

Dearborn lures coach firm With lower tax bill, grant

Mike Berberich was looking for more space to park a growing fleet of limousines and buses. He found that and a much lower tax bill in Dearborn County.

“Over a year’s time, there’s probably \$80,000 to \$90,000 in savings,” said Berberich, co-owner and founder of Crown Car & Coach and Crown Charter.

The sister companies provide transportation services to local sports teams and corporate clients. They relocated from Covington to Lawrenceburg in December. That brought 15 fulltime and 20 part-time jobs to the Hill Creek Industrial Park near U.S. 50. For Berberich’s company, it meant lower earnings taxes and workers compensation payments, lower sales taxes and licensing fees.

The company also received a \$100,000 grant to address road and drainage issues from a fund that Lawrenceburg spends on economic development incentives.

Lawrenceburg City Manager Tom Steidel helped the company get started when he brokered the sale of their first headquarters five years ago in Covington. When Berberich ran out of room on West 11th Street, he contacted Steidel to see if he knew of any other available sites.

Steidel steered Crown Car & Coach to a three-acre property vacated by a Lawrenceburg homebuilder that went out of business in 2008.

“They seem to have a very progressive operation,” Steidel said. “They’ve done very well, going against some pretty good competition. We’re glad to have them. They filled a vacant building for us. They’ve been very easy to work with.”

Berberich started the company with his brother, Jack. Both were longtime employees of the federal government who invested in land development in the latter stages of their government careers. They started a limousine service in March 2004, adding charter buses two years after that.

Corporate clients include Kroger Co., Ashland Inc. and the Walnut Group of Cos. Sports clients include Miami University and the Cincinnati Bengals. It’s a capital-intensive business, with buses that cost up to \$500,000, their interiors richly decorated with options like fibre-optic lighting, heavy-duty sound systems and high-definition plasma screens.

The company generates about \$3 million in annual revenue and expects to hire up to four new employees each year for the foreseeable future. The recession has yet to impact the charter bus business, where Berberich hopes to add to his fleet of 12 buses this year.

“It has taken its toll on the car business,” he said. “We’re down probably about 25 to 30 percent from where we were last year. But on the bus side, it’s just the opposite. It’s growing.”