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Culligan Southwest has more than 100 employees serving four market areas—San Antonio, nearby Kerrville, New Braunfels and Midland-Odessa.



Despite slightly slower business, Boerner and his staff are using the downtime to work on the basics and plot a new course for the upturn.

## editor's emphasis

*Every month, Water Quality Products recognizes a unique water dealer who has gone above and beyond in their line of work through the Dealer of the Month e-newsletter. At the end of the year, we asked you—our readers—to identify which of the 12 featured dealers you felt deserved the honor of being*

By Rebecca Wilhelm

# Recognizing the Best

*WQP honors industry leaders with the Dealer of the Year award*

**W**QP's Dealer of the Year and President of Culligan Southwest, Inc., Bob Boerner, has continued on the path of industry involvement and leadership that helped him earn recognition from his peers.

Based in San Antonio, Texas, Boerner was swept up in the legislative debate over water softeners in 2001. Legislative action "forced us into a long set of meetings with the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission, who were not cooperative in terms of helping forge a compromise," Boerner said.

"Ultimately, we were forced to go through the legislative process to allow us to continue to do business in areas with onsite systems, which actually represents a large percentage of many of our markets."

Boerner continues to stay involved in the WQA and Texas WQA. "I encourage dealers to tune in and participate in these whenever you can, as they are really helping to define our industry and enhance its professionalism," Boerner said. He also became involved in the Culligan Dealers Association Board last fall, and recently helped moderate a Regulatory Issues session at their annual convention.

Boerner is the co-chair of the WQA's Onsite Issues Committee, and been quite involved in this arena the past year. The subject was studied in the 1970s and no apparent problems were found, Boerner said. But newer onsite and softener technologies point to a need to revisit the interaction of these systems.

"We continue to make slow but steady progress in this area," Boerner said, "having established some good contacts in the onsite industry and fostering an ongoing dialogue with them in setting up a new set of studies that will answer the various questions that have arisen in the last few years."

Continued involvement in the regulatory process is especially important as environmental concerns continue to rise.

"We need to be able to advocate for our industry whenever we get the chance, because we do provide real and valuable benefits from an environmental perspective," Boerner said, such as energy savings in heating water, reducing the use of soaps and cleansers, preventing premature plumbing system degradation and failure and reducing delivery costs for bottled water.

### Staying Successful

Since we spoke to Boerner in May 2008, the economic difficulties that threw many businesses off-course have had an impact on his business, but not as great as in other areas.

"Since Texas didn't get really swept up in the speculative boom of the mid-2000s to the same extent as other areas, we haven't felt the same pain of readjusting real estate valuations, which has tended to make us more stable," Boerner said.

To grow despite the economy, Boerner continues to encourage rentals, "which require major capital up front by dealers but will ultimately lead to greater cash flow and stability," he said. "We also see this as a way to make it easier to do business with us, which is of course a goal we all share."

While a downturn in business is unwelcomed, Boerner pointed out that it can also have a silver lining, providing the opportunity to closely evaluate expenses and procedures and adjust accordingly. "It's almost like a mini-timeout that can be used to regroup and trim the sales, tune up the engine, put more emphasis on training and essentially get ready for the next surge, which will inevitably come," he said.

At the end of the day, Boerner measures success by how happy his customers are with his products and services. Attaining that, he said, requires working diligently on all areas of our business every day, by every single team member. *wqp*

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