

3 Vectors + 1 FreeStyler = Higher Profits for Former Gas Retailer



The Vector® is popular at both Friendly locations



The new site's FreeStyler® has built its own following

WEST SPRINGFIELD, MA – When gas prices go up, they go up for everyone ... including gas retailers. “Everyone thinks the gas stations are making a killing when prices go through the roof,” says Jim Porter, a former multi-station owner. “In fact, they’re getting killed.” He explains that high gas prices mean lower profit margins, reduced demand, and higher credit card fees that erode what little profit remains.

“It’s a lose-lose situation,” Porter remarks. “Here I was, with five gas station and convenience store locations, just trying to turn a profit.” He notes “I saw a lot of other petroleum operators adding car washes, to gain an additional profit center with stable margins.” Porter adds “I thought, why simply add a car wash? Why not *replace* the gas station and c-store with a *dedicated* car wash business?”

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— Jim Porter, Friendly Car Wash

Porter began selling his gas business, while he researched car wash equipment. “I considered several manufacturers before I selected Belanger,” he recalls. “The Vector’s two-arm design offered an obvious throughput advantage, versus single-arm competitors.” Porter adds “I also liked the Vector’s open bay feel and low maintenance needs. It was exactly what I wanted.”

Meanwhile, Porter found the perfect site for his first wash. “It was an old Friendly’s restaurant,” he notes. Porter says he named the location “Friendly Car Wash” to capture existing good will toward the site. “We wanted folks to be excited about the wash, while still connecting with a familiar name,” he says.

Belanger distributor Mark DiTommaso of Auto Shine Car Wash Systems helped design the site. “We went with two Vectors, two spray bays, vending and vacuums,” he says. “We knew the site could support two Vectors, and the layout was right for the area.”

After just two months, Porter was hooked. “We opened in December, with salty winter roads,” he says. “During December and January we did a brisk trade that kick-started our car wash.” Porter jokes “For the first 60 days I thought I was a business genius.”

Porter says his first site did so well, that three years later he opened his second – a Vector® and FreeStyler® in adjoining bays. “The Vector/FreeStyler combo caters to every driver, regardless of preference,” he observes. In fact, Porter offers similar pricing and packages on both. “It really comes down to their choice – soft touch or touchless?” he says.

Porter says he plans to keep expanding his business, to five locations or more. “With Belanger equipment and our distributor’s support, we haven’t had *one minute* of unplanned downtime in over six years. We’ve *never* turned anyone away,” he remarks. “That’s why I’m sticking with Belanger and Auto Shine. They keep my business going, so I can keep it growing.”