

Keepin' it fresh...

WITH A SIDE OF PROBLEM-SOLVING TO BOOT.

BY SARAH CLEMMONS

The story of inventions and the inventors behind them has always captured the popular American consciousness. **Matt Gulick of Pourzilla** is no exception to these types of stories, but his beginnings as an entrepreneur may have grown roots (literally) a little earlier in life than others.

Gulick has been coming up with creative business ideas since age 7 or 8 when he used vines cut down by his father to craft Christmas wreaths that he insured with a lifetime warranty that kept him servicing neighbors for decades. Early on with this and other childhood business ventures, Matt demonstrated a knack for solving problems, a tool that led to his success in the U.S. Marines as a combat engineer who deployed for three tours of duty in Iraq from 2001-2007.

After Gulick's retirement from the military in 2007, he was forced to reckon with questions surrounding his professional and personal identity. With rehabilitation assistance by the SHARE Military Initiative program at the Shepherd Center, he was able to identify the problem-solving talents that have shaped his identity in each stage of life.





Seal the deal Perhaps the airtight tank enclosure was part of the inspiration for the tough Pourzilla seal.



These MacGuyver-esque talents naturally led to the invention of Pourzilla, a cap that seals in freshness on any woven reinforced cloth and plastic packaging in its current iteration. It was developed after an initial collaborator left, pushing Gulick to teach himself 3D printing and CAD to improve upon output and 1000+ prototypes. The “current” caveat is important because Gulick is always making updates to Pourzilla, which started out as a way to keep his son’s cereal fresh after opening.

Although Gulick is a natural inventor and creator, he is self-admittedly still very new to the business world. Gulick’s natural humility led him to understand when additional business and marketing assistance was needed by experts like Amber Roback of LightningLaunch and locals Max Hoag of Switch Hitch and Chuck Atkins of VantagePoint Foundation, another veterans’ organization that strives to help veterans transition to civilian life. These local mentorships led him to the Don Ryan Center for Innovation in Bluffton for additional guidance and mentorship through every stage of the entrepreneurial process. By leaning on DRCI mentors as well as prototype-testing support in Berke-

ley Hall, also facilitated by Hoag and Atkins, Gulick has been able to present Pourzilla to interested corporations on a national scale.

Although Gulick admits that inventing can be a very solitary and lonely process, his acceptance of support and feedback in the business and inventing communities has helped him stay connected and engaged.

In the next five years, Gulick hopes to see Pourzilla in the marketplace with the pet market as a beachhead. Gulick sees Pourzilla as an opportunity to both gain independence and do some good in the world. As a result of future successes through Pourzilla, he hopes to support organizations like the Shepherd Center, which made it possible for him to transition to civilian life, as well as local humane associations.

As far as words of advice to his fellow inventors who may have a secret idea that has yet to be shared with the world, Gulick urges perseverance, belief in your talents no matter how dark the tunnel might seem, and the ability to determine what tangible and intangible tools will take you to the next level in your entrepreneurial journey. ■

Why didn't I think of that?

Necessity is truly the mother of invention, as every pet owner can attest to.