

2010 TLPA Taxicab Operator of the Year



TLPA's 2010 Taxicab Operator of the Year is Bill Scalzi, Metro Taxi, West Haven, Connecticut.

Bill Scalzi and his wife and business partner, Isabelle, are no strangers to implementing social innovations at Metro Taxi in West Haven, Connecticut, while successfully balancing business excellence.

Founders of both the University Ride Safe Card, a debit card for college students, and MetroAccess, Connecticut's first and only wheelchair-accessible taxi, the Scalzis have demonstrated some of the most innovative thinking in the

industry. For that reason and more, the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA) is pleased to name Bill Scalzi its 2010 Taxicab Operator of the Year.

"I'm delighted, pleasantly surprised and humbled by this award," Scalzi said. "The TLPA's international membership is an incredible group of sharp, talented people who know how to run their businesses efficiently and effectively."

Established in 1917, the TLPA is a non-profit trade association of and for the private passenger transportation industry. The association honors exceptional operators and drivers for their outstanding service focused on professionalism, customer service and safety each year at a ceremony at its Annual Convention and Trade Show, held this year at the JW Marriott in Los Angeles from October 27-31.

Scalzi was only 14 years old when he first started working for his father's taxicab business, doing odd jobs throughout the company. He learned from an early age that a family-owned business demanded hard work and long hours. It is precisely these ideals on which Scalzi's own business, Metro Taxi, was founded.

"I'd like to think that today Metro Taxi is a hometown, family-run taxi company offering big city benefits through its modern, high-tech, 24/7 operation," he said.

Scalzi attributes the success of the business to nurturing customer and employee relationships as well as the social entrepreneurship business model he follows.

"Isabelle and I share a value-based leadership ethic and work hard to earn the respect of our clients, society and the industry by building a reputation that demonstrates our allegiance to Connecticut communities and our mission to be both business leaders and social innovators," he said.

MetroAccess is one clear example of how the Scalzis developed their business through socially responsible methods and partnerships to help build safe and healthy communities. It is also Scalzi's proudest achievement to date.

After a 12-year personal campaign, Scalzi successfully incorporated MetroAccess into his fleet in October 2009. It is Connecticut's only wheelchair-accessible taxicab service.

"The victory to get antiquated legislation changed to allow those with mobility disabilities the same value, freedom and equality as other taxi users is beyond compare," he said. "Since its introduction, MetroAccess has truly changed lives in so many ways, giving users the freedom of spontaneity, reducing their costs, improving quality of life and providing more employment opportunities since transportation was formerly a huge barrier for those with physical disabilities."

Another clear social responsibility example is the Scalzis' University Ride Safe Card initiative.

This initiative was born out of a community need for college students to have a safe and reliable form of transportation at any time of the day or night. The Scalzis forged a relationship with the Governor's Prevention Partnership, a non-profit organization whose mission is to keep

Connecticut kids safe, successful and drug-free.

As Metro Taxi's business and programs continue to grow, Scalzi continues to look ahead.

"I want to customize evolving technologies

to meet customers' changing needs for all lifestyle settings, while we remain committed to the environment by implementing practices such as the use of compressed natural gas," he said. "It's the cleanest alternative fuel available, reducing tailpipe emissions anywhere from 35 to 95 percent."

Scalzi plans to add several dozen wheelchair-accessible taxis powered by compressed natural gas to his fleet in the future.

In addition, Scalzi would like to see the taxi industry more involved in government-funded transportation initiatives, as well as in long-term transportation operations analysis.

An avid golf fan when his work schedule permits, Scalzi also sponsors and participates in local golf tournaments serving as fundraisers for community-based organizations.

Though Scalzi has clearly accomplished a lot during his professional career, he shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

In recognition of exceptional dedication to professionalism, customer service, and safety, as well as for ongoing service to the industry, the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association is very proud to honor Bill Scalzi as **TLPA's 2010 Taxicab Operator of the Year.** ■

"Isabelle and I share a value-based leadership ethic and work hard to earn the respect of our clients, society and the industry..."

—Bill Scalzi