

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Landscaper's growing clientele comes from listening

By SARA PELLOWSKI
Daily News Staff

Aron Rodman of West Bend originally went to college to become a professional firefighter.

But ended up becoming a business owner and landscaper after he was forced to consider a new career path.

His business, Extra Mile Landscape Service, started three years ago when his current position with the West Bend Fire Department was cut.

His background in landscaping started when he was 15, working for the state Department of Natural Resources and United States Forest Service. He restored trails and built horse corrals.

"It never crossed my mind to start a business in that field," he said. "I was always too intimidated."

Despite his hesitation, Rodman took the initiative and his knowledge into landscaping to create Extra Mile.

"When that happened, I thought, 'There's no better time to start than now,'" he said.

"Since, then it's really taken off."

The business, which got its start in a trailer with a lawnmower, currently covers Washington and Ozaukee counties, providing customers with a wide variety of landscaping services.

"The primary focus of the business is on hardscapes," Rodman said.

Patios, retaining walls, pathways and plantings, like trees and shrubs, are popular services.

Extra Mile also provides lawn services like mowing, weed control and fertilizing.

"The business has really grown quite rapidly," Rodman



Sara Pellowski/Daily News Staff

works with employees, his wife and two sons to build a rock wall. Even though his employees work the most with Aron, he says, his wife and children are a big part of the business as well.

said. "Instead of continually adding new services, we are narrowing in on the ones we have."

By giving attention to fewer things, he said, the primary focus can be on landscaping.

Even though the business runs out of Rodman's home, the central location of his office and equipment, all of the estimates and services take place at the customers' homes.

"We always try to give the customer something unique," he said. "We try to custom tailor

the property to their personality and home."

Mary Ann Rooney of Hartford said she noticed this as soon as she started using Rodman's service.

Even though Rooney only hires him once or twice a year, she said, his work has changed the look of her yard.

She had been struggling with erosion on a hill in her back yard for quite awhile, but as soon as Rodman added several trees, surrounded by a ring of

AT A GLANCE

Extra Mile Landscape Service

Location: 5367 S. 18th Ave., West Bend, covering Washington and Ozaukee counties
Number of employees: 4
For more information: call 334-3011

rocks, there was a "big difference," she said.

"It just looks so pretty back there now."

Rodman said he especially enjoys interacting with his customers.

"We really try to get them involved," he said. "They make a lot of the decisions, offer options and even make changes during the process."

"It's all about keeping the customers we have happy," he said.

As a result of his business etiquette, Rodman said 90 percent of all customers either refer him to a friend or ask him to come back to work on their property.

"When I'm finished, I like to stand back with the customer and hear them say, 'I never knew it could look this nice,'" he said.

Rodman said his four employees are the biggest key to the success of his business.

Rich Ruchalski, who has been working with Rodman since the beginning, said he likes never having to do the same thing.

"You always have something to show for at the end of the day," said Forrest Peterson, a charter employee.

Even though balancing family life with business has become an increasing challenge, Rodman said he enjoys teaching his two sons his trade.

He realizes he isn't the only landscaping business available in the area, but said there are things that make his individual business unique.

"I know there are a lot of really great landscapers out there," he commented. "I'm just happy knowing I'm one of them."