

Why Pink?



More and more propane and fueloil customers from coast to coast are asking their delivery person, “why pink?” It must seem incongruous that a truck driver would operate a pink truck, but that’s what at least two dozen drivers are doing. And, despite the initial teasing some have received, every driver says he’s extremely proud to be taking part in a number of breast cancer awareness campaigns that were initiated by Rymes Propane & Oil (Keene, N.H.) last year.

There are now more than a dozen propane and fueloil marketers nationwide with pink bobtails and delivery trucks on the road to help raise awareness of breast cancer. As of October, which was National Breast Cancer Month, Kohler Oil & Propane, Permagas, Vegas Propane, Propane Discounters, HCL Cullipher, and Liberty Propane had added a new bobtail painted pink or repainted one of their trucks as part of the campaign to raise awareness of the disease and the resources that are available to the women and men who have been diagnosed with the cancer.

Jim Rymes of Rymes Propane & Oil, the first marketer to paint a bobtail pink in 2006 (*BPN*, May 2006, p. 33), has added a second pink truck, this one for delivering fueloil, to his fleet. Describing himself and his family as being very fortunate to have been able to help the cancer awareness campaign, Rymes said

he will be donating a penny per gallon from the fueloil truck’s deliveries just as he has been doing with his bobtail. Blackmer, a Dover Co. (Grand Rapids, Mich.), again joined Rymes in the campaign and donated a transport pump for use on the new truck. Blackmer’s OEM Boston Steel division built the fueloil truck and enlisted several vendors, who donated either equipment or supplied it at below cost. Boston Steel then donated the equipment savings directly to the campaign.

The American Breast Cancer Foundation (ABCF) is the charity that Rymes chose in 2005 when he and his family agreed to raise funds and awareness for breast cancer. The bobtail has been to more than 20 local events after it was exhibited at several propane industry conventions in 2005. He has raised just under \$10,000 since he received the bobtail. This doesn’t include the approximately \$30,000 in donations from nearly two dozen truck equipment suppliers, who agreed to give money in an amount equal to or close to the piece of equipment they donated for the bobtail. That initial fundraising effort was coordinated by Shawn Auxier of Bulk Truck & Transport Service (Hanover, Ind.).

Both his propane and fueloil drivers are excited about driving the trucks, and they have received a number of requests to bring one of them to breast cancer fundraisers and other local events. The

pink truck driver also gets to wear a special pink company shirt.

Out West, Vegas Propane’s (Las Vegas) manager Jack Goslin said his driver has had to fight back tears when customers and others figure out why the truck is pink and have to tell him their cancer stories. Goslin got the idea earlier this year for repainting one of the company’s trucks to honor his cousin, Cindy, who passed away from the disease, after reading about Rymes and the other marketers with pink trucks. Goslin’s boss, Tom Mueller, who founded the company 20 years ago, is an enthusiastic supporter of local charities and is excited about the ABCF partnership.

Vegas Propane also is donating a penny per gallon for every gallon sold from the truck to ABCF.

The truck is rotated among different routes that include residential and commercial customers. It has been taken to breast cancer-related events, where Goslin and his drivers will sometimes pass out their company shirts printed in pink. The bobtail’s driver was asked “why pink?” by several vendors prior to a fall Vegas National Hot Rod Association event, when he was delivering fuel. When he explained why, the response was more than positive and supportive.

Among the new bobtails that Lib-



erty Propane (Overland Park, Kansas) ordered earlier this year was one for its Permagas (Lake Stevens, Wash.) operations built by JARCO (Salem, Ill.).

The Kenworth T600 truck with a

2800-gal. barrel arrived at Permagas' office in time to kick off Liberty's fundraiser for ABCF, which started July 1. It has also been featured in two local parades. Permagas schedules the truck on routes that primarily have commercial deliveries in more populated areas to give the truck more exposure.

