



## Glass Water Systems

**Corporate Office:** 502 E. Tyler Ave.  
Tampa, FL 33602

**Retail Store:** 5130 South Dale Mabry  
Highway, Tampa, FL 33611

**Phone:** toll free (877) 345-2770  
(813) 832-9293 **Fax:** (813) 832-9297

**Employees:** 11 **Trucks:** four

**Website:** [www.glasswatersystems.com](http://www.glasswatersystems.com)

**Email:** [glasswatersystems@msn.com](mailto:glasswatersystems@msn.com)

In Florida, nature offers up a unique blend of issues and opportunities regarding water. All of it fascinates Matthew Glass.

Find him in the office or maybe at the water store. Then again, he might be in one of the company's warehouses. Tracking down Glass may seem difficult at times, but it's part of his nature to be wherever he is needed at any particular moment.



Matthew Glass

Known as a team player, any given day he's performing a wide variety of tasks—financial activities, office management, service work, submitting proposals and bids and (on occasion) running a salt route.

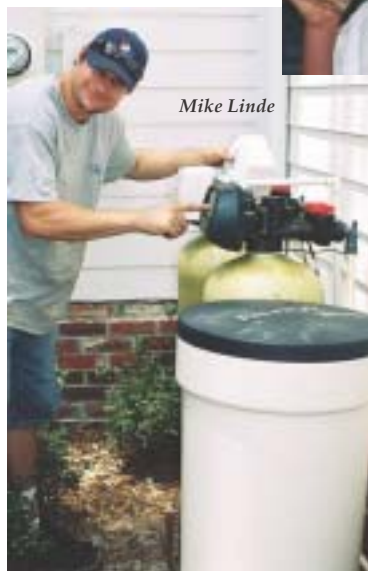
A native Oklahoman, he entered Florida State University to pursue a degree in business. Glass joined ROTC and briefly considered a military career, then refocused his efforts towards a degree in business economics. After graduation he began his career in the investment world, returning to school to receive further accounting training. In 1995, that additional education led to a position keeping the financial records of Ashbury Water Systems, a central Florida water company, his introduction to the water quality industry.

Glass proved an adept and enthusiastic student. When the water company's owner wanted to sell the business, he offered it to Glass first. But he wasn't certain the time was right to run his own company. Glass operated the business for the ailing owner until 2000. "I realized there were some innate problems that could not be solved by a change in ownership," he recalls. Glass moved to Aqua Systems, gaining more corporate and water quality industry experience.

Glass received WQA certification as a Water Specialist I in 2004, knowing it

# Growth In the Eye of a Hurricane

Future water experts: David (8), J.W. (10) and Campbell (4).



Mike Linde

By Denise M. Roberts

would be a valuable asset in the future. He is proud to have begun his official certifications. He toyed with the idea of buying an existing water company or pursuing partnerships, but then decided that his ambitions would only be achieved if he started one from the ground up. "I envisioned the concept of a perfect water company and implemented a plan of action to build that business," he reminisced. "When I created Glass Water Systems, that dream became a reality."

Glass opened the retail water store in August 2004, offering filtration products. He rented office space to handle the corporate aspects of the business and arranged for warehouse space at a family-owned property for product and equipment storage. A small (1,000 sq. ft.) retail space was leased, where Glass set up an RO system display to help customers learn more about the process. Later, a second, smaller storage area next to the store was also acquired.

Glass then tapped Rick Eppard as Customer Service Manager. One of four licensed boilermakers in Florida, with over 35 years experience in the water treatment and plumbing industries, he had worked for Glass at Ashbury. Said Glass, "I knew how he worked and there wasn't anything plumbing-related he



Dr. R.T. Glass



Laura Glass

couldn't do. He's the best plumber I've ever seen. He can install anything."

Glass made additional hires as soon as company growth made it possible. Eppard's son Randy soon joined the firm, becoming part of the service team. Service technicians Mike Linde and Mark Olsen complement the group. Olsen and Chris Tubbs comprise the salt delivery team, occasionally handling service calls 250 miles away in metropolitan Miami. "If the opportunity presents itself, we take it, although we concentrate our service efforts primarily in central Florida," Glass said.

When asked if he attempted to create a family-oriented business structure, Glass simply stated that he knew the abilities of those near him and trust ranked highest on the list of qualities most important to him. The professional expertise of his family members influenced additional staffing decisions. His wife, Laura, is the company's attorney and legal advisor. His father, Dr. R. T. Glass, a retired pathologist from Oklahoma University Medical School, is one of two retained professionals who field complex water problems. Dr. Glass continues adjunct teaching of forensic sciences at Oklahoma State University. He also handles issues surrounding water-borne diseases and contaminants, such

as *Giardia*, for his son's company. "We don't have that many problems with the water but I prefer to have a specialist on hand to help when the situation requires it," said Glass of his father's consultancy.

The second water specialist is Charlotte Maddox. Winner of Florida's Young Engineer of the State Award a few years ago, she is a Professional Engineer specializing in water drainage and structural design. She is also a member of the Board of the National Society of Professional Engineers. At the water store, Receptionist/Secretary Agnes Hayes is the only full-time employee, handling customers and all the administrative functions.

With emphasis on sales and service, professional business practices and in-house expertise, Glass continues to move forward. "As a young company, we are growing rapidly and see several hiring opportunities in the near future. The retail website is responsible for a large portion of the firm's growth, resulting in sales and an increasing customer base in California, the midwest, the northeast and nearby island countries. Commercially, I think bigger projects are emerging and we will be strengthening our national and international sales position. Our overseas sales are primarily focused on markets in Europe. We have provided RO filtration and water softener systems

for customers in such diverse locales as Greece, Israel and Haiti," noted Glass. Bottled water services will soon be offered as opportunities become available.

One of the biggest challenges for the company was designing and supplying an industrial bottled water treatment system for a water company in Haiti. The specifications alone were so detailed that it became necessary to obtain the equipment directly from a manufacturer in China. The equipment had to be modified by hand to achieve the final product, then transported to Miami for shipment abroad. "We're looking forward to more international service calls for large industrial jobs and we have another one already in the planning stage," said Glass.

Today, the company's strongest areas are complete well treatment systems, water softeners and carbon filters. Possibilities in different markets arise daily. Looking ahead, Glass sees the residential market increasingly becoming one of necessity as opposed to luxury. "As cities grow and the quality of water supply diminishes, that trend will continue," he opines. "There are no limits to corporate growth with the expanding global need for the multiple services Glass Water Company offers." ♦

