

Community & People

Orono-based Solo Dock announces donation program

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A Solo Dock is taken out of the water with a simple winch system. (Submitted photo)

by Sean Miner

The Pioneer

For every dock that Orono-based Solo Dock sells between now and June 1, the company will donate \$100 to the lakeshore association of the customer's choice.

"Our mission is to help people enjoy their time at the lake," said the company's owner, John Gehring. When asked for the reason behind the program, Gehring responded, "We appreciate our customers, we would like to thank them, and this fits in with our mission."

The docks manufactured by the company are easy-to-install and highly customizable aluminum tip-in docks, originally engineered by a family in Mound. The business office is located in Orono, and the shop and manufacturing facility are based in Medina.

Gehring purchased the company last summer. He said that his interest was piqued because he was "really attracted to the design and, subsequently, how easy it was for customers to install."

The docks are installed section by section, tipped in one by one from each previous section. Unlike most other docks, the Solo Dock can be installed by one person, without ever entering the water.

Past that, dock sections (or extrusions) are designed to attach to one another in several ways. This allows dock owners to customize their dock setup virtually however they wish, as well as accommodate a variety of dock accessories.

"Everything is designed to work together," described Gehring. "Because the extrusions work together, dock owners can easily add onto their dock in the future."

Among the accessories currently offered are bumpers, benches and, of course, the ubiquitous traditional dock ladder. Gehring identified as his favorite a set of 4-foot-wide aluminum stairs, which allows lakeshore owners a more convenient way in and out of the water.

He also mentioned that more accessories, among them kayak and paddleboard racks, are in development, and that Solo Dock is open to suggestions from customers for additional accessories.

Lakeshore associations, which exist for many area lakes, are a way for lakeshore owners to organize and advocate for many lake-related issues. The money donated by Solo Dock can be used at the discretion of each association; many associations use funds to stock their lakes with fish, fund events, and prevent or control invasive species.

Solo Dock has already made several of these contributions, and expects to contribute several thousand dollars to local associations between now and June. In the event that a customer's lake has no lakeshore association, accommodations can be made; one such donation went toward a fishing tournament being organized by neighboring lakeshore property owners.

Gehring, as one might expect, has a Solo Dock himself. He lives with his family on Lake Minnetonka.

He went so far as to say, "I look forward to putting my dock in." Gehring reported that he was able to put his dock in, by himself, in the same time that it often took a team of three to do so with a previous dock.

According to Gehring, the easier installation and removal of a Solo Dock also extends the season during which the dock can be out. Since he can perform both tasks himself, he doesn't have to worry about coordinating additional people to help out, giving him a few more weeks on either end.

After being removed, the docks store in neat stacks, measuring four feet by six feet. This small profile makes the docks quite shippable, and while they have been sold in various parts of the country, Gehring reported that the company was focused on the upper Midwest.

Gehring said that he was inspired to implement the program after learning about lakeshore associations, particularly as the associations have become more active in fighting against invasive species.

"It seemed like a natural fit," said Gehring. "It was a way I could support those efforts."

Gehring lives in Orono with his wife, Kristin, and two daughters, Hannah and Kayla. Kristin works in market research in the medical device industry. Hannah and Kayla are a senior and freshman, respectively, enrolled in the Orono school district.

To find out more about Solo Dock, visit solodock.com.



A Solo Dock is assembled section by section, and these pieces can attach to one another in a variety of ways. (Submitted photo)

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