

DIESEL AND MORE

Relocating to Superior Was the Right Move for Twin Ports Diesel & Auto, Since Business is Growing



Jason Dohse was pretty content with his diesel repair shop in Carlton, Minnesota. He worked on semis, dump trucks, logging trucks – machines that use powerful diesel engines. Dohse had a great reputation and a going business. And Bobbie, his wife, helped out with some of the business's paperwork on the side from her own career as a real estate closer.

However, Dohse – who is a military veteran – believed that they could probably do better. So he thought it was time to look for a new place, something closer to home, Bobbie said from her office in the “new place” they found in downtown Superior.

Twin Ports Diesel & Auto opened in April 2019, and the Dohses, who co-own the business, are on the home stretch to com-

pleting their first year in operation at 1327 Ogden Ave. They've embraced their new location in the heart of the city, because for them, Superior is more than just a place to do business.

AMONG THE MOST LOYAL CUSTOMERS IS THE SCHWAN'S CO., AND TWIN PORTS DIESEL & AUTO CONTINUES SERVICING THE COMPANY'S FLEET OF FOOD DELIVERY VEHICLES.

“We want to be involved in every single thing that they do in Superior,” Bobbie explained. “It's not just running a business that's





"A LOT OF THE WORK THAT WE DO COMES IN BY WORD OF MOUTH. EVERYONE'S BEEN SAYING, YEAH, GO THERE – GO THERE. SO THAT IS A HUGE THING FOR US."

– CO-OWNER BOBBIE DOHSE

important; we want to be a part of that community." They've made it a part of their business to be involved in community events as well as celebrating all holidays with special treats for children and seasonal decorations.

In moving to Superior, the Dohses decided it was worth it to trade a larger building size for a prime location. The new shop doesn't have the ceiling height required to work on big trucks, so the business has adapted to medium-size trucks – and has done so very successfully. For example, it services and maintains the operating fleets of a number of Twin Ports-area businesses. Among the most loyal customers is the Schwan's Co., and Twin Ports Diesel & Auto continues servicing the company's fleet of food delivery vehicles.

"Fleet repair is one of the things that carry us," Bobbie explained. "The quality of work that Jason and the other mechanics do keeps bringing new customers in the door. A lot of the work that we do comes in by word of mouth. Everyone's been saying, yeah, go there – go there. So that is a huge thing for us."

Since the Superior location opened, the business has attracted many new, local clients including Bernick's, a wholesale beverage and food distributor, and ASI. Maintenance and repair of medium- to heavy-duty trucks is still a specialty of Twin Ports Diesel & Auto. Jason and his employees, for example, are experts on GMC Duramax engines, Mercedes-Benz S550s and large one-and-a-half-ton trucks. In the three-quarter-ton truck market, they can handle Cummins, Duramax and the Ford Power Strokes. And increasingly, they are working on the newer Volkswagen turbocharged direct injection (TDI) engines.

THE EARLY YEARS

Relocating his business to Superior takes Jason back to where his career began. He started out almost 20 years ago working at Superior Truck Inc. He was first hired as a certified welder to install dump boxes onto the frames of a dozen trucks ordered by Kimmes Oil. When he was done with that project, the company began



From left: Mechanic Dillon Hanson, co-owners Jason and Bonnie Dohse, Shop Foreman and Lead Mechanic Christian Issacson.





"I'LL WORK ON ANYTHING. YOU PUT A FOUR-WHEELER IN FRONT OF ME AND I'LL GO AHEAD AND WORK ON IT."

— CHRISTIAN ISSACSON, SHOP FOREMAN AND LEAD MECHANIC

teaching him how to be a mechanic through a combination of on-the-job training, school and online training. It was a great start to what has become his lifelong profession.

Then about 10 years later, Jason started working with another company in Carlton on tractor-trailer mechanic work – the "heavy duty stuff," as he described it. He had been working 60 hours a week, but the economy then slowed to the point where he was having a tough time putting in a regular 40-hour week. To make ends meet, he began working on the weekends repairing bulldozers, front-end loaders and other construction equipment. It wasn't long before a friend suggested that Jason should rent an empty building space he had and start his own business. It made sense, so in 2010 Jason launched Dohse Truck & Diesel Repair, which also operated under the name the Shop On 61, in Carlton.

