

## Unmarked success gets it reward

Shannon Kaser, Royal Excursion, receives 2011 BUSRide Motorcoach Industry Achievement Award



Royal Excursion founder and President Shannon Kaser is 12 years into his dream of operating his own business.

A solid work ethic will typically set the foundation for any notable achievement. The commitment just to do the work offers the best chance of success with the prime components – creativity and imagination. This winning combination works for Shannon Kaser, founder and president of Royal Excursion, Mishawaka, IN. It also earned him the 2011 BUSRide Motorcoach Industry Achievement Award, presented in January at the UMA Expo in Tampa, FL.

Relying on solid work habits engrained since childhood and working weekend auctions with his father, Kaser had what it took to create his own transportation business in 1998.

“This is a long way from how I started. I had no experience, no family involvement with buses,” says Kaser. “I just always knew I wanted to run my own business and saw a likely niche for a few vans in this area.”

Calling it a calculated gamble, Kaser invested in one 12-passenger van and started knocking on doors. One year later he added a minibus to meet growing demand for his service, and purchased his first motorcoach in 2000. Royal Excursion became a full-fledged charter tour company in 2002 when Kaser moved the operation out of his home and hired a few employees to help. Today, the fleet includes an array of 50 vehicles.

In addition to the minibuses and several specialty limo vehicles for small groups and shuttles, the charter tour division has grown to require 19 motorcoaches. Royal Excursion also is under contract for fixed routes with municipalities and casinos.

Wanting to build provide service more dynamic than the average taxi or limo service. Kaser believes he nailed the concept with his all black, unmarked motorcoaches. College sports teams call the Van Hool C2045s the Rock Star coaches.

“The hardest part for me was to simply allow my qualified employees to help me,” he says. “I quickly learned that if my dream was to succeed, I would have to trust and rely on their contribution.”

Kaser and his team have developed Royal Excursion in a manner that he says keeps customers coming back, growing the business only as needed without sacrificing quality for the sake of growth.

“I have never tried to pre-determine how big this operation should be,” says Kaser. “It’s about being absolutely certain we are doing the best we can for the customers we already have.” Kaser’s strategy includes his heavy investment in equipment. Much of the Royal Excursion business comes from transporting college sports teams in the unmarked Van Hool C2045 Rock Star coaches outfitted with black leather wingback seats with tray tables, custom parcel racks, WiFi, satellite TV and galley.

“Schools will have seen them or heard about our vehicles and call us,” says Kaser. “Royal Excursion has become all about the big black bus.”

With over 90 percent of his passengers on their way somewhere to have a good time, attending sports events, going to casinos or off on sightseeing tours, Kaser sees their trip to and from the destination as a big part of the fun. He says staff training hinges on ensuring his entire company contributes to everyone’s coach experience.

“Obviously, we seek out the most competent and safest drivers,” he says. “But people skills rank high in the hiring process. We need drivers who can relate with the passengers. In fact, we rely heavily on their rapport with our customers to generate and maintain repeat business.”

According to Kaser, along with safe and striking coaches, a customer’s request for a particular driver serves as a major vote of confidence in the company. **BR**