



Hail sales fuel already hot year for cars

By STACY WESCOE
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Hail damage from a late May storm caused tens of millions of dollars in damage to autos in Berks County and small pockets of Lehigh County.

For example, Tom Masano's Mercedes-Benz dealership in Reading was among the hardest hit, with about 500 of the new and used cars on his lots damaged or destroyed by hail.

Elsewhere, many car owners found their own vehicles severely damaged and even totaled by the hail, which was reported to be golf-ball sized and larger.

John Masano, president of Tom Masano's Mercedes-Benz, said he knew those fellow storm victims would be looking for new cars and he immediately contacted his Mercedes, BMW and Ford manufacturing representatives

to get new vehicles into his lot so that he would have inventory for those storm victims looking to buy new cars.

Fast forward to today, and that expectation has

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Hail, some larger than golf balls, fell during a brief but intense storm in parts of Berks and Lehigh counties last month.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES GANGEWER

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MANAGEMENT**



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Jose Perna says Perna & Associates Mortgage Solutions will coach someone now so that he will be in a better position in the future to work for the company. Page 17

At last, more business owners looking to take summer vacations

By KENDALL VRANA
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When Bonnie Sussman-Versace of Focused LLC in Wyomissing took a five-day spring vacation to Vancouver, she almost – but didn't – sign up for an international phone plan to check on her business.

Like many small-business owners, she finds it difficult to step away entirely from her career and unplug for a few days.

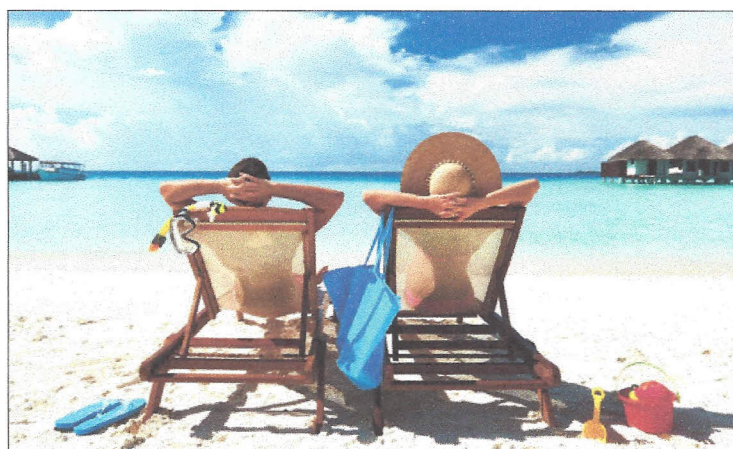
"I absolutely love what I do," said Sussman-Versace, who offers leadership development and training. "Most of the time, it's very difficult for me to take a true vacation where I completely shut all electronic devices off and take time for myself."

She is not alone in finding it difficult to get away. And she is not alone this year in finally taking a vacation that is longer than a weekend.

Last year, a record low of 49 percent of small-business owners said they planned a week-long summer vacation, according to American Express' Summer 2014 Small Business Monitor. The monitor surveys owners and managers of small companies with fewer than 100 employees and is released every fall and spring.

This year, the monitor found a jump to three-in-five owners (60 percent) who are planning a week-long summer vacation. The increase likely is attributable to a slight upgrade in the economy and because many owners have not taken extended getaways for years.

"There seems to be a little bit more confidence in the economy. It's very slight, but I see even a slight improvement is what might lead to that,"



Sussman-Versace said of the renewed interest in vacations.

The other reason for the increase in vacations, she said, is that business owners are coming off a really stressful time.

"Not saying it isn't stressful now – it certainly is – but I think they're recognizing they need that time for themselves," she said. "They've earned it, they owe it to themselves."

Even though she is taking a two-week vacation this summer, Sussman-Versace described her vacation schedule as "pitiful at best."

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NO VACATION? THESE TIPS COULD HELP

If you can't take a week for a vacation this year, try this advice to stay fresh at work:

- Take advantage of long weekends to get away.
- Mix up your daily routine with hobbies.
- Walks, yoga, meditation and other healthy activities and exercise help to reduce stress. For example, take a walk during lunch break.
- During the work day, time away from the desk is important. "I tell people to get up from their desk," said Ben Spalding of CISS Inventory & Logistics Specialists.

SOURCES: BONNIE SUSSMAN-VERSACE, BEN SPALDING, RENEE CANTWELL



BUSINESS IS PICKING UP

With many clients throughout the region and eastern Pennsylvania, Stanley Sweeping of New Tripoli has grown to be a go-to service for cleaning construction sites and commercial and industrial properties. Page 3

THEY PICK UP WHAT YOU PUT DOWN

By BRIAN PEDERSEN
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It could be a call from Dorney Park requesting a cleanup job at 3 a.m. or it could be one of the many calls Brent and Francine Stanley receive throughout the day and night.

Either way, they make every effort to answer the phone. They know that each call is important – and if they don't pick up quickly, the caller will choose another company. It keeps their customers happy, helps to add new ones and also allows the company's employees to put food on the table for their families.

It's one way the married couple managed to increasingly build business over the years for Stanley Sweeping, a site cleaning company they operate with street sweeper trucks.

