



Bug Zero... A Local Success

More than 50 pest control companies do business in Springfield, but that hasn't stopped Ivan and Terri Eftink from carving out a niche for their company, Bug Zero.

Ivan Eftink founded Bug Zero in June 1990. Prior to venturing out on his own, Eftink worked for another pest control company,

but he longed to start his own business. "I operated our family farm before I got into pest control," he said. "Once you've worked for yourself, it's hard to go back."

Initially, Eftink was the company's sole employee, and he conducted business from an office in his home. Six months after opening, he hired his first employee, Connie Galligher, who currently manages the office and fields incoming calls.

In 1991, Eftink met his future wife Terri, who has extensive experience as a hotel account executive, and two years later, she began working full-time at Bug Zero. By 1994, the company had four employees and a host of new clients. The Eftinks decided to relocate their expanding business, and they began leasing an office and small warehouse on South Union Street in Springfield.

"It was time to get our life back," said Terri Eftink. "It's hard to leave your work behind at the end of the day when you work out of your home."

Bug Zero continued to expand, and in 1999, the Eftinks moved to their current location at 311 N. Waverly in Springfield. The move allowed them to triple their office space and double their warehouse space.

The company currently has 11 employees, operates eight service trucks, and offers a wide variety of pest control services designed to keep ants, termites, roaches, spiders, fleas, wasps, crickets, mice and rats in check. Bug Zero also removes skunks, opossums, squirrels and other small animals that have become a nuisance.

Ivan Eftink estimated two-thirds of the company's work comes from commercial clients such as nursing homes, hospitals, retail and food-service establishments. Most of these clients reside within 90 miles of Springfield.

Last month, Bug Zero began providing pest services for St. John's Health Systems. Servicing these facilities has Bug Zero's trained technicians traveling throughout southwest and south-central Missouri.

"We were able to win that contract because we already had the systems and manpower in place to serve them," said Ivan Eftink.

Eftink said prospective employees go through a rigorous screening process, which includes a background check. Employee training also is rigorous, with technicians completing one month of intensive in-house and on-site training that helps them learn about various forms of pesticides and their use, as well as the company's standard operating procedures. New employees also take correspondence courses in pest management, offered through Purdue University in West LaFayette, Ind.

A Local Success...Continued

The Eftinks believe extensive employee training has allowed them to provide customers with good, consistent service. Employees who have a question while on a job site also can refer to the company's manual, which outlines the course of action that should be taken.

"Establishing a set of procedures for employees to follow was one of the smartest things I've done," said Ivan Eftink. "If I hadn't done that, I'd spend all day answering questions."

Education extends to Bug Zero's customers as well. Each technician takes time to explain the treatment plan that will be used. A technician also might recommend and establish a regular maintenance schedule for a customer.

"People have a right to know what services they're getting, how much they cost, and why they're needed," said Ivan Eftink. "We don't just go in and spray. We try to stop em at the source. That's our slogan, and it appears on our service trucks."

Eftink is a member of the National Pest Management Association and is the president of the Missouri Pest Management Association.

Bug Zero is experiencing a period of record growth. Last year, the company's revenues increased by 23 percent, and the Eftinks said they expect to meet that figure again this year.

"Our goal has never been to be one of the bigger companies in town," said Eftink. "We want to be the company that provides the best service and has the best reputation."

In addition to running their business, the Eftinks are involved in the community. The two belong to the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce and participate in many of the chamber's networking events. They also serve on the board of directors for several professional organizations.