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Miracle Worker

By: George Spohr , Business Editor



Staff photo by Mark Czajkowski

J. Andrew Reid, CEO of Reid Plumbing Products, manufactures the Well Manager, lauded for bringing water to homes that depend on nearly dry wells.

Water worth its weight in gold thanks to one man's invention.

J. Andrew Reid chuckles at the notion that he's a miracle worker, but that's how he's described by the customers he's been working with for the last decade.

Mr. Reid, the CEO of Reid Plumbing Products in Hopewell, is the inventor of the Well Manager system, a program that helps owners of nearly dry wells extract enough water to sustain their household's needs.

The system, which has been purchased by customers across the country, is gaining popularity — especially in Central Jersey, where some undeveloped areas are playing host to multimillion-dollar homes but lack access to municipal water. Their owners are people who aren't used to the concept of water conservation — a concept Mr. Reid says "was part of the charm" of rural living.

"There's a whole new breed of people moving to the country," Mr. Reid said. They're people who ask: "What do you mean my \$12,000 unit with 20 showerheads won't work?"

And then there are customers like Wayne Smith, also of Hopewell, who simply couldn't explain why his well wasn't able to fill his family's modest water needs when he knew it had the

capacity to do so.

It was five years ago that the Smiths' well ran dry. Though that was more than 1,800 days ago, Mr. Smith still remembers what went through his head when he realized he wouldn't have enough water to meet his basic needs.

"Number one, it was panic," he said. "Number two, the first thought was to call the phone number I saw on (Mr. Reid's) sign and have him come out and give me an analysis."

Mr. Reid dropped by and told Mr. Smith exactly what he wanted to hear: The well that had run dry most certainly can produce enough water to fit the family's needs.

Therein lies the secret to Well Manager.

How it works

Mr. Reid developed Well Manager in the early-'90s, following four decades in the plumbing and electrical fields. The product was the result of asking questions.

Often, while out on calls to residences where families were complaining they didn't have enough water, Mr. Reid was baffled. He saw low-yield wells that he knew were outputting adequate amounts of water per day — and nine times out of ten, that should've been more than enough to fill a family's basic water needs.

"I'm sitting there thinking, 'Well, that shouldn't be,'" he recalled. And the solution those families often were faced with — drilling a second well — seemed unnecessary.

It didn't take long to figure out that the problem was that the families were using up the water before the well had enough time to replenish its supply. The trick, he surmised, was to collect water 24 hours per day — at a capacity he knew the well could support — and manage that process electronically.

"It's weird," Mr. Reid said. "It all sort of came together."

Since each well is different, one mathematical formula had to be used to find the proper output of each well — enough water to sustain the family, enough storage room to keep the excess water, with enough production to not dry out the well.

"In actuality, it makes perfect sense," Mr. Smith said. "The drawing for 24 hours versus when you need the water makes sense, and the internal tanks are nothing more than providing a deeper or wider well casing.

"It ends up being almost like a no-brainer," he continued, recalling his initial contact with Mr. Reid. "After not too much contemplation, we were like, 'Yeah, go ahead and do that.'"

Five years later, the only work needed on the Well Manager has been normal upkeep and maintenance. Mr. Smith, a realtor, refers clients who buy homes in rural areas to Mr. Reid and his products.

Nearly all of the parts in the Well Manager system are made at Mr. Reid's workshop in Hopewell.

Wide repercussions

Well Manager, while in existence for a decade, only became a money-maker this year. Its popularity has grown as the simplistic brilliance of the system has made headlines here and across the country.

Previously, when a home had a well that produced only 1½ gallons of water per minute, conventional wisdom said that wouldn't be enough to supply a home.

Well Manager shows that 1½ gallons of water per minute translates into 2,160 gallons per day — plenty of water to supply a household.

How is that any different than wells linked to large storage tanks? It's the mechanics of the Well Manager system.

Well Manager uses a small tank that fits in the corner of a basement or utility room. It compensates for droughts in a smarter way than the typical patchwork of a well, pump and storage tank.

Well Manager can compensate for a drought more easily than that kind of patchwork, where systems are damaged if there isn't enough water to be pumped. If Well Manager can't pump water during an on-cycle, it turns itself off and tries again later. Status lights tell the user what's going on. The entire system is installed within a day.

Mr. Reid says he never gets tired of telling people that problems they've lived with for months, years, even decades can be fixed in a few hours.

"I'll get calls from people who are so frustrated, and they'll tell me their problem, we'll walk through a series of questions, and then I tell them, 'I can fix that this afternoon.'" *For more information, visit www.wellmanager.com.*