

EMERGING 10

SMALL BUSINESSES OF THE YEAR

Travel Lynx Charters and Tours named Emerging10 Award Winner

Chamber of Commerce to honor area businesses for their achievements

This annual program recognizes the area's fastest and strongest growing small businesses for their exceptional achievements in the area of business development. The 10 companies are selected for their contributions to the region's economy and for how they have positioned themselves toward continued success. Nominated by their peers and clients, the companies selected for this year's award have demonstrated strength in the following key areas:

- Sales
- Growth in employees
- Innovation
- Diversification
- Expansion
- Response to adversity
- Community aide/contributions

The Emerging10 Awards are presented by the Cleveland County Chamber. From those selected for this award one will be named the Carson L. Fox Small Business/Entrepreneur of the Year at the Annual Meeting & Banquet in January. The other nine businesses will be showcased throughout the year as a Small Business of the Month.

Article from the "The Star" (March 17, 2009)

SHELBY - The historic Sept. 11 attacks changed many lives in America, including Travel Lynx owner Mark Bumgarner's. "I didn't set out to be in the travel business," he confessed, but more than seven years later, he can boast a Cleveland County Chamber Emerging Top 10 award.

He and a friend had bought a bus to fix and resell but after the tragedy, no one was buying.

Through a connection at Gardner-Webb University, Bumgarner started using the tour-sized bus to drive sports teams to out-of-town games. Using his philosophy of "going beyond the call," he made more connections, more trips "and have been blessed ever since," he said. Forty-five percent of the company's business comes from schools and universities now, followed strongly (30 percent) by the senior group market, then planned

tours, conventions and family reunions.

"We try to stay on the cutting edge of technology," he said. "More than half our coaches (nine total, with another expected in April) are considered 'green' and we'll be moving to all green eventually. "It's all about emissions. We have all clean air coming out. It costs more and maintenance costs are higher, but we chose that option because we believe in taking care of the planet." In other technology, equipping coaches with satellite TV and WIFI especially appeals to college teams, he said. "We do a lot of sports teams and churches, and we are the prime mover for Young Life in North and South Carolina." From refurbishing a used bus to operating 10, Bumgarner's company has grown to five full-time staff, 18 drivers and part-time bus cleaning crew.

The Travel Lynx Trolley is another service, operated primarily during special events around Shelby. What's hardest now is maintaining "because the economy is so depressed," Bumgarner said. "But I tell you, if you're going to travel, now it the time" because major attractions are offering deep discounts, he said. "We're holding our own and once the economy comes back, you'll see more people traveling."

Questions? 704-482-9077; 1-877-TRY-LYNX

On the Web: www.travellynxtours.com