brandon. The city came to the company and requested help with its existing SCADA system. The city had continual problems with the system, and Earl III spent many hours working on a solution. "Earl III adds various components to achieve what smaller towns are looking for," explained his father. Earl III found the project gratifying, and is now designing another system for Brandon.

Selecting the right equipment is an important step toward improving efficiency. The Vosses make it a point to learn about problems from an operator's perspective. The elder Voss explained, "Sometimes operators end up getting equipment they don't like. Some of our competitors talk only with engineers or mayors. But we also like to visit with guys who are using the equipment to see what they really want and like."

The company offers customer training. Mechanics who work for various manufacturers lead training, and past events have included a tasty barbecue lunch.

Customers find support even on weekends and holidays; the Vosses set aside their Christmas dinner to deliver a grinder station on Christmas Day.



(top) Mechanic Mike Votta performs service work and rebuild work.

(above) (Pictured left to right:) Earl Voss III, and Earl Voss Jr. "It's fun to work with family," says the elder Voss.

Despite a shaky economy, the business has grown. The family's business success shows that small systems appreciate customized solutions. Said the elder Voss, "We've lost money to get the job done right. It goes back to friendships with customers; you don't take advantage of friends. We've been lucky to grow in this economy. We rent booths at the

MsRWA trade show, which gives us lots of visibility."

Magnolia Pump and Equipment is designated as a Women's Business Enterprise. Karen noted, "That's a benefit for our customers with government jobs."

Give Magnolia Pump and Equipment a call. Earl Voss Jr., Karen, and Earl Voss III will be glad to help you. 