

2005 TLPA Limousine & Sedan Operator of the Year Jacob M. Salem, First American Limousine, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts

The Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association is pleased to announce that Jacob M. "Jake" Salem, president of First American Limousine, Inc., Boston, Mass., has been selected as the TLPA 2005 Limousine & Sedan Operator of the Year.

Jake was nominated by three distinguished members of TLPA's Limousine & Sedan Division: Victor Dizengoff of the Black Car Assistance Corporation, Joey Cirruzzo, Sr., 2004 Limousine & Sedan Operator of the Year, and Guy Mongello, 2001 Limousine & Sedan Operator of the Year.

The following written by Guy Mongello typifies the nomination letters TLPA received. "Jacob has served the industry for over 20 years and takes perfection to the next level. The training he provides his chauffeurs shows up with the high customer satisfaction ratings his company achieves. We do follow-up calls to clients after service has been completed, and for the last five years the comments have been nothing but complimentary. Repeat clients to Jacob's area have requested certain chauffeurs time and time again. This not being one chauffeur, requests come for numerous ones, which tell us the training is across the board. Jacob himself not only provides good transportation, but also is willing to provide you with his knowledge and experience in the industry. He is a longtime member of the TLPA Limousine & Sedan Steering Committee. He was a charter member and retired director of the National Limousine Association as well as the founding secretary of the New England Livery Association. It's time for him to be recognized for these accomplishments."

Jake Salem was born in 1959 in Tripoli, Lebanon, to American parents. His family moved back to the United States in 1976. Jake studied engineering and business at Northeastern University in Boston. After college, he worked for Raytheon, Westinghouse and United Technologies before starting his first transportation business in



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1985, a courier service, Salem Executive Services, that also offered executive car service. In 1987, he founded First American Limousine as a graduation present to his brother. In 1989, Jake took over the business from his brother when he went to Kuwait to run a chain of restaurants.

Jacob Salem's philosophy toward running a limousine and sedan transportation company is "to operate an efficient organization that provides superior service levels. Quality staff, Quality clients, Quality equipment." He says, "We aim to impress with every ride. I have developed a rigorous safety and maintenance program."

The loss runs for First American Limousine are among the lowest in the industry. The company has had no workers' compensation claims in more than 15 years. "The TLPA Limousine & Sedan Steering Committee, of which I am a member, has adopted quality goals that each member pledges to make every possible effort to achieve. To me these are not goals, they are our most basic practices," Jake says.

Jake Salem says he joined TLPA in the early 1990s mainly out of curiosity. He says that he has come to value TLPA because "the information

exchange has kept me ahead of trouble."

Jake has fought many battles on behalf of the industry. He was instrumental in keeping workers' compensation (1991) and auto premiums (1995) from being inflated in Massachusetts. He assisted his state's registry of motor vehicles in writing the guidelines for issuing livery plates. He is a believer in working closely with governing and regulatory agencies and educating them about the limousine and sedan industry in order to achieve a less hostile and restrictive business environment.

Jake says that as an employer, he has always believed in mentoring instead of managing. He says he is demanding as well as rewarding. He brags that he has had the pleasure of training many of his competitors' best employees. Leonard Uminski, TLPA's 2001 Chauffeur of the Year for A International Limo of Boston, credited Jacob for his training that set him on the path to win the award. First American Limousine, Inc., has many service awards including recognition for superior service and dedication from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and The House of Al Sabah of Kuwait.

After September 11, 2001, Jake refinanced his business and pledged his home as security to keep from laying off any of his employees. First American Limousine's current fleet consists of four stretch limousines, seven sedans, three vans and two SUVs. Asked what changes he had seen in the limousine industry since he started working in the field, Jake stated, "The onset of larger operators, the slow death of stretch limousines, and the growth and increased use of networks." When asked if any members of his family worked with him, Jake said, "My family thinks I am crazy to be in a 24-hour, 365 days a year business." Speaking of family, Jacob and his wife Donna are involved in many charitable and humanitarian organizations and causes including The United Way, the Walk for Hunger, battered women,

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Geoffrey Riesel

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Jonathan works in business development at the London office of CNN.

