

Stair Lift Business Expected to Climb

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RIDGELAND – As the baby boomers enter retirement, Ridgeland-based Life Lifts LLC, hopes to corner the market on amenities to convert their family homes into livable retirement spaces.

Life Lifts, owned by Hank and Debbie van den Ende, started as a part time business seven years ago in Delaware selling stairlifts, or chairs with a mechanism to slide up and down the banister for people with trouble climbing stairs.

“We started this business because we believe people want to age into the home they lived in, raised a family in and where their memories are,” Hank van den Ende said. “But your home needs to be a place where you can live independently, with easy access all around and feel safe.”

Van den Ende said the business, then called East Coast Stairlifts, grew steadily in Delaware and he expects it to grow even more in the Lowcountry. He cites the region’s attraction as a retirement destination in which the number of retirees is expected to double.

The only challenge van den Ende sees is educating the public. He said if people know what stairlifts are, they think that they’re expensive, hard to install and difficult to operate.

“The hardest part is creating awareness,” van den Ende said. “Most stairlifts are a fraction of

the cost of an elevator, can be easily installed and removed, yet most people don't think about it unless they hear about them from someone or see an ad.”

Life Lifts plans to market from Charleston to Brunswick. The van den Endes have hired a salesperson and created a Web site at www.life-lifts.com.

The couple added walk-in baths, bath lifts, scooter lifts, modular ramps and grab bars to their product line when they opened their showroom on Route 170 in Okatie outside of Bluffton in March.

Life Lifts both sells and installs its products. Hank van den Ende said most installations take about two hours. Stairlifts are battery operated and can be installed on any kind of staircase including curved or spiral staircases. Customers can see working stairlifts on a staircase at the company’s showroom.

Another product that is gaining popularity, van den Ende said, is the tub cut.

“We can cut an access into an existing bath, that turns it into a shower; this can be reversed later if desired,” van den Ende said. “This is a cost-effective alternative to a walk-in bath. We can do this for fiberglass, cast iron or steel bath tubs.”

(Details: 843- 987-3300)/



Life Lifts showcases working stairlifts at its Okatie showroom. The company also sells other products to accommodate older homeowners, including walk-in baths, bath lifts, scooter lifts, modular ramps and grab bars.



Life Lifts' stairlifts can be mounted to any type of staircase, including curved or spiral.