

STAMPEDE!

ON LOCATION

THE PRO: Gallup Pumping Service

THE JOB: Junior High School National Rodeo Finals

LOCATION: Red Rock Park, Gallup, N.M.



WHEN IT COMES TO WRANGLING RESTROOMS AND KEEPING UP WITH HUNDREDS OF RV PUMPOUTS, GALLUP PUMPING SERVICES IS A RODEO CHAMP

By Betty Dageforde

Participants in the Junior High School National Rodeo Finals work their horses. A few of the restrooms placed by Gallup Pumping Service are in the background. (Photos courtesy of Gallup Pumping Service)

THE TEAM

The Mortensen brothers, Chris and Dustin, operate Gallup Pumping Service, a septic/portable restroom business in Gallup, N.M. They have 15 employees between the restroom service and their plumbing business, Williams Plumbing, three of whom are shared office personnel. For the rodeo, the company used their four route drivers and hired an additional four temporary workers.

Chris Mortensen describes their management style: “Neither my brother nor I are plumbers or pumpers, so the business is not dependent on us being in a truck every day. That allows us to focus on sales and customer service. We just try to grease the tracks and help our guys stay effective and billable.”

COMPANY HISTORY

In 2007, Chris Mortensen was an accountant and Dustin was in construction and contracting, both living in Albuquerque. They had grown

up in Gallup and when they heard the 46-year-old Gallup Pumping Service was for sale, they saw it as an opportunity to move back home. They started out with 150 portable restrooms and now have 300.

They serve the northwest corner of the state in the Four Corners region, as well as the Navajo Nation located in parts of New Mexico and Arizona, where the company has one of its biggest events, the 10-day Navajo Nation Fair, for which the brothers provide 150 units.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

The rodeo project was won four years ago through a competitive bid from the City of Gallup. It was renewed each year since, and has been extended for another two years.

Chris Mortensen believes they’ve kept the contract because of their service. “We try hard to have a zero complaint, zero issue type of event,” he says. “We make this a 100 percent turnkey thing for the city. They tell us where to set up and we take it from there and handle the entire operation.”

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THE MAIN EVENT

The Junior High School National Rodeo Finals was established in 2004 to promote rodeo among kids in grades six through eight. It's held in Red Rock Park outside of Gallup, this year the week of June 24-30.

The event includes standard rodeo competitions – roping, chute dogging, barrel racing, goat tying, bull riding, etc. – as well as less intense contests such as volleyball, tug-of-war, dancing, along with family oriented activities, shopping and sightseeing. At the Saturday evening championship round, \$75,000 in prizes and \$100,000 in college scholarships are given away.

The 2011 event attracted 5,000 attendees – about a fifth of them contestants – from 41 states, five Canadian provinces and Australia. The 1,152 horse stalls were full, as was the 603-space campground.

BY THE NUMBERS

The company provided 36 brown/beige PolyPortables Inc. Vantage restrooms and four PolyPortables Inc. Enhanced Access Units. These were placed in eight service areas – food courts, vendor locations, the practice arena, the campground, side event areas, and a few at individual campsites.

The bulk of the company's work was pumping out nearly 850 holding tanks because the campground did not have a dump station for the RVs and horse trailers (with living quarters) the contestants stayed in.

LET'S ROLL

The company started bringing in units on the Monday and Tuesday before the event. It took two trips using a 2002 Explorer 20-unit transport



Above left, technician Justin Yazzie, and right, Earl Samuel work in tight spaces to pump out RVs that combine living quarters for the participants up front and horses in the back.

trailer from McKee Technologies Inc. During the week units were moved around to accommodate changing demand using the back bed of a 2011 Polaris Ranger Crew – big enough to hold one unit but small enough to get into tight spaces.

The Gallup Pumping Service team is shown with a vacuum truck from Largo Tank & Equipment Inc. In the front row (left to right) are Dustin Mortensen, Vince Chee, Donovan Dez, Earl Samuel, Chris Mortensen (with Howie, the office dog), Andrew Sandoval and Kevin Manuelito. In the back (left to right) are Justin Yazzie, Brian Decker and Ryan Bracken.



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KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

Four vacuum trucks were used. The 2008 Ford F-550 flatbed has a homemade slide-in 400-gallon waste steel tank and a Moro USA Inc. pump. The company's other vehicles were built by Largo Tank & Equipment Inc. in Farmington, N.M.: a 2005 Chevy 6500 flatbed with a slide-in 600-gallon waste steel tank, a 300-gallon freshwater steel tank and a Masport Inc. pump; a 2007 Chevy 7500 with a 1,500-gallon waste steel tank, a 400-gallon freshwater steel tank and a Moro USA Inc. pump; and a 2006 Chevy 8500 with a 1,500-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater aluminum tank and a Masport Inc. pump.

Portable restrooms were serviced early morning and mid-afternoon starting June 23, using pressure sprayers, Simple Green cleaning products and PolyPortables Inc. Turbo Tubes.

Due to the congestion from tightly-packed trailers, along with kids, dogs, horses and golf carts, two technicians were in each service vehicle so one could act as a spotter for safety purposes. Drivers normally wear uniforms, but for this event the company made special T-shirts so they'd be more comfortable in the heat. One vehicle was left each night for after-hours emergencies.

With special permission from the city, waste was dumped into the Gallup municipal wastewater plant through a manhole near the park.

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Chris Mortensen

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED

A sign-up system was established for RV and horse trailer pumping. Attendees stopped by the company's tent and purchased a ticket. If they signed up by 4 p.m., they were guaranteed same-day service. After providing their name, state, type of trailer and RV site, they were issued a hangtag for the trailer. After cleaning, the technician would remove the tag and leave a note saying they'd been there.

BETTER WITH AGE

There were no unusual problems at last year's rodeo, the biggest event for Gallup and the second largest event for the company. “This was our



Gallup provided 36 brown/beige PolyPortables Inc. restrooms throughout Red Rock Park, from competition areas to a large campground.



Owners Dustin (left) and Chris Mortensen have operated Gallup Pumping Service since 2007. The rodeo is a large special event requiring plenty of hours on site.



This 2007 Chevrolet 8500 service rig from Largo Tank & Equipment has a 1,500-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater tank. It maneuvers between RV sites, where workers keep 850 holding tanks pumped.

fourth year doing it, so it was business as usual,” Mortensen says. Every year the company has the opportunity to sit down with event organizers for a post-event briefing to go over everything, get feedback and brainstorm about how to do it better. “The biggest thing is being able to respond very quickly to the demands of the customers and the demands of the event,” Mortensen says. “It’s really a lot of fun, and we’re proud to be a part of it, not only for us but also for the city of Gallup.” ■

MORE INFO

Largo Tank & Equipment, Inc.
505/327-6281
www.largotank.com
(See ad page XX)

Masport, Inc.
800/228-4510
www.masportpump.com
(See ad page XX)

McKee Technologies, Inc.
866/457-5425
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