While they run the business out of their New Tripoli home, their trucks are stored at two bays in nearby Weisenberg Township and one in Downtown Allentown. Both Stanleys are often out with their site cleaning crews, going to construction sites, shopping center parking lots, highways and anywhere a cleanup job is in need – including scrubbing and sweeping the inside of distribution centers and warehouses throughout the region.

Brent Stanley's motto is, "we're picking up what you're putting down," which comes to just about anything, from garbage to human and animal waste.

As Francine Stanley noted, with the high population of geese in the area, the company gets many requests to sweep up goose waste. Customers are all about being clean, and the company will tackle any situation, she said.

DIVERSIFICATION

As with many successful businesses, diversification is key. To survive, you must adapt.

When Stanley began his lawn mowing business as Stanley Lawn Care in 1983, he built it up to about 120 lawns by the time he started college. During the down time, he would do snow removal.

But during winter seasons with little snow, the need arose for a more lucrative and sustainable business stream.

"We needed to do something to diversify ourselves," he said. "We figured we'd get into parking lot sweeping."

He acquired his first contract with Lehigh Valley Hospital in 1994. For that one-time deal, all he had was a push broom, shovel and wheelbarrow.

FEMALE INFLUENCE

His father-in-law helped Stanley buy his first machine, a ride-on Lincoln sweeper that he still has. Now, the couple have a fleet of trucks and equipment.

He is the president; his wife is the CEO.



A Stanley Sweeping truck cleans the parking lot at a Weis supermarket in Fogelsville.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

STANLEY SWEEPING AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE INC.

- **What:** Cleaning services, including power washing, scrubbing and sweeping for construction sites and commercial, industrial and retail properties and roads.
- **Location:** New Tripoli.
- **No. of employees:** 15.
- **Website:** www.stanleysweeping.com.

"We decided he just couldn't do everything," said Francine Stanley, who, along with her husband, has two children.

While it is a male-dominated industry, at one time the business had three female drivers and she noted that she and her husband play a role in every aspect of the company. She learned a great deal about the trucks from ordering truck parts and is looking to acquire her commercial driver's license in a year.

She is a former store manager for Coach Leatherwear, learning how to operate a business while in that role.

"There are pros and cons to running your own business, but most days there are more pros," she said. "It's a lot different from selling handbags to working on trucks."

BUSINESS IN ALLENTOWN

The company recently contracted with City Center Lehigh Valley in Downtown Allentown to take care of its parking garages, Francine Stanley said.

"Being born and raised here in Allentown gives us an incentive to get out there and keep the city clean," Brent Stanley said.

The changes that have been occurring in the Allentown area over the past few years have brought new business for the small company.



Francine and Brent Stanley

PHOTO/BRIAN PEDERSEN

"As the growth of the city of Allentown is rising up, we actually opened another shop [in Allentown] to access the community," he said.

The company rents a garage on George Street in Downtown Allentown which allows it to quickly access downtown properties.

REGIONAL CLIENTS

While the bulk of Stanley Sweeping's work is in eastern Pennsylvania, the company ventures as far west as Harrisburg.

"We feel we do a better business locally," Francine Stanley said. "We don't go out of state."

Also among its clients are Hillwood Properties, NAI Summit for the Plaza, City Center Lehigh Valley, Liberty Property Trust, Nestlé Waters, Uline and Sands Casino Resort.

Stanley Sweeping works with Rapid Response Inc., an environmental services company in Northampton, and has contracts with Berks, Lehigh and Schuylkill counties. It also travels up and down the eastern border of Pennsylvania, Brent Stanley said.

The company travels with Haines & Kibblehouse Inc., a site contracting division with the H&K group based in Skippack. Stanley Sweeping does business with almost all of the elite construction companies in the area, Francine Stanley said.

"A lot of these companies have a sweeper, but they are hard to maintain and when they break, they break big," she said.

The sweeper trucks cost about \$25,000 each.

DEDICATED EMPLOYEES

Whether its emergency response situations or road construction, Stanley Sweeping is at the end of the line, sweeping up everything.

"Brent has been with us for five years," said Cliff Hubbs, facilities manager for NAI Summit, which manages The Plaza, a parking deck at 835 W. Hamilton St. in Allentown. "He has been doing a great job. He cleans the facility, is very courteous. I'm happy with what they do."

It's certainly not a job for everyone, but Francine Stanley noted that the employees take great pride in what they do.

"It takes a special person to do what we do," she said. "We have 15 dedicated employees; they like working strange hours."

This includes responding to a number of new customer calls for site cleanup around Reading Hospital as a result of the recent hailstorm which caused property and vehicle damage.

"Our biggest enemy is Mother Nature," Brent Stanley said. "We are always on our toes."

TIME FOR FAMILY

Despite the hours, the couple make sure that they and their employees make time for family life.

"It's all about quality of life," Francine Stanley said. "It's very important to stay connected to your family if you have that opportunity. We feel 100 percent responsible to make sure our employees can support their families."

And for that 3 a.m. call, Stanley Sweeping was able to get two trucks to the site at Dorney Park in South Whitehall Township in about 20 minutes.

"What's most exciting about the job is it's something different every day," Brent Stanley said.

Information Session



Doctor of Physical Therapy

Thursday, June 26 4:30 p.m.

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