

Business Spotlight

Ross Limousine Marks 25 Years of Weddings, Airports

By ED SALVAS

The first limousine Martin Ross bought for his limousine service was a 1993 10-passenger vehicle that he picked up in Ohio and drove back to New Jersey. At that point Ross Limousine was ready to hit the road. There was only one problem: Ross was under the age of 25 which meant he couldn't get a CDL, or commercial, driver's license.

"I could own the business, but couldn't legally drive my limousine," Ross said in an interview at his Neptune office.

Once he got special permission to drive, Ross quickly started growing the business. With the help of his mother, Karen Ross, he moved from his home in Ocean Township to Neptune, and his mother is still managing the office.

Ross Limousine now has 13 vehicles on the road, including Town Cars, stretch limousines and super stretch limos and SUV's. He employs six full time drivers and several part timers, and explained that the men and women who drive are all employ-



Coaster Photo

Martin Ross of Ross Limousine in Neptune has grown from one passenger vehicle to a fleet of 13.

ees because they drive only company-owned vehicles. Freelancers would have to own their own cars and Ross uses his vehicles and sets the standard for the drivers.

Ross says his business is a

"boutique limousine service" that depends more on a personal level of service and that means keeping it small. Weddings and Proms are the lifeblood of the business along with airport drop-offs and pick-ups and corporate contracts.

Ross says proms are especially important because it keeps kids safe so they don't have to drive late at night. Customers also call Ross for trips to New York City for dinner and shows by individuals and groups seeking a night on

the town. Asked about Atlantic City, Ross said "It was a big part of the business a decade ago, but it's no good now." He does have one reminder of those heady days - an early 1990's framed picture of himself with hotel owner Donald Trump, now President Trump.

A big part of the Ross Limousine business has nothing to do with cars. It's the annual Neptune Food and Toy Drive. Now 10 years old, the drive run by Karen Ross provided help for 80 seniors and toys and clothing for 50 people during the holiday season. Ross said they work with the township police, schools and Housing Authority to identify the residents who need assistance.

Among the biggest changes in the business in recent years is the widespread use of email for inquiries and reservations and the need to maintain a strong social media presence as well as advertising on the Internet. Then there's competition from car services like Uber and Lyft.

Ross Limousine is on the Internet at www.rosslimo.com.

Marketing Plan Being Developed for Entire State

By ED SALVAS

The Asbury Park Chamber of Commerce welcomed the Acting Director of the State Division of Travel and Tourism at its first 2017 General Membership meeting held at the Paramount Theater.

Jake Buganski, who was appointed in December, told the audience last week it was his first visit to Asbury Park. He said he was excited to see all the development taking place and pledged that his department "would be as visible and cooperative as we can be."

Buganski also said he is the first tourism industry professional to head the state agency which oversees a \$43 billion industry, including Monmouth County's \$2.4 billion, ranking it 6th overall among the state's tourism areas. That figure is up 25 percent since 2010, Buganski said. He also said Asbury Park should play on its heritage because of the many iconic places in the Asbury Park area.



Jake Buganski

Buganski said he's working with a Washington, D. C. based organization called Destination Next to develop a marketing plan for the state and they will be surveying chamber members for suggestions and comments. He said that could include a coordinated Public Relations program with more substantial and robust stories.

Raised in South Jersey and a

graduate of Rowan University, Buganski comes to New Jersey from upstate New York where he previously was President of the Corning and Southern Finger Lakes/Steuben County Conference and Visitors Bureau. He had earlier worked in the Garden State as Executive Director of Visit South Jersey, one of several Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) in the state.

Chamber Executive Director, Sylvia Sylvia-Cioffi reviewed the organization's signature events for the year, including the 4th annual St. Patrick's Day Parade on Sunday March 12, Restaurant Tour on Sunday April 30, Carousel Awards Friday May 5 and Oysterfest Friday to Sunday September 8-10. A new event, Kite Day, is being planned with Madison Marquette for the beachfront in early summer and the chamber is also considering bringing back the popular First Saturday in some form.

Sylvia-Cioffi also announced

that Matthew Whelan has been promoted to Assistant Executive Director of the Chamber. The 2017 Board of Directors has Nicole Ouellette of Choose New Jersey, Inc. as President, Jennifer Schulman of Fortune Web Marketing, 1st Vice President,

Chris Famiano of Madison Marquette 2nd V. P., Secretary Kristina Bannon of Pucker Lemonade and Tony's Sausages and Rae Kee of Kearny Bank, Treasurer. More Asbury Park Chamber of Commerce News at www.AsburyParkChamber.com.

A black and white advertisement for Mickey's The Real Man's Barbershop. It features a large, striped barber pole on the left. In the center, there is a photo of an older man with glasses being shaved by a barber. Two speech bubbles are overlaid on the photo. The top bubble says, "What is behind the accusation that Sessions had ties to the Ruskies?" The bottom bubble says, "I saw him in this dinner club and he put Russian Dressing on his salad." Below the photo, the text "Mickey's" is written in a large, stylized script font. Underneath that, in bold capital letters, is "THE REAL MAN'S BARBERSHOP". Below that, in a smaller font, is "Celebrating 126 years!". At the bottom, it says "Walk In or Appointments • Gift Certificates Available Monday thru Saturday 8am - 5pm • Sunday 8am - 12pm" and "314 Main Street • Avon 732.988.1522".

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