

focus

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THE "Dean" OF TRANSPORTATION

Even a casual observer can quickly see how Kellie Dean's roots in education led him to a career in school bus and charter bus transportation business. But, in Kellie's mind he has always been in the education business.

It was Kellie Dean's roots as an educator along with his strong passion for his alma mater, Michigan State University that not only helped him build a thriving business, but also has caused him to maintain a deep commitment to building a stronger community.

"Our business is literally built around organizations involved in the community," said Dean, "I am a proud business person who wants to see this region grow."

Kellie Dean came to Michigan State University on a football scholarship in 1971. He eventually received a master's degree in school administration and set off for a successful career as a teacher and administrator in the Lansing Public School District.

Kellie's passion for special needs children and community service grew during his years working with high needs kids at the Marvin E. Beekman Center in Lansing. Eventually he became the Director for the area Special Olympics and spent years coaching, fundraising and taking kids to various Special Olympic events.

In 1986, Lyle Stephens convinced Kellie to change careers and help him grow a small bus company that was in the business of transporting special needs students. It was a natural transition for Kellie who completed the purchase of the company in 1995.

Dean Transportation, Inc has grown into one of the most successful businesses of its kind headquartered in Lansing with 10 other offices throughout the state employing 1,100 people with a fleet of 1,000 vehicles and serving 80 school districts throughout Michigan.

Though the size of the company is impressive, Kellie Dean is equally proud of the fact his organization has twice been recognized as the North American School Bus Company of the year, and has received the highest bus inspection award from the Michigan State Police on multiple occasions.

"We have the largest fleet of busses in the state of Michigan, more than double that of any other company," said Dean. "Having the number one safety record is a source of pride for all of our employees."

Though Dean's school bus service represents 85 per cent of the company's business, Kellie recognized the need to diversify, and as a result created a separate charter motor coach division. Dean Trailways now has 25 motor coaches that transport various groups to sporting events, including moving thousands of visitors to and from this year's PGA Championship at Oakland Hills as well as various business outings.

The latest development at Dean Trailways has been the addition to two luxurious motor coaches that are popular with various boards of directors, associations and business executives. The executive style coaches are set-up living room style with leather chairs and couches and feature plush amenities including satellite TV.

"The luxury motor coaches are perfect for executives going on a golf outing," said Dean. "The group can have a meeting on the way to and from the outing and enjoy a day of networking on the golf course at the same time."

Dean Transportation has also received a rarely awarded safety certification from the U.S. Department of Defense, which has allowed Dean the honor of transporting military troops around the country, and would allow Dean vehicles to be utilized for transportation purposes in the event of a national homeland security emergency.



Kellie Dean is proud of his community, which is why he has set a standard for community service that is widely admired throughout the region. Kellie was recognized for his tireless contributions to the community when he was awarded the Lansing Regional Chamber's Community Service award in 2004.

Kellie strongly believes in the need to capitalize on the wealth of research and experience at Michigan State University as a top economic development priority. That's why he says he is excited to be on the board of the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) and helping that organization develop regional growth strategies.

Dean Transportation, Inc has a family atmosphere. That's why it is fitting that Kellie's son Patrick has recently joined the firm after receiving his degree in finance from Eastern Michigan University. Patrick is in charge of special projects, and like dad has already gotten involved in community organizations.

"We've aspired to have a family business," says Dean. "Now we truly have that."