



# RENTAL MANAGEMENT

The Official Magazine of the American Rental Association

February 2021

# Taking a shot at COVID

What employers should  
consider when creating  
vaccination-related policies



Understanding the new stimulus bill

Washing up with portable restrooms and sinks

How the election results could affect legislation

By Brock Huffstutler

A new woman-owned  
equipment rental business

# ***hits the ground running***

Benson goes from making hard cider to renting tools



**K**rista Benson is a self-described “jack-of-all-trades” when it comes to equipment rental. Growing up from the age of 14 in a family-owned True Value/Just Ask Rental business, she became adept in handling not only paperwork and rental contracts, but also hands-on equipment operation and maintenance. These skills gave her the confidence, at age 28, to open her own rental business.

Her business, New Paltz Equipment Rental, New Paltz, N.Y., grew out of the void created by the closure of the Just Ask Rental, which was ran by her father, Lou Benson, for 22 years.

“When my dad sold the True Value store, the new owner did not want anything to do with the rental company,” Benson says. “My dad was going to auction off the rental equipment just to get rid of it and start fresh into his retirement. I did not allow him to do that. I told him I was interested in buying what he had and relocating it in the same town.”

A career in equipment rental felt like a natural fit for Benson, who recalls that “I always had a huge interest in engines. I always had a dirt bike, four-wheelers and stuff like that. So once the rental division opened at my dad’s True Value store, we both felt that I was a good fit to get that



started. I managed it with one other person for about three years.”

After a while, however, a decidedly different calling beckoned which took Benson out of the rental world for a few years.

“My dream was to be a hard cider maker,” she says. “I did fulfill that dream. I was given an opportunity to pursue it with a full-time job where I spent about six years. I worked with the tanks, pumped the juice, everything like that.”

The opportunity presented by the pending auction of her father’s idled rental equipment — coupled with the needs of homeowners in the growing market of her community in upstate New York — lured Benson back into the rental game.

“I decided that New Paltz needed something like this,” she says. “I just felt the need from so many customers and knew there were a lot of homeowners in this area that would benefit from it. So, I made the jump. I opened in May 2020 — the day before the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown happened is when I signed the papers. That was a little bit nerve-racking, but I’m here, I’m doing well and am very busy.”

New Paltz Equipment Rental provides mainly construction and tool equipment, with most of its inventory in “smaller earthmoving equipment, like excavators and skid steers,” Benson says. “I also have floor sanding equipment, chainsaws, power washers, power tools, concrete equipment. About 30 percent of our customers are contractors and the rest are homeowners that are doing projects

themselves. Most of them have project experience but a few do not. They kind of put their trust in me and we help them get the job done.”

Benson explains that one of the biggest challenges her business has faced in its first months has been balancing the establishment of a unique identity for itself while at the same time assuring longtime customers of its connection to the legacy of trusted service provided by the late Just Ask Rental.

“Everybody knew True Value/Just Ask Rental, and my dad is a really well-known gentleman in this area,” she says. “When we closed the Just Ask Rental, everybody was under the assumption that the rental company was no longer. It took maybe a month or two for customers to realize where I was, that [the equipment] was relocated. So, it was more a matter of marketing myself in the local media. A lot of our business is word-of-mouth. There are always going to be challenges in opening a new business, but I’m trying to make it as poised as possible.”

Closing in on a year into her enterprise, Benson considers herself proud that she is “a young, woman-owned business in — I hate to say it — a male-dominated field. As opposed to just doing the paperwork, answering the phones, and doing the contracts, I’m an operator. I am delivering equipment, I’m the one showing you what to do and not do. I’m really big into safety and customer satisfaction means everything to me. I like to learn about my customers, what their needs are and what kind of project they are doing so I can base my help around that.” ♦