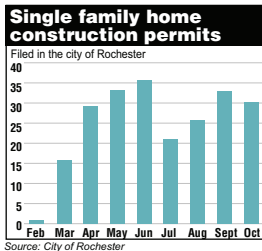
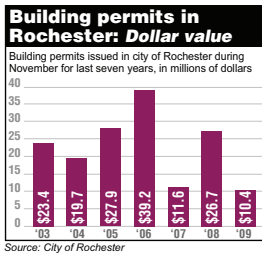
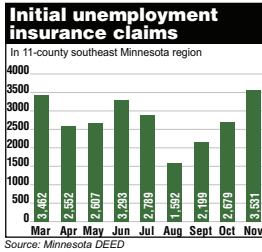




SNAPSHOT



Must-do list

- Here's this weekend's "Must-Do" list, from the Rochester Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 1. Forever Christmas XIX**, Elks Lodge, today and Sunday. Dinners at 6:30 p.m., show at 7:30 p.m. High-energy musical comedy in its 19th year. For more information, call 507-993-5244 or visit www.minnesotatheatrecompany.com.
 - 2. Classic Christmas**, 7:30 p.m. today, First Unitarian Universalist Church, by Rochester Aria Group. For more information, visit www.rochesterariagroup.org.
 - 3. Paint Your Own Pottery**, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. today, noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, Color Me Mine, 3160 Wellner Drive N.E. Call 507-252-0365 or visit www.colormemine.com.

WHO'S IN TOWN



Here are groups that are visiting Rochester soon, according to the Rochester Convention & Visitors Bureau.

- Today through Sunday: RYHA Hockey Junior Gold Tournament, 300 expected, citywide.
- Dec. 28-30: Rotary/US Bank Holiday Basketball Tournament, 1,000 expected, citywide.
- Dec. 28-30: Kiwanis Hockey Festival, 600 expected, citywide.

ROCHESTER / REST ASSURED MATTRESS COMPANY



Chuck Dixon, owner of Rest Assured Mattress Company in Rochester, has found a way to not only succeed, but thrive as a small business owner.

Jerry Olson, olson@postbulletin.com

He's made his bed

By Matthew Stolle
mstolle@postbulletin.com

When Chuck Dixon launched Rest Assured Mattress in 1991, he had a simple goal: To develop a successful business based on the idea of providing customers with the mattresses that best suited their needs.

Dixon would reach his goal, just not as quickly as he would have liked. It would take the better part of a decade for this Rochester mattress maker-turned-businessman to establish a solidly profitable company. Now that he has, "Chuck the Bedder Man" has become a bedroom name, if not a household one, among many of his 10,000-strong customer base.

Instead of being hammered by the rocky economy, Rest Assured has seen its sales volume and market share grow. From a company that struggled in its first decade, Rest Assured is on track to cross the \$1 million threshold in revenue.

That success comes in spite of an environment in which competitors and furniture shops often wield more muscular advertising budgets and more recognizable brand names.

"We've developed a market for people who like us. They want us to be successful," Dixon said.

Rest Assured also has the distinction of being Rochester's only bed business that makes its mattresses locally. During a recent visit to his store at 4151 Frontage Road N.W., Dixon invited a visitor to stretch out on one of them.

Like a tailor trying to find the right fit for his customer, Dixon delves into sometimes delicate territory, like sleep patterns and nocturnal habits. And customers may inadvertently tell more than they intended.

But the conversations are completely confidential and all aimed at one goal: Maximizing a person's sleep by matching them with the right mattress.

"We sell them the bed that's the best for them, not the one that we make the most money on," he said.



Jerry Olson, olson@postbulletin.com

Bruce Beckett stitches a mattress using a Kevlar thread that is highly flame resistant.

Learning lessons

The values of customer satisfaction have not always been at the heart of every mattress-selling business Dixon has been a part of.

When Dixon first started out in the business in 1972, he was hired as an apprentice for Rochester Mattress Company. It was there that Dixon learned the fundamentals of the business, from making mattresses to the importance of satisfying customers.

But when the business was sold to a larger corporation, Dixon thought the new company was sacrificing quality to save money. That eventually led Dixon to strike out on his own. But as a family man with bills to pay, Dixon also needed a regular paycheck. So he took a night job at Cub Foods scrubbing floors, while he worked during the day on his business.

Rest Assured opened in 1991. His dream of creating a "very successful business in very short time," however, ran into some early challenges. One of them was Dixon's own lack of business experience. Soon he

had a roomful of mattresses, but no one coming through the doors to buy them.

"That was lesson No. 1: Maybe I better find some way to get them in someone's home," he said.

Repeat customers

The customers and orders would come and so would Dixon's business savvy. From a one-man operation, Rest Assured has grown to employ three full-time and four part-time employees. And driving the success has been a simple idea, Dixon said: A satisfied customer is likely to be not only a repeat customer but one who recommends Rest Assured to others.

The business model worked; it just took some time.

"We could make more mattresses, cheaper mattresses, cut the quality, save money, put the money we save into advertising and our market share would explode," Dixon said. "But unfortunately, we'd end up with transactional customers who are only concerned about price, not the relational buyers who want to keep us in business."

By the numbers

35.9 million **\$6.2 billion**
Number of beds sold in 2008 Value of the beds sold in 2008

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Shelly Joseph and Katie Paulson



Scott Jacobson, sjacobson@postbulletin.com

Shelly Joseph and Katie Paulson, co-owners of H2O Salon.

Ages: Joseph is 40; Paulson, 39.

Job: Co-owners of Blu H2O Salon in downtown Rochester. Both Lourdes High School graduates, and friends for 25 years. They moved together to Arizona in 1989. Joseph met her husband there, lived in Colorado, and moved back to Rochester about six years ago. Paulson lived in Arizona and Minneapolis before moving back to Rochester where she owned Take Off Salon. Katie is in her 20th year as a hairstylist.

Business: Blu H2O Salon opened in May in the Doubletree Skyway. "We felt downtown Rochester was ready for an upscale, but not intimidating, full-service hair and nail salon. A perfect venue to enjoy a service and enjoy a night out in downtown Rochester."

What's your business philosophy? "Our philosophy is simple. We want our employees to love to come to work and our clients to have such a good experience that they can't wait to come back. So far, I believe we are achieving that goal. Our clients tell us over and over they feel the positive energy in the salon. We have some of the best stylists in Rochester."

Do you use social media? "We all use Facebook in many ways. We have a fan site that we can post our specials on. We also communicate with some of our clients that way. It is a great networking tool. On a personal note, we have reconnected with a lot of old friends."

What's the most rewarding part of your job? "The most rewarding part of our job is making someone feel better while we have them in our salon. We have had hundreds of clients visiting the Mayo Clinic, our goal is to give them an escape for a few minutes or a few hours. If we can take some stress off anyone's day, we have done our job. When your hair, make up, nails, etc. look good, you can see people stand a little taller, walk a little prouder. Overall you just feel better about yourself. After all, you know what they say about a bad hair day!"

How do you choose your hair styles? They attend classes all over the United States and watch trends through television, movies, magazines and the Internet.

Executive Profile runs each Saturday in the Business section and profiles an area business person. To be featured, please contact Local News Editor Mike Klein at 281-7481 or mklein@postbulletin.com.