

# Rental Company Reaches

BY GLENDA CADOGAN

It started out 32 years ago as a small mechanic shop in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn. Customers who left their cars for repairs needed a replacement vehicle to get around. So Sam, the shop's owner, started lending out cars. In a short time, his popularity grew and so too did the "car rental" company. It was called "All Car Rent a Car," and since then it has grown to become the largest New York-based car rental company.

Now managed by Sam's son, Guy Cygler, All Car Rent a Car has been a haven for Brooklyn renters seeking quality cars at bargain prices. As such, this claim could well be the company's slogan. But so too can be a few other apt phrases, like "we are in this together," "bridging the gap between community and company," or "we are all Brooklyn." That's

because there is an unmistakable spirit of family, camaraderie and customer relations that permeates the atmosphere at all of All Car Rent a Car's physical locations in Brooklyn.

With a fleet of 700 well-conditioned new model cars at extremely competitive prices, All Car Rent a Car is an attractive alternative for Brooklyn residents, many of whom are

turned off by the up sell and red tape of the national chains. In addition, the convenience of a neighborhood car rental company is a big plus. Cygler takes pride in serving the community he has called home all his life. "At All Car Rent a Car we understand and meet the needs of Brooklyn residents," he says. "And in some ways those needs are unique. But we pride our-

selves on serving the local community and making it possible for people to rent cars when they have a need."

Cygler and his team know the community because, in part, they are the community. "All our employees live in the five boroughs of the city," he says. "We spend our money in Brooklyn and we buy our parts for the company in Brooklyn.



Guy Cygler of All Car Rent a Car shows one of the 15-seater passenger vans in his fleet of rental vehicles.

PHOTO BY AL PEMBERTON

## Microsoft Provides Tech Skills Tools at No Cost and Low Cost

Microsoft Corp. recently announced a new initiative, Elevate America, which will provide up to 2 million people over the next three years with the technology training needed to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

Microsoft has worked for years with other businesses and community-based partners to broaden access to job opportunities through information technology education and training. Elevate America expands these efforts and provides immediate support in response to the current economic crisis in partnership with others in the public and private sector.

Elevate America has two main offerings, one available immediately and one that will be provided in partnership with state governments including those of Florida, New York and Washington.

A new online resource, located at <http://www.microsoft.com/ElevateAmerica>, is now available. This new website helps individuals understand what types of technical skills they need for the jobs and entrepreneurial opportuni-

ties of today and tomorrow, and resources to help acquire these skills. The website provides access to several Microsoft online training programs, including how to use the Internet, send e-mail and create a résumé, as well as more advanced programs on using specific Microsoft applications.

In order to provide a broader range of training programs and certification exams, Microsoft will also partner with state and local governments, which in turn will make these resources available to their citizens. Pamela Passman, corporate vice president of Microsoft Global Corporate Affairs, announced that Florida, New York and Washington will be the first states to provide Elevate America to their residents.

Elevate America is an extension of Microsoft's long-standing commitment to provide skills training and certification through schools, government programs and community-based organizations. The Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program is an example of how Microsoft is already working to bridge the technology skills gap and equip more people with

skills relevant to today's work force. More than half of today's jobs require some technology skills, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that will reach 77 percent in the next decade.

"Millions of Americans don't have the technology skills needed in today's economy. Through Elevate America, we want to help workers get the skills they need to succeed," Passman said. "We are also providing a full range of work force development resources for state and local governments so they can offer specialized training for their workers."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more people than ever are pursuing Microsoft technical certifications. As part of the Elevate America effort, Microsoft is providing 1 million Microsoft Learning vouchers for free access to Microsoft eLearning courses and select certification exams.

More information on Elevate America is available at [www.microsoft.com/ElevateAmerica](http://www.microsoft.com/ElevateAmerica).

# Out to Serve the Community

So in fact, we are Brooklyn.”

What's unique about All Car Rent a Car, is unlike its national competitors, customers without a credit card in their name are not turned away like pariahs. “We do not hold the fact that someone does not have a credit card against them,” says Cygler. “And we certainly do not subscribe to the view that because someone does not have a credit card it means that they will not pay their bill. But in these cases we take the approach of verifying all other personal information so we can contact errant customers.”

Another way that All Car Rent a Car meets the needs of the local community is by carrying a fleet of full size cars and 20 vans. “We are the only car rental company that does not carry any compact size cars in our fleet,” says Cygler, adding cheekily, “After all, we are New Yorkers.” In addition, he says, all cars at All Car Rent a Car are just as good as the major competitors – 2008-2009 models.