Summing up its involvement in the ABCF campaign, Liberty said it hopes its efforts will help encourage men in the propane industry to "get the ladies in their lives a breast cancer screening. In addition, the campaign brings a message to truckers who travel the heartlands and to truck manufacturers nationwide, to be advocates for those whom they love, because early detection saves lives."

Money collected for the ABCF campaign will help fund screenings for uninsured women and men in the different states in which the trucks operate. ABCF is one of the few organizations that also provides screening and other services to men, who are also vulnerable to breast cancer.

JARCO's president Nancy Coop also worked with J.D. Geisler of Propane



Discounters (Jensen Beach, Fla.) earlier this year when he called to ask her advice about repainting one of his trucks, a 1996 Ford F700 that also runs on propane. The idea to join the breast cancer campaign was sparked by a combination of seeing one of the articles on Rymes and the death—but not from breast cancer—of Geisler's stepmother in 2006. "Just getting the message out that cancer affects everyone is important," Geisler told *BPN*.

Despite their initial skepticism, Geisler's drivers are very supportive of the company's efforts to get the word out

about preventing cancer. One of his drivers even bought his own pink polo shirt to wear when the company's new pink work shirts weren't ready. The response has been great. A customer wrote a letter to a local newspaper, which resulted in an article on the company and the campaign. Women come up to the drivers at different events and ask to get their photos taken with them. Among the events the truck is scheduled to attend is an upcoming walk-a-thon that is expecting about 20,000 participants. Propane Discounters chose the Susan G. Komen for the Cure program and is also donating a penny per gallon sold.

In Michigan, Kohler Oil & Propane (Brown City) has added a pink bobtail to its fleet from Signature Truck Sys-



tems (Clio, Mich.). Arriving in time to help kick off National Breast Cancer Awareness Month locally, Kohler partnered with Marlette Regional Hospital on a project called "Breast Cancer Understanding Prevention Screening," or BCUPS, which the company helped establish as part of the hospital's Be A Star Fund. A portion of Kohler's propane sales donated through BCUPS will be used to provide education and screenings to uninsured and underinsured area residents.

Stephen Kohler saw a follow-up *BPN* article on the breast cancer awareness campaign and contacted Apollo Propane, one of the companies that added a pink truck to its fleet, to thank them for the idea and ask for advice. He chose Marlette Regional Hospital because of its work with area residents in reducing financial challenges to necessary health-care Signature Truck Systems built the Freight-liner truck with a 3000-gal. barrel, and several equipment companies.

including Blackmer, contributed to the project and provided donations.

Since putting the bobtail on the road, Kohler has taken it to a handful of local breast cancer awareness and other events where he and his staff hand out an educational brochure using the BCUPS logo they designed with a pink bra. The lucky driver who is scheduled to drive the truck also hands out the brochures on his route. Kohler told *BPN* he's purchased a pink 1956 Cadillac to take with the bobtail to future events. The feedback from his employees, customers, and others has been wonderful. When the truck arrived, his drivers commented that the truck even smelled pink.

Another new bobtail on the road is in Tennessee courtesy of HLC Cullipher (Alamo). The BT&T-built bobtail with Blackmer pump, LC meter, and Fisher internal valves travels the roads of five counties. Brad Laman of HLC said when his driver, Don McCandless, saw the Rymes



pink truck at the Midwest Propane Gas Convention and Trade Show in 2006, he said he'd be honored to drive one to help raise funds for ABCF. His first wife died of cancer and his second wife currently is battling the disease. The wife of another HLC employee, Johnnie Maddux, is also fighting cancer.

Out in BT&T's shop is another truck chassis getting prepped to join the pink truck brigade. It was ordered by Doug Auxier of Auxier Gas Inc. (Batavia, Ohio), who told *BPN* that he has had several close friends and family members afflicted by cancer. The new truck will be one way to honor their struggle and help educate those who see the truck that early detection is important.

—Ann Rey