

Godfrey Business Spotlight: Gorilla Car Wash is Business Built from Passion

by Jim Mager - Village of Godfrey Economic Development
February 8 2024 5:19 PM



GODFREY - While salt may do wonders for food, it is definitely not something you want on your vehicle. With that in mind, how fortunate to have Gorilla Car Wash here in Godfrey. They are a business built from a passion for friendly customer service, where team members and manager Mike Kiffmeyer work hard to make sure customers have a great experience and a clean car.

Gary and Susan Chappel got into the car wash business in 2011. Gary owned an auto glass business when developing health issues made it impossible to continue working in that industry. Looking for an income opportunity that would accommodate Gary's health condition, they decided to purchase a self-service car wash facility in Greenville. In 2013, they bought their second unit in Collinsville.

In 2014, they purchased (what is now) the Gorilla Car Wash in Cottage Hills. At the time the "automated" car wash facility was closed. When the facility was purchased, they had to renovate the washing mechanisms and add vacuums located on the east side of the building. Wanting to recreate that model in Godfrey, they purchased the car wash located on Godfrey Road. With that acquisition and an additional \$1.3M in improvements, Godfrey now enjoys the service offerings that exist today.

Gary explained that building an automated car wash from scratch requires several million dollars of investment. Starting out, he did not have that kind of capital. As such, he has purchased existing facilities and made needed improvements to get them to desirable functionality.

The Chappels go beyond working to ensure good service to their customers. They also work to be great corporate citizens for the community. In 2022, they supported the Alton Booster Club by setting aside one day to provide free washes. The Alton athletes were on hand to accept donations from patrons. On that day, \$5,000 was raised. They repeated the effort in 2023 for a weekend, raising \$8,000.

"Working in the business is a lot of fun. People in the industry are very helpful toward one another," said Gary.

Having grown up in Alton and graduated from Alton High in '81, Gary enjoys the opportunity to have their business in the area. "We enjoy being able to give back to the community and Godfrey is a wonderful place. I really appreciate how easy it is to work with the Village. I'm currently working to develop another unit in University City and it is a lot different over there," said Gary.

The business provides great value to their customers. They have multiple wash packages to fit different customer needs. A standard wash is currently \$6.00 including free towel usage, mat cleaners, window cleaners and vacuum usage. Going to a self service wash can cost \$5.00. At Gorilla's automated wash, the customer does not even have to get out of the vehicle. They also have a \$19/month package that provides an unlimited number of washes.

Gorilla Car Wash is located at 5077 Godfrey Road. The hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday. For more information about local businesses in Godfrey, check out VisitGodfrey.com.