

Aqua View President Gus Searcy is pictured with a component of his new SinkmiSer product while standing next to a Forest River Berkshire motorhome during Open House Week. Searcy's ShowermiSer product can be found in several Forest River products.

PHOTOS BY BRADLEY WORRELL AND CHRIS CIETO



Water-Saving Tech

Aqua View, which introduced the ShowermiSer to the RV market in 2015, has high hopes for SinkmiSer, its newest water-saving product.

By K. Schipper

Inspiration can strike any time, anywhere.

For Gus Searcy, that moment came while standing in the shower of his Fleetwood Providence motorhome one May morning in 2014.

To Searcy, it seemed to be taking forever for the shower water to heat up – all while fresh water was going down the drain and into his gray tank. As he waited, he grew irked enough that he finished his ablutions, got in his car, and drove to Camping World to buy a product that would solve the problem.

"I knew exactly what I needed to have, but when I got there, it wasn't there," he says. "I thought, 'OK, they can't carry everything.' I went back home, went online and it wasn't there, either."

Not only did Searcy search the usual places, but he expanded his search through databases that cover both Asia and India. Rather surprised that what he was seeking still wasn't available, he decided he would have to invent it himself.

Fortunately, Searcy is a professional inventor with one

product (a voice recognition system) on permanent display at the Smithsonian Museum and he has a background in product development and two decades of RVing experience.

"I have a fairly extensive electronics background, so my first thought was let's do this via electronics," Searcy says. "Then, I thought, 'electronics, shower, water; that doesn't go together. There must be another way.'"

A Better Way

The solution Searcy ultimately came up with was the ShowermiSer – a device that diverts cold water that would normally be lost to the gray tank back to the fresh water tank until the hot water is present.

The flip of a lever in the ShowermiSer directs water to either the fresh water tank or to the showerhead, as desired. RVers are able to tell in under four seconds when hot water has reached the showerhead thanks to heat-activated technology tied into

the return pipe, which visually signals (by changing the PVC pipe color from blue to blue-and-white to white) when the hot water has arrived. Hence the company's motto, "Results you can see!"

The ShowermiSer installs a water diverter anywhere on the non-pressurized side of the fresh water system, such as the fresh water tank or the input side of the water pump. Searcy says that, for an aftermarket installation, it generally takes a skilled technician between 30 minutes and two hours, depending upon the difficulty in accessing the installation point.

In the approximately 20 months since Searcy launched the product, it has been picked up by Newmar, Weekend Warrior and the Forest River divisions Berkshire, Cargo Mate, Coachmen Galleria, Flagstaff and Rockwood. Additionally, the product is available in the aftermarket via NTP-STAG.

Building upon the success of ShowermiSer, Searcy has developed a companion product, the SinkmiSer, which does the same thing with any kitchen or bathroom sink. The major difference between the two products is the SinkmiSer puts the diverter valve and a color-changing "magic mushroom" on the countertop.

"Once I came up with the SinkmiSer and found out no one had done it before, we patented it, trademarked the product, process and technology," Searcy says.

Today, as people are waking up to the need to conserve water, Searcy says SinkmiSer offers a way to do that easily and cheaply. And he believes his latest invention is nearing the tipping point in terms of becoming a must-have product for RVs.

The Six-Minute Pitch

To build support for the SinkmiSer, Searcy will follow the same strategy he employed to get buy-in for the ShowermiSer.

In that case, he and his wife loaded up the family motorhome with his samples and headed to Elkhart, Ind., to make cold calls at the various OEMs.

His first stop was the manufacturing plant for Forest Rivers' Berkshire Class A motorhomes, where he asked to speak with the chief engineer.

"She got him on the phone and I led with our 11-second pitch: 'Tell him I can increase fresh and gray water tank capacity by up to 40 percent without changing tanks or adding weight,'" Searcy recalls. "I could hear him expressing skepticism in the background so I said, 'Tell him I have a six-minute presentation, a 30-second demonstration and I give free samples.'"



Aqua View's ShowermiSer (left) is made up of multiple components, including a valve that diverts water that would be lost to the gray tank back to the freshwater tank and a PVC pipe that turns from blue to blue-and-white when hot water is traveling through the ShowermiSer. Pictured above the ShowermiSer is the SinkmiSer, Aqua View's latest water-saving product for the RV market.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AQUA VIEW



Searcy is pictured with members of his team at the 2017 NTP-STAG Show in Anaheim, Calif., where they debuted the ShowermiSer to the aftermarket. NTP-STAG is a distributor for the product.

"He said, 'OK, I'll be right up.'"

