

Steven E. Carpenter, Sr., Yellow Cab Company of Newark, Inc., Newark, OH Named the 2006 TLPA Paratransit & Contracting Driver of the Year

Steven E. Carpenter, Sr., driver of an accessible paratransit van for Yellow Cab Company of Newark, Inc., Newark, Ohio, has been selected as the TLPA 2006 Paratransit & Contracting Driver of the Year.

In her letter nominating Steve Carpenter for this award, Jane Wilson, General Manager of Yellow Cab of Newark, wrote about Steve's competence, his dedication and his outstanding driving and safety record, then she continued, "With all of the above, this is not the main reason for the nomination. Steve is truly the kindest driver I have ever seen. His patience with his wheelchair clients is beyond the call of duty. Steve has gotten to know all the people by name and he is always quick to compliment them and take a second or two to speak to them all. He has handled people emergencies with true professionalism and grace under pressure. We have some great drivers here but Steve is the best of the best." She also noted that 2006 is Yellow Cab's 25th anniversary of joining TLPA.

Steve was born and raised in Newark. He started driving a taxicab part time in March 2002 to supplement his income when the building industry slowed down after 9/11. He says, "I quickly realized I was able to make a difference in my passengers' lives by providing a safe, clean and friendly environment for them. It didn't take long to realize I had found the perfect job for me. I take my job seriously. I believe I have to be able to perform my job with compassion. Compassion for my riders is the number one asset I bring to my job."

Yellow Cab operates the Newark-Heath Taxi Token program, which provides trips for \$1.50 for eligible elderly and disabled riders. The general public pays \$3.00 per trip. The program operates 24/7, 365 days per year. Steve carries 48-60 passengers per day in this shared ride service. Fifty percent of his riders are people in wheelchairs. He notes that most of



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his passengers are regular users of the Taxi Token Program. He states, "I find it rewarding to be able to be a positive influence in my riders lives on a daily basis. Getting to know their aides, their families, their friends, as well as the nursing home, the group homes, workplace staff and administration, enables me to take my passengers special needs into consideration on a daily basis."

We asked Steve what was the most interesting experience he has had as a paratransit driver. He replied, "In December 2004, our area was hit by a devastating ice storm, crippling our community's ability to function. I am very proud to say that our company was the only transit system in our area to continue service, helping seniors and disabled people get to a warm place. Every trip I made that day seemed to be an emergency. People did not have heat and electricity and the roads were covered in 1-3 inches of ice. Trees were coming down in front of me. I would miss a tree just in time to miss a power line pole falling. It was an amazing day. We evacuated an entire nursing home with no power or heat. In short, we saved lives that day and the days that followed."

Steve says he likes working with Yellow Cab of Newark because he likes to drive and he appreciates the opportunity to earn a living providing a vital service to the community. He says, "Driving an on-demand paratransit taxicab with wheelchair accessibility is a challenge everyday. Our company objective is to provide safe transportation for our clients in a timely manner."

We asked Steve about the changes he has seen in specialized transportation since he began driving. He stated that the equipment he uses (the lifts, the vehicles, the tie-down straps and the seatbelts) have been the most positive changes. He also noted that the need for specialized transportation has increased. He said, "On the downside, the increase in paperwork increases my workday by at least one half an hour per day at the end of the day."

Steve met his wife Christina when he was waiting for a client to come out of a grocery store. Christina, another Yellow Cab driver, was dropping off a passenger. He says, "We said hello and the rest is history." They have 5 children, 4 boys and a girl. Steve's hobbies include golf, bowling, reading and playing cards. Asked his reaction to winning the TLPA Paratransit Driver of the Year Award, Steve stated, "I'm surprised, excited and truly grateful to be honored with this most prestigious award that can be given to someone in my line of work. This award isn't just for me. It is for the drivers, passengers, organizations and administrations of the Newark and Heath, Ohio communities."

In honor of his dedication to his profession and his family and his sensitivity to his clients, the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association is proud to recognize Steven E. Carpenter, Sr., as the TLPA 2006 Paratransit & Contracting Driver of the Year. ■