



LOCATOR

TRAILBLAZING DUO

Yard Of The Month

Trails End Auto & Truck Salvage

Brothers Mike Swift and Steven Swift have the best of both worlds. They own Trails End Auto & Truck Salvage, a successful auto recycling business in Des Moines, Iowa. They also find support and inspiration from the local competition, Swift Auto Parts.

"Both are family businesses," Mike said. "My sisters [Wendi and Susan] work for my dad [Dale] at Swift Auto Parts. My mom [Gretchen] works here and she works for my dad. We have a family saying: 'Once the junk gets in your blood, you can't get it out.'"

The brothers grew up at Swift Auto Parts, which their grandfather, Orie Swift started in the 1940s. Dale and Gretchen purchased it in the late 1970s. Sons Mike and Steve worked there until December 1999 when they bought Trails End.

"When we first purchased the yard, the parking lot was muddy and there was no inventory," said Mike. "It was just a basic yard to get us started. The beautiful part was that it had a name, a phone number and was zoned as a salvage yard."

Building A Business

The Swift brothers went on to build up the new company. They had some unexpected help from Roger Reed, owner of the adjacent business, Des Moines Construction.

"Roger had terminal liver cancer," explained Mike. "We arranged to buy his place on contract and make the payments to his wife after he passed away. He took down the fence and we shared the office space."

That meant that Trails End had an 80-by-100 foot building with restrooms and running water. After Roger passed away, the Swifts helped June Reed organize and sell her husband's equipment. Then they expanded their business to an 80-by-200 foot facility.

"We put a couple of hoists in a tear-down room," said Mike. "We built some new offices. Eventually, we'd like to put in a dismantling area."

Today, Trails End serves a customer base that is half-and-half wholesale and retail. The business ships parts all over the country using Federal Express and freight companies. It also makes local deliveries throughout Des Moines and the surrounding communities.

Standing Out

"That's one thing we learned from our dad," said Mike. "There are 15 salvage yards in the Des Moines area and the only thing that separates us is service. We stand behind our products. We offer a standard warranty that's usually 90 days and customers can buy extended warranties."

manager and my best friend, Tim Hedges, to a massive heart attack," said Mike. "I can't say enough how much he is missed."

Tragic setbacks such as Hedges' death have required the staff to pitch in wherever they can. "There are no job descriptions," Mike said. "We have specific jobs, of course, but anyone can

FAST FACTS

Owners: Mike Swift & Steven Swift

Location: Des Moines, Iowa

Years In Business: 8

Number of Employees: 15

URL: TrailsEndAuto.com

See Ad On Page: 26



Trails End Auto & Truck Salvage, Des Moines, Iowa

By Felicia Lowenstein Niven

Another distinguishing factor is the customer service delivered by a dedicated staff. "We have a really good group of employees," said Mike. "The newest one has been with us for four years. Two employees speak Spanish fluently to cater to the large Hispanic community in Des Moines."

Mike also speaks fondly of an employee who is no longer with the company. "This past August, Trails End Auto & Truck Salvage suddenly lost its

stop and help pull a part. I'm one of the bosses and I still check batteries."

When Mike is not pulling parts, driving end loaders or helping customers, he is working on legislative research. He is currently president of the Iowa Automotive Recyclers association and is very involved in the industry.

"I love this industry," he said. "My son is 14. He loves coming here. Family is the reason we're here. We're building this for the future generation." ❧