After a successful meeting, the engineer called the distribution center for Forest River and told them they should meet with him, Searcy says. After giving the same presentation/ demonstration there, ShowermiSer was on its way to becoming a standard in many of Forest River's models.

Nor was that the only positive encounter Searcy was to have in Elkhart. He and his wife didn't realize the campgrounds in Elkhart don't open until April, so they were basing their stay in a Walmart parking lot near another motorhome.

Eventually, the Searcys crossed paths with the owners of the other motorhome, who asked what they were doing in Elkhart. Again, Gus Searcy gave his pitch. The man wanted to see the ShowermiSer in action, so Searcy invited him in.

"He said, 'This is amazing; Newmar should have this,'" Searcy relates. "I said, 'I don't know how to get to Newmar,' and he said, 'I do.' The next day I was making my presentation at Newmar, and we're now in both their Dutch Star and Ventana models for 2018."

Their parking lot neighbors were from Europe, and they suggested Searcy and his product would find a receptive market there. He quickly scheduled a trip to Europe and his new friends met him and gave him a hand up in meeting some of the key players.

"By the end of April, I had personally met 98 percent of all the RV manufacturers on earth, giving my six-minute presentation, 30-second demonstration and free samples," Searcy says. "We also stumbled onto the huge distributor Webasto, and they fell in love with the product."

Currently, Aqua View distributes its product to 59 countries worldwide.

In this country, Aqua View is represented by NTP-STAG and David Carter & Associates, and from being told as recently as last year by some manufacturers that their customers weren't asking for it and their competitors weren't using it, Searcy believes his latest invention is close to reaching the tipping point in the RV market.

"The tipping point is when it goes past being a flash in the pan to where the sales curve shoots straight up," he says. "Pretty much a 'who's who' in the RV industry is now on-board, and I believe this will become as fundamental as a generator or a water heater."

Staying Firmly Planted

If his assumption is correct, Searcy says he feels Aqua View is prepared for whatever demand the industry throws at the company – even though his manufacturing facility also is a bit outside of the traditional box.

ShowermiSer and SinkmiSer are assembled and packaged at a sheltered workshop in San Bernardino, Calif. Searcy had originally contacted Goodwill about its sheltered programs, but found they don't have the ability to glue. Looking a little further, he located the Vocational Improvement Program (VIP), which employs people who are physically or mentally challenged.

"They can handle the gluing aspect, and they offer scalability," Searcy says. "They're capable of doing 2,500 of these a day, and they love what they're doing. This is a win-win situation that helps people, which is a big bonus."

Components come from a variety of suppliers from Maine to California, with only the brass parts sourced from China.

"If I can find a foundry that would do it, I would get the other parts made in the U.S., as well," he says.

Currently, Aqua View is employing more than 60 people, and Searcy says the company is running a very large inventory because he's confident of what's about to happen to his products in the RV OEM world, with the potential for good growth in the after-market sector as well.

Aqua View's mission statement says the company's goal is to be the world leader in providing inexpensive, simple and innovative technologies for water conservation, and while Searcy says he's looking at other marketplaces, such as the marine industry, his main goal at present remains getting the ShowermiSer and SinkmiSer properly established in the RV market.

"We're always looking forward, but we have to stay focused, because if we get too unfocused, we can make a mistake that could be costly," Searcy says. "We have to avoid the temptation to try and be in too many places at once and spread ourselves too thin. Our objective is to focus on one area, become firmly established, and then move on to the next area."

PHOTO



PHOTO COURTESY OF AQUA VIEW

Aqua View's ShowermiSer and SinkmiSer products are assembled by the San Bernardino, Calif.-based Vocational Improvement Program (VIP), which employs people who are physically or mentally challenged. Searcy says the VIP has the capability to produce up to 2,500 products a day.



ITC Brings Tomorrow's Advancements to Today's RV Market

Next Level Lighting Technology

New light engine configurations, new fixtures, and new control competencies all combine to elevate ITC LED lighting products to the next level of lighting technology advances for the RV.

See us at **RVIA Booth 309** for a demonstration.



itc-us.com
888-871-8860
sales@itc-us.com



Lighting Technologies



ITC is focused on lighting control, including RGB zone control and integration with on-board digital systems for more individual control.

Dim2Warm Zone Lighting Control



ITC lighting now allows for adjustments in light color, enhancing the RV experience. As the lights dim, the color becomes a relaxing warm wash.

LED Light Engines



ITC has optimized the LED light engines in our most popular fixtures, adding more state-of-the-art lighting benefits to already great designs.