

Screen-repair service on a roll

By Airan Scruby Correspondent
San Gabriel Valley Tribune

A worn-out screen door usually means a trip to a hardware store. And that's often followed by the aggravation of trying to put the repaired screen back into place without damaging it.

But if you've got holes in your screens, help is on the way.

Jason Oldham and his truck make up the newest franchise of Screenmobile, a Thousand Palms-based company that offers mobile service to rescreen doors, windows and other products for home and commercial use.

A lifelong resident of the San Gabriel Valley, Oldham, 42, lives in Covina with his wife, Larisa, and their children, twins Erin and Paige, 14, and son Jake, 8. He has worked as a general contractor for nearly 20 years.

"I already have a small construction business but I wanted to just try something different," Oldham said.

Screenmobile was established in 1982 when Monty M. Walker and his sons, Scott and Monty L., stumbled upon a niche market while working as handymen in the San Gabriel Valley.

Many customers began asking if the Walkers could take their damaged screens to the hardware store where the Walkers picked up their supplies. Walker and his sons ultimately opted to make a screening station in their garage and do the work themselves.

When their customer base became more spread out, Scott decided to move the screening station from the garage into a utility trailer. The new setup allowed them to complete more screening jobs in less time, and Screenmobile was born.

By 1984, the family decided to franchise its business. Scott is now the company president, while his father and brother serve as co-vice presidents.

The venture now uses a more-corporate business model than it did when it began with a utility trailer and a homemade screening station.

But Screenmobile is still a family affair.

"We consider ourselves as a family-run corporation," Scott said.

Oldham discovered the business through Dale Dennis, a friend he'd known for 10 years. The pair met at church, and Oldham took notice of Dennis' success with his Screenmobile business.

Dennis, who is the son-in-law of company president Scott Walker, found he had more business than he could handle himself and decided to sell a portion of his sales territory.

Oldham expressed interest in buying the rights to the area and began the process of becoming a part of the company. Dennis said he's confident in Oldham's ability.

"He'll do fine," Dennis said. "He's been working his own business for 20 years."

Oldham attended informational sessions about Screenmobile, now based in Thousand Palms, and was impressed. It was a chance to get away from large construction projects and try something new.

"They are smaller jobs, and I get to meet a lot more people," Oldham said, adding that what really drew him to the company was the ethics of the franchise.

"It was an all-Christian company," he said. "That's what I really liked."

Screenmobile is also involved in charity work, which helped to attract Oldham, who enjoys volunteering through his church.

"We do some orphanage work in Tecate, Mexico," he said.

Oldham just launched his franchise and plans to continue spreading the word about his Screenmobile through advertising and word of mouth. Dennis said he knows Oldham will be a success.

"He's already banging it out right now," Dennis said. "He's getting orders, the phone's ringing."

Oldham's Screenmobile can be reached for rescreening and other services at (626) 335-8813.