Brooklyn has been dubbed the borough of churches and with this in mind, All Car Rent a Car has also tailored its fleet to meet the needs of the church community. With its 15-seater passenger vans and 14 foot cargo vans, All Car Rent a Car is the pick of pastors as they plan church outings, harvests and other events.

With emphasis on the personal touch, it is not all about the cars. Cygler has developed a personal relationship with many pastors and, working in partnership of them, has developed a special program to benefit local churches. In addition to its lower prices and free upgrades for congregants, All Car Rent a Car gives a five percent rebate to all churches that send business to the company. “In return, churches list us on their websites and their bulletins,

so it's a rewarding experience on both ends,” says Cygler.

One such partnering church is Full Effect Gospel Ministries located in the East New York section of Brooklyn. The church is led by Pastor Archie McInnis, who calls his relationship with All Car Rent a Car “a blessing.”

“One Sunday morning we needed to rent a 15-passenger van at the last minute,” he told the Christian Times. “The rates we were being quoted elsewhere were absolutely ridiculous.

Then I recalled that an associate had given me the number for a car rental company in Brooklyn. I called them up – and got not one, but two vans. Not only were they in good condition, but the rates were affordable,” he says. That was two years ago and since that time Pastor McInnis has been renting vehicles from the company for all his church engagements and outings. “It has been a very positive experience over the past two years,” he says. “Everyone – from the guy who preps the vans to the managers – are pleasant and helpful. In fact, we have all grown to know each other by our first names,” he says.

It is this kind of community relations that Cygler believes makes All Car Rent a Car unique. “We are very committed to our community,” he says. “We do not hide behind an 800 number somewhere in the Midwest but, on the contrary, we are very accessible to all of our customers. We really do our best to listen to them and respond to their suggestions. And we also empower our staff to



PHOTO BY AL PEMBERTON

make those accommodations even if it means doing unconventional things, like making a half-day rental.”

With the growing economic crisis, All Car Rent a Car, like most other companies, has been called to make adjustments to accommodate the growing needs of customers who have lost their income. Fortunately, raising rates has not been one of them. “We are doing our best to work with people through this economic crisis,” says Cygler. “Instead of raising rates or laying off employees, we are doing things like taking less of a deposit, especially for our loyal customers.”

It's for reasons such as these that long-term customers like Steve Greenidge are willing to publicly endorse the services of All Car Rent a Car. When Greenidge needed a van to take his family on a day trip, he stumbled upon All Car Rent a Car. “I was just driving through the neighborhood when I saw the sign,” explained the Brooklyn barber. “I went in and could not believe the steal of a

deal they were offering. I was even more surprised when I realized that the vans were in very good condition.” Greenidge took his entire family – his wife, mother, sister-in-law and a group of kids – on the day outing, and then stored the number for the company in his cell phone. “That was three years ago and since then I have not rented from any other company,” he said.

With 70 employees who are like an extended family, Cygler has placed the business of car rental on the fast track in Brooklyn in ways that defy the odds. “There are some people who have been with our company for 20 years,” he says. “We have been through good and bad times together. We have been through births, deaths and marriages, and we know each other's first names. We support our community, churches and elected officials by donating vans to some of their charitable events. So I know that through it all we will survive,” says Cygler. “At the end of the day, we are all in this together.”

## Business.gov Launches Online Community for Small Biz

SBA's Business Gateway Program has launched a new Web initiative – <http://Community.Business.gov>, the first government-sponsored online community built specifically for small businesses.

The objective of the Business.gov Community supports the White House's mission to create a transparent and connected democracy, and aims to provide small business owners, bloggers, and the government with a place to discuss and share information about starting and running a successful business.

An extension of Business.gov, the Business.gov Community combines discussion fo-

rum, blogs, an idea exchange, and more, and offers advanced tools for navigating the labyrinth of government resources, policies, laws, and opportunities that impact the small business owner.

In addition to providing a “home” where users can share expertise and unique experiences, the site also provides a pioneering opportunity for small businesses to provide direct input into Business.gov and voice the ways government and the online community can better serve them.

“Over the past year, we have significantly expanded our efforts to engage with small business owners, by giving them easy access to the information they need to run their business,” said

Nancy Sternberg, program manager of Business Gateway. “The launch of the Business.gov Community represents a new milestone. Through the application of Web 2.0 technologies, we hope to unite small business owners, industry experts and government, and take the program to a new level of collaborative knowledge-sharing and insight.”

Over the next few months, the Business.gov Community will expand to include additional features and resources that address specific user interests and provide access to the wider pool of government and Business.gov partner resources available to the small business owner.