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McCreary is referring to the charm of him and his two sons, who also work at Baymeadows Moving and Storage. "I am trying to have my boys be the face of the company as someday I will hand them the keys."

MOVING FORWARD

McCreary says they are in the learning process of how to adapt to their system because the way they do things is real in-depth and a little different from what they are used to, but it will net him half a million dollars to a million dollars just from the relationship.

"It's not easy; in fact it's complicated, but I've got smart people around here and we will figure it out. It will take about a year to get to where we want it, but North American Van Lines gives me the support I never had in the past," says McCreary. "There are all these different people that are there to help you that I didn't have with the former company we were with."

Part of the support they are provided are laptop computers that allow McCreary's sons to do in-home estimates by using a service that lets them to do inventory electronically. "It brings us out of the ice age and into a new world, and we can print the quote in residence or send it to e-mail. That is something new through driver services," says McCreary.

BEING BETTER

"Their philosophy is perfect for me—they specialize in one thing and one thing only and that's household goods relocation," says McCreary. "This puts me over the top because I already do everything else, but I've been reluctant to do long distance because I never had the support they can give me, but our strengths are still in whatever we can do locally. And now this relationship pretty much puts us where we need to go." ■



Wendy Bautista is editor of Advantage: The Resource for Small Business. She can be reached at Wendy@advantagebizmag.com or 904-536-2234.

OWNER: Mike McCreary

IN BUSINESS SINCE: 1996

PROJECTED GROWTH: "We don't know how big this new relationship is going to be, but I know that if things continue the way they have been, it will gross us a half a million dollars to a million dollars in revenue. I'm already in the position where I might have to hire more people."

GREEN EFFORTS

Baymeadows Moving and Storage makes it a point to go green whenever possible. They have their own baler, recycle at their desks, and each warehouse has a recycling area.

After clients unpack, they make truck runs to get the opened, used boxes and paper for recycling. "Some may be reused for certain jobs and customers depending on the situation, but the paper and boxes that are damage are baled," says McCreary. "Bales are anywhere from 1,000 to 1,200 pounds each."

He says he has literally been paid thousands of dollars for recyclable materials, and most of the big movers in this city do it and see the value in it. They recycle paper and cardboard in the tens of thousands of pounds, with one of the largest pick-ups weighing in at 41,000 pounds. He also has a container for metal recycling for things such as steel bedrails, old file cabinets, and bases of certain chairs. "I try to do everything I possibly can," says McCreary. "I even took out ads in the local newspaper about recycling stating, 'Recycle Jacksonville. It's the right thing to do! Sponsored by Baymeadows Moving and Storage.' Whether it made a difference or not, who knows? "You can't find it all the time but you can certainly try," says McCreary. "The recycling program is basically me because I feel guilty if I throw something into the dumpster that I know could possibly be reused somewhere or recycled."

As movers, they get a lot of furniture that people don't want any more. McCreary gives Habijax or Angel Aid anything he thinks they can sell for a profit that goes to charity. He also helps the Kiwanis Club with their auction by donating a tractor trailer and a couple of big containers loaded with stuff that they can auction off to generate money to give to their charities.

A move in the right direction

Baymeadows Moving and Storage's new channel partnership will help drive Mike McCreary and his crew forward

By Wendy Bautista

WHILE HE MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN INTO THE MOVING BUSINESS "KIND OF BY ACCIDENT," THE SUCCESS MIKE MCCREARY, OWNER OF THE FAMILY-OWNED AND OPERATED BAYMEADOWS MOVING AND STORAGE (WWW.BAYMEADOWSMOVERS.COM), HAS FOUND IS NO ACCIDENT.

"I started out in 1974 as a truck driver, hauling just about anything, and after six years, I learned not to like it," says McCreary. "I didn't like being gone all the time, so I got into a sales position." That sales position led to a couple of different jobs in sales, but nothing related to the moving and storage industry, until he saw an ad in the paper.

"There was a sales company looking for a sales representative for a moving company and I thought I would give that a try," says McCreary. "So I went to that address only to find I was at the wrong place! But it was another moving company and they hired me." Over the years, he worked for various movers and after too many unfulfilled



promises about becoming a part owner, he decided to start his own company. In August 1996, McCreary bought the name Baymeadows Movers from the gentleman who owned it. He took that and all the years of work he'd done making contacts with people and businesses and let everyone know he was starting his own company. "And you know what?" asks McCreary. "They were right with me the whole time; I never lost a customer."

