

Boulder's ShelfX sued for patent infringement by firm with Texas mail center address

Colorado Daily: University of Colorado at Boulder

September 30, 2019 Monday

University Wire

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 447 words

Body

Boulder-based ShelfX, Inc. is being taken to the court for an alleged patent infringement by a Texas company. ShelfX is a maker of unattended retail vending systems that was founded eight years ago.

Saros Licensing LLC, filed a lawsuit last week in U.S. District Court in Denver. The lawsuit claims ShelfX's fridge has infringed on Saros's patent entitled, "communications, particularly in the domestic environment," and seeks damages. The patent presented as an exhibit in the case was filed by NCR Corp., Dayton, Ohio, in 1999 and granted a patent in 2002.

The suit could perhaps be an effort by a patent troll trying to get money for an old patent that involves home appliances connected to the internet, said Ran Margalit, CEO of ShelfX. "We don't make home appliances. We are in commercial setting only."

The company's vending systems are used to sell a variety of foods in universities, hospitals, office buildings, train stations, airports, residential buildings, golf courses, country clubs, ski resorts and more.

ShelfX's proprietary weight sensing plate technology eliminates the need for cashiers or product scanning, and allows consumers to purchase products from what looks like a refrigerator after a swipe of a credit or debit card (or other acceptable modes of identity recognition and payment systems.)

"This technology allows consumers to walk up to a fixture, present payment, take items from the shelf and walk away. The charge for the items taken is applied to the shoppers account which receives an email receipt detailing the purchase," according to the information on the company website.

Margalit heard from a lot of lawyers willing to defend his company since the news spread online. The company has its own attorneys.

His company so far hasn't been served with summons.

"We'll forward it to our lawyers. We believe (the lawsuit) will be dismissed," he said.

He also hasn't heard from Saros Licensing.

Saros' listed address on the court documents is 15922 Eldorado Parkway, Suite 500-1640, Frisco, Texas. It's a mailbox at Mail & Print Center that was leased in April, according to a store associate who didn't wish to be identified.

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Saros Licensing LLC is a plaintiff in 10 cases in U.S. District Court of Delaware. It filed lawsuits against several consumer appliance makers, including LG Electronics U.S.A., Inc.; Haier Appliance Products, L.P.; Electrolux USA, Inc., et al.; Whirlpool Corp. since late April. Nine of them have been closed.

Saros filed a patent infringement case against The Coco-Cola Co. in Delaware last week using identical language.

Saros's listed attorney Isaac Rabicoff, Rabicoff Law LLC in Chicago, didn't return calls or respond to messages.

Load-Date: October 1, 2019

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