

Port bike shop owner finding her stride

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Thompson-Oreskovic keeps her balance while managing two businesses

Tammy Thompson-Oreskovic was a successful businesswoman long before she opened the Port Washington bicycle shop Zu Zu Pedals two years ago.

Thompson-Oreskovic is president and CEO of Arnold's Environmental Services, a Town of Saukville business she co-owns with her husband Pat.

The couple bought the company in 1992 from Arnold Egerer, who started the business in 1952 with a focus on hauling waste from private septic systems.

Since those early days, Arnold's has expanded operations to include the rental of portable restrooms.



The business and Thompson-Oreskovic were featured in the cover story in the latest edition of PRO Monthly magazine, a trade publication aimed at portable restroom operators.

The company has 20 employees and owns about 1,700 portable restrooms and four heavy-duty service trucks.

Thompson-Oreskovic grew up in West Bend and has a degree in graphic arts and photography from Rocky Mountain School of Art in Colorado. She was selling newspaper advertising when the couple decided to buy the waste business.

"It wasn't really someplace I saw life going, but it has worked out really well. I learned that success in business is all about marketing and customer service. It is just the product that changes," Thompson-Oreskovic said.

The success of the waste business allowed her to share her passion for biking and outdoor living by opening Zu Zu Pedals.

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The shop at 228 N. Franklin St. is filled with bikes and biking apparel.

“The bike business has been everything I had hoped it would be. What I love is when people just stop in and sit down to talk about bikes. It is something people feel very passionate about,” Thompson-Oreskovic said.

“The location is ideal, being on the lakefront and right next to the Interurban bike trail.”

Thompson-Oreskovic said wide-tired beach bikes are especially popular with visitors, who like to tour the lakefront from Port all the way to Harrington Beach State Park in the Town of Belgium.

“It is amazing to me how many people stop in from all over the world. They come in the shop from boats at the marina, as well as people from town and tourists who are just passing through,” Thompson-Oreskovic said.

To document the global appeal of biking, the shop has a display of foreign currency brought in by customers.

Thompson-Oreskovic said the shop is adding kayak and paddle board supplies as a natural extension of the active lifestyle theme it promotes.

“Kayaking has become really big. We call that portion of the business Zu Zu Paddles,” she said.

Thompson-Oreskovic said she spends a portion of every day of the week at both businesses, a schedule that cuts into her own appreciation of biking.

“For the first two years, I didn’t have much free time to get out on the bike at all, but I am making time now,” she said.

In hopes of nurturing new biking fans, Thompson-Oreskovic is a member of the Feith Family YMCA board of directors and a supporter of the Ozaukee County mountain bike trail. She is also a backer of plans to start scholastic mountain bike teams.

To counteract seasonal swings in the bike business, Thompson-Oreskovic has introduced spinning and yoga classes at the shop. Computerized CompuTrainer equipment will be brought in next month, allowing riders to use their own bikes to work out indoors.

“Our off season is pretty much from November to March, when people start thinking about getting their bikes out,” she said. “By having the classes and just keeping our lights on, I hope it reminds people we are still here.”

Thompson-Oreskovic said she couldn’t be happier with the way the bike shop has been

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received.

“I just love Port Washington, and I could see the potential the community had when we first opened. Now that places like Duluth Trading Co. and Twisted Willow are here, you can really see the difference in the downtown, but that is not something that just happens. People have been working to make it happen,” she said.

Thompson-Oreskovic’s enthusiasm led to her appointment to Port Washington’s Business Improvement District board of directors, but she stepped down after one meeting.

“I am still sold on Port, but I could see their emphasis on fund raising was not for me. I am more of an artist,” she said.