BUSINESS BOOMS

What started as one truck, three men, and a 10-foot by 20-foot storage unit quickly grew to two trucks, six men, and a 5,000 square foot space within the first year. Over the years, they have expanded to the current 15 trucks, a staff of about 50, and 36,000 square feet of warehouse space on 6.5 acres.

Most of that warehouse space is used to store household goods and commercial storage, such as office furniture, cubicles, etc., and all the items needed for packing (paper, boxes, blankets, etc.). They will not store chemicals, perishable items, steel, lumber, or freight.

It is not uncommon for McCreary's crew to do 10 to 12 jobs a day, six days a week, sometimes even stacking jobs if the truck is capable and depending on what the logistics are of the moves.

"Military members' household goods are a big percentage of what we do—about 40% to 50% of our business," says McCreary. "We represent 15 different carriers for military work and move people to anywhere in the world they want that person to go. Sometimes, they will be gone for a couple of years and their stuff is still here."

They also do a lot of work where trucks aren't even involved, with many of their commercial jobs just needing equipment and manpower at a job site—but not just any old manpower. McCreary ensures all of his employees are clean cut, respectful, have manners, and are upstanding, ethical people with a great work ethic.

"I have a dress code and an employee manual that they all must follow," says McCreary. "If I have rules about dress code and ethics that they are willing to follow, and encourage everybody that works for me to educate themselves and get training or go to trade school, then that's the kind of people I want to hire—and I think I will get a better employee for it."

LIFE MISSION

Whether it's blanket wrapping something to ensure its safety, loading the trucks so you get your rugs first, or stacking some of your boxes in the garage so you have room in your home, McCreary has learned over the years it's all the little things that you do that make a difference in life.

"I tell everybody that I want to be better today than I was yesterday," says McCreary. "What can I do tomorrow that I should've done today or I didn't do today, and how can I be better? I always want to do something just a little bit more."

That little bit more he gives is what brings in the referrals and provides a competitive edge. While others were sitting on their wallets during the recession, he decided to spend money.

"I just did everything I could to promote my business, even



changing the image of company by going to red, white, and blue lettering on the trucks—and now the trucks are so recognizable."

GETTING NOTICED

McCreary says he's always been "incognito" and didn't really want his competition knowing what he was doing, but sometimes it can pay off. North American Van Lines, one of largest moving companies in the world, has chosen Baymeadows Moving and Storage to represent them in northeast Florida—and he has a competitor to thank.

"They say one closed door is an open door for someone else, and I believe it," says McCreary. "When the other North



American agent that was here opted to close for whatever reason, the general manager from that competing company told them I'm the one they should look at. So essentially my competition is what got me this relationship."

The relationship began with North American wanting to see his financials. Once they saw his financials were decent, they then came down to meet the staff and see the facility and find out all they possibly could about the company.

While this relationship may be new, McCreary has competed

HOW YOU CAN DO IT

"I AM NOT SURE THIS COULD BE DONE IN JUST ANY COMMUNITY. BUT IN THIS COMMUNITY, I FOUND MY PLACE HERE AND I'VE BEEN ABLE TO BE SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE OF THIS COMMUNITY AND THE PEOPLE THAT I'VE MADE CONTACTS WITH OVER THE YEARS."



against them for years, but says he never really paid any attention to them. "On a local level, you pay more attention to the local agent than the van lines itself, but after I went up to Fort Wayne, Ind., and met the CEO and each of the department heads, I felt really comfortable with their laid back, family approach to business.

GETTING CONNECTED

Baymeadows Moving and Storage's strength lies in the southeast, but their affiliation with North American Van Lines allows them to go anywhere in the world using their network of agents.

"The fact that they are represented in 200 countries and have 350 agents in the continental United States and Canada just adds to my network because anything coming or going within this city, whether I'm doing it or their doing it, they may need to use me," says McCreary. "From here to somewhere else, or from somewhere else to here, they may need me."

For the past 90 days, even before officially signing on with North American Van Lines, McCreary's warehouse has been busy doing work for them. North American Van Lines has an 80-person call center that operate 24 hours a day, 364 days a year that he is now linked up to. When anybody needs a move in this zip code area, they make appointments for McCreary to go see who might be moving where. "The nice thing about that is the lead is pretty qualified already," says McCreary. "Getting the lead and having it qualified is 50% of the sale, so then it becomes a matter of the McCreary boys putting on the charm!"