

Bottom Lines: Ferries expand Christmas-decorating territory to Cape May, Gloucester counties



Shawn, left, and John Ferrie are expanding their decorating-service territory this season, adding those in Cape May and Gloucester counties to the Atlantic County customers they've served since 1998.

Kevin Post, Business Editor | Posted: Sunday, October 3, 2010

A dozen years ago, Shawn and John Ferrie added outdoor holiday decorating to their landscaping and lawn service.

That gave them a business segment that got busy just as the yardwork slowed down in late fall.

The Ferries became a franchise of Christmas Decor, which was founded by a Texas landscaper in 1986 for the same reason, as an off-season supplement to his business.

Now Christmas Decor is the largest holiday decorating franchise, with nearly 300 locations nationwide.

And the Ferries are expanding their decorating-service territory this season, adding Cape May and Gloucester counties to the Atlantic County customers they've served since 1998.

They're also participating for the first time in a Christmas Decor program to help cheer the homes of American military personnel serving overseas during the holiday.

[Click here to find out more about the contest.](#)

The Ferries started Fresh Cut Landscape Management Professionals in 1983. Since then, the business has grown to 35 employees providing a wide range of services.

That has helped in the economic downturn.

"We're busy because we have so many different divisions," said Shawn Ferrie, of Egg Harbor Township. "Landscaping has been light like most businesses, but we have regular maintenance customers and commercial contracts.

“When the weather’s dry, the irrigation division gets very busy. And now going into fall we’re beginning fall cleanup and winterization of irrigation systems,” she said.

What they call the snow division — Christmas Decor by Fresh Cut — will have nine to 12 employees installing outdoor decorations this fall.

“We do roof lighting, shrub and tree lighting, garlands, wreaths and stake lighting,” Ferrie said.

First she meets with the homeowner to discuss what can be decorated and select the elements they want.

Then the company installs the decorations, maintains them through the holiday season, and takes them down in January, she said.

When the Cape May County territory became available this year, Egg Harbor Township-based Fresh Cut took it.

“There wasn’t a dealer to the west of us, so we took Gloucester County as well,” Ferrie said.

“That’s a little far to travel but we’re trying to grow the business.”

She said a couple of clients there already had signed up for the service.

This year the Ferris also want to provide their decorating service for free to three families — one in each of their counties — with members serving overseas in the armed forces.

The Decorated Families program of Christmas Decor takes nominations online from the public through its website.

The nominations are matched to franchise operators and sent to them, and they decide which service family homes to decorate, largely on the basis of the family’s story from the nomination, Ferrie said.

Brandon Stephens, director of marketing for Christmas Decor, said the company started the program in 2005 and decorated 100 homes for service people that year.

Now the franchisees are donating more than 200 decoration packages a year, he said, and most don’t even put in for the stipend Christmas Decor pays them to help cover the costs at each home.

Nominations used to be open until December, Stephens said, but starting this year they’ll close Nov. 1 and the nominees will be sent out the following week so franchisees can work them into their schedules.

Shawn Ferrie said Fresh Cut and the families prefer to decorate the homes sooner rather than later.

“We have to put up the lights before Dec. 15, but I’d prefer to do it sooner than that, maybe just after Thanksgiving,” she said.

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