

# ATV/UTV

## Family-values, determination and perseverance

*Minnesota dealership Leo's South still successful after 42 years*

BY **ABBY LARSON**

■ STAFF REPORTER

Want to learn more about a dealership that has withstood the test of time and persevered through decades of unstable markets and fluctuating economies? For Leo's South, the longevity of the decades-old business can be attributed to customer appreciation, determination and the stubborn belief that failure simply isn't an option.

Leo's South began servicing the Twin Cities area in 1977 when brothers Jerry and Oscar Bedeaux set up shop and began selling Polaris snowmobiles. As the business grew, more of the Bedeaux family joined the dealership and turned the operation

into a family-run business. It wasn't until 2009 that Jerry stepped down and passed ownership down to his two sons, Randy and Wayne. For the last 10 years, Wayne and Randy's collaborative efforts have kept Leo's South at the top of its game and highly regarded around the Twin Cities area.

"We've been doing this for a long time," said Wayne Bedeaux, part owner of Leo's South. "I started when I was a kid, right after the dealership first opened. We have always had the customer-comes-first mentality, and that is something we have maintained since the beginning."

Not everything has been smooth sailing since the company first opened 42 years ago, however. Fluctuating markets and harsh economies hit the dealership just like it hit any other throughout the years, but when others were forced to close their doors, Leo's South surged onward.

"When things were bad, we kept plugging away simply because we didn't know any better," Bedeaux explained. "For us, I think what got us through was that we always try to make customers feel like individuals. Treating customers like family and establishing long-term relationships has been one of the most important aspects of running a business. We don't see them as a sale today, but rather as a potential long-term relationship. We have customers today who have stuck with us since the beginning because we've treated them like family over the years."

Though Leo's South was the first dealership in its area to establish itself, competition is inevitable. Other dealerships began popping up nearby, and as it stands today, two dealerships sit just a stones-throw away from Leo's South. Bedeaux says that, despite such close proximity, the relationship between each dealership has remained cordial.

"We have a good relationship with neighboring dealers," Bedeaux said. "Each of us being here brings motorcycle enthusiasts into the area, so it works out well for all of us. If someone's looking for a motorcycle, they can shop just about every brand within a two-block radius. We'll send customers

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Leo's South is a family-owned and operated business that has been servicing the Twin Cities area since 1977. Photos by Abby Larson/ Powersports Business



Part-owner Wayne Bedeaux attributes the longevity of Leo's South to his family's refusal to quit, even during tough times.



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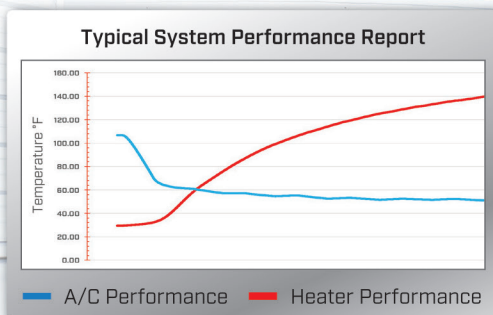


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## LEO'S SOUTH

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back and forth if they're looking for a specific brand that someone else carries that we don't. But," he added, "we were here first."

Forming in-store connections with new and returning customers isn't the only way Bedeaux and his staff operates. Dealership staff participates in community engagement through attending local events or hosting their own in-house occasions with the ultimate goal of increasing traffic to the store and getting more eyes on the company name.

"We definitely see some increased traffic from the shows when we exhibit," Bedeaux said. "We do the IMS show when it's in town and other big, local events where we can go out and meet some new people. Our being out in the community or throwing our own event promotes brand awareness and gets our name out there, which translates into more people coming through our doors. We typically get a good response from attending different shows around the area, and it allows us to meet new people and tell them who we are and where they can find us."

When it's all said and done, the Bedeaux family's secret to success is, in fact, not a secret at all.

"When a customer comes through our doors, we don't look at them as a potential sale, but as an individual who we can form a long-term relationship with," he explained. "We give each of our customers personal attention and cater to their individual needs. When we hire on staff, one of the first things we do is make sure they have a customer-focused mindset before we train them so we can really drive home



Establishing long-term relationships with customers remains the number one priority at Leo's South.

that the customer is number one, always. We don't pay their paycheck; the customer pays their paycheck."

Going through the rest of the 2019 season and beyond, customers around the Twin Cities area can expect much of the same from Leo's South.

"We'll continue to do our best to take care of every customer's needs. Anyone who walks through our doors, longtime customer or newcomer, can expect the same kind of bend-over-backwards mentality that we've always had." **PSB**



Local and dealership events help Leo's South employees form connections inside and outside of the store.



Wayne Bedeaux says that having a customer-focused mindset enhances the relationship between dealer and customer.

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