

# Former Napoleon resident plans to stay connected

**Wanda English Burnett, Editor**

An idea that grew out of frustration is paying off big for a former Napoleon resident. Mike Schutte has invented and patented an electrical outlet cover that holds cords secure. He has launched his own company, StayConnect LLC.

Schutte, a 1988 graduate of Jac-Cen-Del, now lives in Cornelius, NC, with his wife Tracey and daughter, Victoria, 7. Tracey is the daughter of the late John and Eva Everage of Versailles.

Schutte's life has taken an interesting turn after frustration of constantly being disconnected while using his electric yard tools. He told the Osgood Journal, "My yard working tools consisted of a gas powered lawn mower, electric weed eater, and electric leaf blower. I always edged, weed-eat and blew the grass and leaves with my electric tools. Of course, this meant that I had to pull out my 50 foot extension cord, plug it in and proceed about my business."

He went on to say that it never failed when he got out about 49 feet, the cord would pull out of the outlet. He said he doesn't know how many times he walked back and forth just to plug in his tools.

After searching the Internet and going to local hardware stores, where he was told to do essentially what he had been doing, setting a potted plant on the cord to secure it, Schutte said he began to put a lot of thought into the situation.

Schutte, who has a degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Purdue University, was traveling for his job, when laying in a hotel bed one night he thought of the solution. "It hit me like a ton of bricks," he noted, as he woke up in the middle of the night and wrote the design down on paper.

When he returned home the next day he said he immediately began building his prototype. "It took about an hour to build and after it was done, I immediately took it into my living room, pulled out the vacuum, and tested it. It worked!"

He called a friend, Chris Moses of Cincinnati, who is also formerly of Napoleon, and told him about it. His friend encouraged him to patent it.

While the story sounds like it was an immediate process, it was not. Schutte explained it took him several years to get frustrated enough to actually work on fixing it. Even after he designed the outlet cover, the weather turned colder and he wasn't working outside as much, so he just put it on a back burner.

Then one night in December of 2007 he was channel surfing and came across a company called HeadBlade. He said the show highlighted all the ups and downs that the owner was going through in his small business start-up. He thought about his own idea and sent an email to the owner Todd Greene. Greene sent a reply back to Schutte, one that will be on his desk permanently. Schutte describes it as a man sitting at a desk and behind him are pictures of himself under each month of the year labeled as "employee of the month." There is also a quote that reads, "one of the perks of self-employment."

He said this 'lit a fire under him' and in January of 2008 he began procedures to patent his invention. In August of 2008, he established his own company and with a non-paid staff, as of January 31 this year, he hosted a Stay Connect party. Attending the event were owners and managers from Ace Hardware, Lowes Home Improvement Financing, and the local newspaper, Lake Norman Herald, along with a number of close friends, to help launch the company. StayConnect will be making its national debut at the National Hardware Show, Las Vegas, NV on May 5,6,& 7, according to Schutte.

He noted that in the midst of the bad economy, "I want people to know that you can still start your own business if that's what you truly want to do."

Schutte has great opportunities in the wings. He's been meeting with corporate officials from Lowes Home Improvement, and talking to QVC, along with 02media, inc., a company that makes infomercials. He says there are multiple designs for his outlet cover and while his website is constantly being updated and changed, you can get an idea of what it is by going to: [www.stayconnect.com](http://www.stayconnect.com).

Schutte is the only son of Wayne and Susan Schutte of Napoleon, but he has several sisters: Monica Seifker of Bedford; Cindy Weisenbach of Batesville; Dana Newheart of Osgood; Sarah Smith of Batesville; Amanda and Erin Schutte, both of Napoleon.

Schutte said his mechanical aptitude skills and his focus of coming up with a solution to a problem, motivated him to invent this electrical solution he hopes will help thousands of others. "I am a do-it-yourself kind of person and take things upon myself to get it done right," he noted.