



A gate in Stanley and Tanza Kubacki's \$23,000 fence malfunctioned. The firm that installed it had given a warranty but said the problem was electrical and not its responsibility. SHAUN SARTIN/PHOTO FOR THE TRIBUNE

A fence finally mended

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Competitor fixes gate for free, but owner insists on paying



Jon Yates

What's Your Problem?

As he sat at Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital Aug. 20 waiting for his wife to be wheeled into surgery, John Hennessey flipped through a copy of the morning paper.

What's Your Problem? caught his eye.

The column described the frustrating tale of Stanley Kubacki, whose \$23,000 fence was on the fritz. Despite a still-active warranty, Allied Fence Corp. refused to repair it.

Hennessey, who owns a competing fence company, Gate Systems Corp., was incensed.

"We were sitting in pre-op, and I read it," Hennessey said. "I turned to my wife and I said, 'I'm going to call this guy.' So I did."

Moments later, the Problem Solver's phone rang. Hennessey said he was upset with how Kubacki had been treated and offered to fix the malfunctioning gate for free. He asked the Problem Solver to forward his cell phone number to Kubacki.

The Problem Solver called Kubacki, who was stunned by the offer. After a few more phone calls, three Gate Systems Corp. employees showed up at Kubacki's door that day. Within hours, the gate was fixed.

CONSUMER WATCH

Turns out, the issue was not electrical, as Allied Fence had speculated, but instead a faulty hinge.

"The gates were installed improperly," Kubacki said.

The McHenry man said he was amazed and appreciative of Hennessey's quick response and his offer to repair the gate for free.

Kubacki said he saw how hard Hennessey's employees worked on the gate and decided he could not accept the repairs gratis.

"He's very much a gentleman, and I'm not a jerk, so I will pay for their efforts," Kubacki said.

Kubacki called Hennessey and asked him to send a bill. The bill, for \$496, arrived with a note from Hennessey that said Kubacki was under no obligation to pay.

Kubacki sent a check for \$496 anyway.

"I feel good," Kubacki said.

"Mr. Hennessey is a man of his word."

Hennessey said he accepted the money because Kubacki insisted, but business isn't always about making a buck.

"If I was chasing the dollar, I would have caught it by now," he said. "You don't have to make something on everything."

Even better news: His wife is doing fine. "It was a good day for everyone," Hennessey said.

Cash flow

The Problem Solver has been keeping close tabs on the case of the missing Colon Flow refund, and is happy to report the situation is now resolved.

Have a problem?

E-mail your story, providing as many details as possible, to yourproblem@tribune.com or write to What's Your Problem?, Newsroom, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611. Please include your name and a way to contact you. We can't respond to everyone, but we'll get to as many as we can and publish the results Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays.



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Review problems and submit yours

Willie Mae Wisdom, who last month was promised a \$69 refund from Natural Health Network LLC of Brea, Calif., received her check Aug. 26.

"I felt so good," Wisdom said. "It was \$69 for something that doesn't work."

The Problem Solver will flush Wisdom's case from his files.

Correction

The Aug. 26 What's Your Problem? column about Arlene Inserra and her vanishing Leo Burnett pension incorrectly stated that Inserra had spoken to a representative from Fidelity Investments. A Burnett spokeswoman, Amy Cheronis, said that Inserra spoke with a representative of another firm, the pension record-keeper.

Fidelity was not involved in the bookkeeping mistake that took away Inserra's pension.

The Problem Solver apologizes for the error.