Geoffrey stated that TLPA has provided immeasurable help to his business. He said, "The network of members has given us a wide knowledge of technology and of systems; it has introduced us to business opportunities. It has opened paths of trade understanding and opened our eyes to many different business issues for example diversification. It has enabled us to network and gain not only wonderful business associates but has also given us a wide circle of the nicest friends anyone could ever have. The TLPA is an extended family of some of the most marvelous people. Long may it continue so! I am completely surprised, but at the same time delighted that we have been conferred this honor, especially when it comes from our very dear American friends at the TLPA. It really is a wonderful and very thoughtful award. I hope we can be worthy of it."

In recognition of exceptional management of an outstanding municipal taxicab service focused on professionalism, customer service and safety, the Taxicab Limousine & Paratransit Association is very proud to honor Geoffrey M. Riesel as the TLPA 2005 Taxicab Large Fleet Operator of the Year. ■

Jo-Anne Thompson

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management and how it benefits her worker and passengers: "The most important thing I do as a business owner is to be accessible to my employees and to my customers. We own our vehicles and our drivers are employees — that automatically makes my company and me directly accountable for the quality of the service we provide. We have our own maintenance and repair facility. Along with the mechanics I regularly spot check vehicles for their condition and cleanliness, we have a driver dress code, we invest in driver training, and I handle most of our complaints myself. Having grown up in and lived in

Framingham most of my life, I take our successes — and failures — very personally. By constantly striving to achieve the best quality of service possible, I can increase our success stories, and minimize our failures!"

Jo-Anne does not have any family members working with her in the business, but says, "My father could not have created this business without the help of his brothers, brother-in-law, and my cousin David Thompson, who was our head mechanic and dispatcher for 25 years, until his death four years ago."

Jo-Anne's reaction to winning this award was to exclaim, "I'm delighted and flattered! It is a great honor to be recognized by my peers in the industry, many of whom have been a great resource and help to me over the years."

In recognition of exceptional management of an outstanding community taxicab service focused on customer service, maintenance and safety, the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association is very proud to honor Jo-Anne Thompson as the TLPA 2005 Taxicab Small Fleet Operator of the Year. ■

Jacob Salem

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cancer research, epilepsy research, suicide hotlines, and helping troubled youth. First American Limousine is a participant in a prisoner work release and reintegration program. By hiring and training soon-to-be-released prisoners to service, clean and detail its fleet of luxury vehicles. The company is providing them with a marketable skill prior to their return to society.

It seems that someone who is in a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year business would have no time for hobbies, but Jake lists, "Auto racing, sports cars, wine and trying to go fishing whenever I can."

In his letter nominating Jake for this award, Victor Dizengoff wrote, "His somewhat flamboyant and 'in your face' business and political personality is not reflected in his personal life. He is a warm, loving and giving friend who likes to have a lot of fun and good times enjoying his love of the automobile and the ocean. It would be comforting to me

to see him receive the recognition he has long deserved."

In recognition of exceptional management of an outstanding limousine operation and service to the limousine industry and his community, TLPA is very proud to honor Jacob M. "Jake" Salem as the TLPA 2005 Limousine & Sedan Operator of the Year. ■

Sheri Watson

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ically challenged and improve accessibility of service. There is more emphasis on human resources and training techniques, which assure safer and more reliable drivers. The use of technology, which allows for better trip intake, distribution and tracking, is on the increase. The general public having a better awareness of person with disabilities and their use of mobility devices."

Sheri loves the outdoors. "I am always involved with my son Chase and daughter Maddie's activities, including Girl and Boy Scouts, and have followed their sports activities very closely. The family rarely misses a Kansas City Chiefs football game." Sheri and her husband Alan share outdoor activities, such as boating at the Lake of the Ozarks and riding their Harleys.

Sheri says of her award, "It is a proud but humbling feeling to be honored by your peers, many of which you've learned from and looked up to for years and with whom you've enjoyed tremendous fellowship. Fleet owners aren't patted on the back very often back home, so receiving the honor is very gratifying. But, I must say that I look upon this award as recognition of our company's commitment to safety and sensitivity. This award really belongs to the Checker Services team, more than 200 people strong, who treat each passenger with the same care and concern each and every day."

In recognition of exceptional management of an outstanding community paratransit service focused on safety, sensitivity and awareness of participants' needs, TLPA is very proud to honor Sheri L. Watson as the TLPA 2005 Paratransit & Contracting Operator of the Year. ■