

# Water is BOSS

By Nicole Bowling

Sixty-year-old William “Bill” Siegmund has been on a quest for water quality knowledge since college. He studied abroad in South Africa and trekked from Cape Town to Egypt, winding up in the drought-stricken regions of Ethiopia and Sudan along the way.

“When I got back from my trip, a businessman that I respect asked me what the one idea I brought back with me was,” Siegmund said. “After seeing what I’d seen, I knew it was water. And that was the birth of Pure Water Works.”

Pure Water Works Inc., the business Siegmund founded in 1980, is located in the small town of Traverse City, Mich. It now has 12 employees, a certified laboratory, a bottled water plant, and domestic and commercial operations reaching as far as Brazil.

## Great Lakes

Pure Water Works is headquartered in northern Michigan, where glaciers carved much of the landscape and fruit farming is one of the biggest industries. This combination makes for unique water quality issues. According to Siegmund, debris from



glaciers makes every water well in his part of the country taste different, and although farming practices have gotten better, they still contribute to nitrate contamination.

“It’s pretty fascinating because people come to northern Michigan for the pristine water and the beautiful scenery and the Great Lakes, and they’re always surprised. Some of the best water and some of the worst water we’ve ever seen comes from northern Michigan,” Siegmund said.

The “worst water” does not faze Siegmund, however. In fact, he chose to build his first retail store in Traverse City because the area was classified as a contaminated site by the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Although the area has since been removed from the EPA list, Pure Water Works prioritizes education because of these variations in water quality. The business practices what he calls “application technology” by offering a group of products that are flexible, but ensuring they are applied properly while also maintaining a relationship with the client after the sale. This, coupled with accuracy and credentials—both of which Siegmund holds in high regard—keep Pure Water Works thriving.

## Ins & Outs

As with many small businesses,

Michigan dealer takes on water quality challenges near and far

**Top:** Service professionals get to work in Pure Water Work’s Michigan facilities.

**Top right:** The business has expanded to include an onsite certified laboratory.

**Below:** The company currently employs a staff of 12.





of the phone books,” he said. “At one point we had five locations and spent over \$100,000 a year in phone book advertising, but I just don’t think it’s a viable marketing tool any longer. People have gone online.”

### Speak the Truth

As an industry veteran, Siegmund’s advice to dealers is to seek credibility from the Water Quality Assn. (WQA)

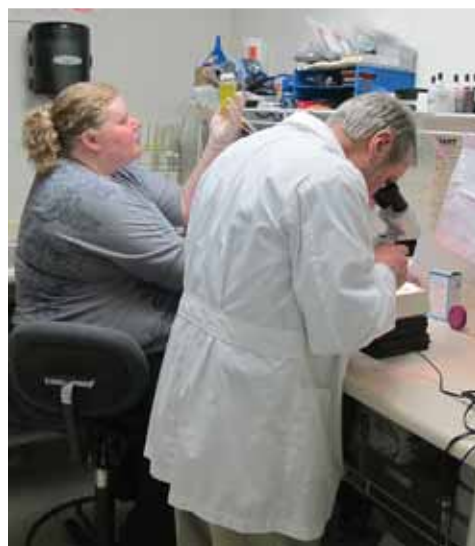
or college-accredited courses, because water quality is such a technical field. As a Certified Water Specialist V himself, Siegmund has worked with WQA on programs like the reverse osmosis and ethics task forces. What he learned from these projects has guided Pure Water Works as a business and helped keep water quality in the forefront.

“The water is always our boss,” Siegmund said. “We say let water do

what it does best, and that’s cleanse. The purer water, the better.” *wqp*

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especially in hard-hit Michigan, the economy has affected Pure Water Works. This dip was small, however, and Siegmund credits the commercial Ultrapure division of the business with stabilizing numbers. Comprising 45% of the company, this division services clients as far away as Brazil, and helps offset the regional ups and downs that could greatly affect Pure Water Works. And although he has not been able to give pay raises for the past four years, Siegmund still provides health insurance to all his primary employees.

“As a philosophy, I feel that health is part of our business, part of what we sell. Pure Water Works does not shy away from health effects, which the industry is starting to embrace now,” Siegmund said.

The industry also is starting to embrace the Web, and Pure Water Works is following suit. Siegmund has ramped up efforts to improve the company website and is starting a blog that he plans to write while flying for business. Based on the feedback Pure Water Works is getting on its website, Siegmund thinks it is the way to go.

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