

## **TRUCK CITY OF GARY INC. CELEBRATES 60 YEARS**

### **Gary firm still truckin'**

**By Lisa Shidler**

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GARY – Truck City of Gary Inc., nestled off of Cline Avenue, doesn't necessarily catch the eye of the average driver, but it's a hotspot for the dozens of truck drivers who go in and out of the doors each day to get their Freightliner trucks serviced.

The Gary company, which is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, sells and leases Freightliner trucks to major corporations and local companies. It has a body shop and service center.

As the family-owned corporation celebrates one milestone, company officials eagerly look forward to the future, saying they'll likely hire as many as 20 additional workers in the next five years to accommodate growth. In fact, they need to hire 12 workers now in addition to the 20, a process they hope to get wrapped up in the next few months, but say it's difficult because there's shortage of diesel technicians.

Another major project for the company in the next five years will be relocating, because the company is located in the patch of the Gary/Chicago International Airport's expansion plans.

Gerri Davis-Parker, general manager, part owner and granddaughter of founder Paul Davis, believes in the airport expansion and said it's worth it to move. "Obviously, we're in the footprint of the future airport expansion plans," she said. "The airport will be big to the area. We're absolutely strong believers that the airport will play a fundamental role in Northwest Indiana."

She intends to start scouting locations in the next five years or so, but would like to stay on the Cline Avenue corridor, which she said is ideal for her company because of the heavy truck traffic. "If you're going to move freight east to west, you have to come around the lake," Davis-Parker said. "The dealership is pretty much the same as an auto dealership. We just have larger trucks."

Airport administrator Paul Karas said there's no hurry for the company to begin packing. The first step toward the airport expansion is relocating the railroad tracks. Karas added the airport will need a few hundred square feet of a gravel parking lot that is leased by Truck City of Gary. But he says the airport would let Truck City of Gary use space immediately to the east. "Right now we do not need most of Truck City's property," Karas said. But he said – in the long-term – the airport intends to build an additional terminal or cargo buildings where Truck City of Gary is located.

Gary Mayor Scott King's spokeswoman LaLosa Burns said the city is more than willing to work with Truck City of Gary to help it relocate.

The Gary company sells three of Freightliner's franchises – Freightliner, Sterling and Western Star. Many of those trucks are custom-made.

While the automotive industry is struggling with foreign competition, Davis-Parker said the lack of foreign competition in the truck business is helping her company. Truck City of Gary's gross revenues and sales have consistently increased for the past five years.

"Transportation is a booming industry. People get frustrated driving down the road next to these trucks, but everything you have at point came off a truck," Davis-Parker said. She said there's a shortage in diesel technicians, making it difficult to find new employees. The company's technicians received gross wages ranging from \$42,000 to \$58,000 annually in 2005.

About half of the company's employees are in the Teamsters Local 142.

"We joke that everyone wants to be a dot.com millionaire and no one wants to get dirty anymore," she said.

Bob Dorrance, a Crown Point resident and 19 year employee, trains diesel technicians at Truck City. "It used to be in the old days, you'd beat on stuff with a hammer and now we use laptops. Everything's gone electric and electrical systems have gotten more and more complex," Dorrance said.

Art Davis, the son of founder Paul G. Davis, said the anniversary is exciting. "Hopefully we can go for another 60 years," Davis said. "We have a lot of good employees."