Soon enough, he had more work than he could handle, which led to one of the best moves he made for his business: hiring another mechanic. Christian Issacson, who is the shop foreman and lead mechanic, has been with the Dohses almost from the beginning. Issacson had heard about "the guy renting out the building" close to where he lived, so he stopped in one day to check it out. He filled out a job application and a couple days later, he was invited back for an interview. "I pretty much was hired on the spot and I've been with them ever since," Issacson said.

Issacson noted that despite Twin Ports Diesel & Auto's shift from working on large rigs and equipment to medium-size truck and automobiles, the mechanical challenges remain. "Nothing is ever really as easy as it's supposed to be," he said. Electrical work, for example, can keep him very busy, due to today's complex truck

field
CONNOLLY
INSURANCE

Auto-Owners
INSURANCE

LIFE • HOME • CAR • BUSINESS

www.fieldconnolly.com • 715-392-9829

and automotive technology. But it's an important aspect of being a good mechanic, and it's the challenge that keeps him focused on his work. "I liked working on the big stuff," Issacson noted, "but I'll work on anything. You put a four-wheeler in front of me and I'll go ahead and work on it."

FAMILY CAR FRIENDLY

Twin Ports Diesel & Auto is adept at switching gears, specifically from diesel engines to gas-powered trucks and automobiles. One of the benefits to customers in the Superior area is the business's designation as a NAPA AutoCare Center. Jason has been affiliated with NAPA for years as a truck center, and he continues passing on the benefits of that relationship to his auto and fleet customers.



"NAPA BACKS US ON PARTS AND LABOR. THERE'S A NAPA AUTOCARE WARRANTY FOR ANY VEHICLE THAT WE WORK ON."

— CO-OWNER JASON DOHSE

"NAPA backs us on parts and labor," he explained. "There's a NAPA AutoCare warranty for any vehicle that we work on – a two-year, 24,000-mile warranty that NAPA backs us on." Customers experiencing difficulty handling an unexpected repair bill can also apply for financing with NAPA, he added.

"When we started our business in Superior, we made a decision to do whatever we could to help people," said Bobbie. And Twin Ports Diesel & Auto stands by that pledge, offering to take deferred payments for work, something most garages refuse to do. It's not easy, she says, but it's a core tenet of their business philosophy. "No one plans that their car's going to break down. There are people that need help, and being able to do that is an amazing feeling," she said. At the end of the day, it's these little things that put a smile on her face as a satisfied customer drives out of the garage.

"Our customers are always happy. We've got a really good customer base, and I treat the customers' vehicles like they're my own," said Jason, who prides himself on his reputation as a good mechanic and a hard worker. Relocating the business to Superior has been a great move, he added: "I like this location because we're right in the middle of town, we've got the dealerships right around us – we're kind of like your auto repair central, right here where we're at."

And don't let the word "diesel" scare you, Jason said. "I don't want people to think that all we do is diesel," he emphasized, pointing out that Twin Ports Diesel & Auto works on "all things vehicle, like tires, tune-ups and oil changes, on your wife's car or you son's beater."

Bobbie is also proud to say that when you walk in the door of Twin Ports Diesel & Auto, you're stepping into a woman-owned, veteran-owned business. The Dohses welcome all inquiries about truck and automotive makes and models. And they look forward to the opportunity to help you – and get your truck or car back on the road. 📞

Patrick Lapinski is a freelance writer who grew up in Superior.

Nathan Jarnot, DDS, MD • Eric Scotland, DDS • Scott Varland, DDS



**Oral &
Maxillofacial
SURGICAL
ASSOCIATES**

Serving the area since 1969

Your Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons and their team are ready to assist you in making the best decisions for a healthy mouth and lasting smile.

We have a wide scope practice to offer including:

- Dental Implants
- Wisdom Teeth Extraction
- Corrective Jaw Surgery
- Financing Available/CareCredit

Two Twin Ports locations to serve you!

Northland Medical Bldg.
1000 E. First St., Suite 108
Duluth, MN • 218-722-1854

Colonial Square
3712 Tower Ave., Suite E
Superior, WI • 715-392-9846