

PEARL — THE BRAND SYNONYMOUS WITH CLEAN



NOVEMBER 2017 • By Haley Jorgensen

As co-owners of seven car washes and two vended laundries in San Diego County, Mark Mariani and Teddy Torbati understand clean. Together, they purchased their first car wash 13 years ago on Pearl Street in La Jolla, Calif. The “Pearl” stuck and has since been applied to all subsequent acquisitions and developments. Their most recent, Pearl Laundromat, sits alongside Pearl Car Wash on Home Ave. in San Diego. “There’s a lot of synergy,” said Mark Mariani, between the two businesses. “They are complementary of one another.”

And that’s not just because people don’t wash cars when it’s raining, but will do their laundry ... Mariani discovered several benefits to running the two businesses, especially when they are located side-by-side. Laundry customers often head to the adjacent self-service car wash to clean vehicles after loading up their clothes in the washers, for example. Plus, there is significant labor and marketing crossover. While laundry attendants watch over both enterprises, patrons of the car wash receive incentives to visit the laundry.

Pearl Laundromat, which turned a profit its first month, was born with help from Van Merrill, of Continental Laundry Development, in Santa Anna, Calif. “Pearl Laundromat wouldn’t have happened without Van,” said Mariani. “He was crucial to the layout of the laundry and used demographic data to determine the size and location of equipment. He steered the project through the city to get us on a faster track as we are dealing with a location near a wetland, creek and homeless area.”

In the end, Pearl Laundry became the perfect partner of the car wash, which was constructed 7 years earlier.

Designing the Laundry for its Location

The 3,700-square-foot laundry is positioned in a dense rental area less than 10 minutes from downtown. The neighborhood is tagged with graffiti and thick with apartments equipped with mediocre laundry facilities. That’s why Mariani worked with the San Diego Cultural Arts Alliance to engage local youth. The nonprofit strives to educate and inspire youth through the arts by redirecting acts of graffiti vandalism into something sustaining and beneficial to the community. “We are working with the nonprofit group and youth from the neighborhood to create mural panels for the laundry’s interior walls,” said Mariani. “The main wall of the laundry features a



contemporary mural created by a professional graffiti artist. The plan is to get different groups of kids in here each year to work with professional artists. The hope is that these kids won’t tag the outside of the building if their work is on the inside.”

Amenities & Efficiency are Priorities

The first laundry in the state to put in a lottery machine, Pearl Laundromat offers beverage, soap and snack machines, free WIFI, flat-screen televisions, a Card Concepts Inc. (CCI) card system, and a mix of Continental Girbau ExpressWash® Washers, G-Flex Washers and ExpressDry® Dryers. “We were profitable the first month in,” said Mariani.

Crafted for efficiency, Pearl Laundromat is lit during daylight hours by solatubes, which bring in natural light through the ceiling.

During the evening, LEDs set the interior aglow.

Continental Efficient Equipment

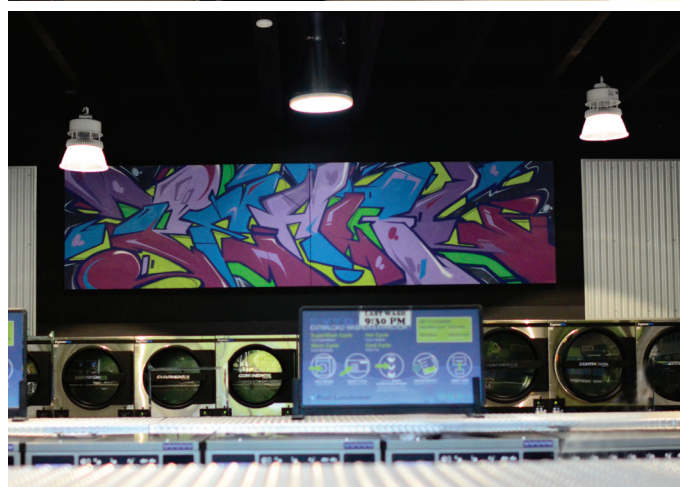
“We went with the Continental laundry equipment because of the water and energy savings,” said Mariani. The card-operated store features a lineup of 24 20-pound capacity ExpressWash freestanding washers; 19 40- and eight 70-pound capacity G-Flex hard-mount washers; and 10 30- and 15 45-pound capacity dual-pocket stack ExpressDry Dryers. Continental Girbau West (CG West) handled the equipment installation.

The washers, according to Merrill, deliver water-saving features and extract speeds from 200-387 G-force. Their compact footprints allow for more capacity per square foot. “We were able to substantially lower water



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and sewer costs because of the washers' efficiency," said Merrill. "These machines use approximately .7 gallons of water per laundry pound. Customers love the equipment because



they are in and out fast with less soap and better results."

Facing the entrance in full view are the 70-pound washers — the store's most popular machines. But, a new 90-pound capacity ExpressWash® Washer will soon debut. Once added, it will serve customers who clean comforters, blankets, sleeping bags and rugs, as well as family sized loads of laundry. "We are anticipating that the 90 will be our busiest machine," said Mariani. If it is, the mega-machine will ease the burden for the furiously busy 70s. Plus, the 90 brings extract speeds reaching 387 G-force for more moisture removal, reduced dry times and less natural gas usage. Customers who use the 90 will enjoy completing a mammoth load of laundry in less than 60 minutes!

More Ways to Wash with ProfitPlus®

By offering customers options, Mariani believes everyone wins. Customers, he said, appreciate the washers' ProfitPlus Control for this reason. While the control offers standard cycles, including Hot, Cold and Warm, it also allows customers to select an extra wash, extra rinse, extra spin or SuperWash.

"We upsell the extras with 50 percent of our customers selecting one," said Mariani.

Meanwhile, the CCI card system allows Mariani to quickly

tweak equipment programs — vend prices, rinses, water temperatures and levels, extract speeds and rotation action — for additional energy or water savings. Using the card system, Mariani can accept credit cards, increase vend prices in penny increments, launch promotional campaigns, and track store operations. He can do all of this remotely via the Internet.

Into the Future

Intrigued by its potential, Mariani hopes to grow full-service fluff-and-fold from 15 to 30-40 percent of total store revenue. Soon, he'll initiate an after-hours processing center and pick-up and delivery services. "Ultimately, we will run a third shift. Attendants take in laundry during the day and help with the self-service side of the business," he said. "At around the last load at 11:30 p.m., attendants will begin processing fluff-and-fold. We don't want to get in the way of our self-service customers."

Pleased with the car wash/laundry combo, Mariani maintains he's always working to expand the Pearl brand — and the idea of "clean" — throughout San Diego.

To find out more about Pearl Laundromat, contact Mariani at 619-501-4264. Discover more about Continental laundry products — backed by industry-leading factory warranties — at cgilaundry.com or call 800-256-1073.

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