

the Chronicle

Serving the Communities of Eastern Connecticut Since 1877

A Chronicle Special Section

Weekend Edition, August 17-18, 2019

Section B

BACK TO SCHOOL



A safe ride on the first day of school

Dattco drives into the region with a new location in Hebron

JACK LAKOWSKY

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Nervousness is an understandable response from parents watching their kids board a school bus.

Cliff Gibson and the team at the Devivo and Tolomea Transportation Co., better known as Dattco, want to ease any apprehension parents or communities feel on that first day of school.

What started as a single bus route by founder Louis Devivo in 1924, Dattco was officially established in 1949. It is now a third-generation, family-owned Connecticut-based business.

Today, Dattco employs more than 2,000 people and is headquartered in New Britain, but has multiple offices, terminals and service facilities throughout New England, including an upcoming location in Hebron.

“Louis Devivo started with a single bus route in New Britain and Plainville,” Gibson said, referring to the company’s founder. “The owner is here every day. When someone calls, they’re speaking to an expert.”

Gibson is the company’s chief operating officer and has been with Dattco for 14 years.

The peace of mind Dattco aims to bring to its riders and their families starts with safety.

Gibson said advancing technologies have allowed bus safety features to improve immensely over the past few decades.

Dattco vehicles now have GPS tracking and cameras.

Dattco focuses on respiratory safety as well. Buses are switching to zero-emission clean diesel and propane.

The company is also in the process of experimenting with hybrid and electric vehicles for its fleet.

Gibson said clean, efficient vehicles lower the cost to the school district which, in turn, saves money for taxpayers.

“Meetings always start with a discussion of safety. Parents want to know two things,” Gibson said. “Is this a safe bus?” and “Is this is a reliable driver?”

Gibson said Dattco only hires the “best and brightest” as drivers.

“We can teach them how to drive a bus, there are things we can’t teach. We want people who love kids, who are happy in the morning and get along with the kids, parents and teachers,” Gibson said.

He said one step the company takes in hiring the “best and brightest” is a focus



Kids arrive at school in one of Dattco’s 1,350 school buses. Based in New Britain, Dattco plans to open a location in Hebron. Contributed photo

on employing people local to the service region.

“Local people, they know the town, they know the roads, they have their own kids in the same school,” Gibson said. “They know the culture of an area, they know the people.”

To further ensure the hiring of excellent drivers, the company has several tests and qualifications for applicants, like background checks and drug and alcohol testing.

“It’s great, steady part-time work. We have an excellent retention rate,” Gibson said.

He said Dattco is proud to employ people living in the communities the company depends on.

Another step toward perfect safety is in cooperation with the state Department of Motor Vehicles.

Gibson said the state’s inspection process is one of the most rigorous and thorough in the country.

“The DMV is excellent. We train our people and the state licenses them. There’s no margin for error,” Gibson said.

Dattco’s fleet of vehicles, including school buses, motor coaches and livery vehicles, is held to a high standard of excellence.

Its DMV inspection report card found less than 4 percent of its total fleet of 1,350 school buses were out of service last school year — one of the best rates statewide.

Gibson said he believes this passion for and dedication to excellence stems from the company’s history.

During its first five decades, the company evolved and experienced significant growth.

Dattco purchased new vehicles, was awarded school bus contracts and created several departments to become a full-service transportation company.

Dattco invests in the communities it

serves through its support of events and charities.

In 2015, Dattco converted a decommissioned bus into the “DiscoveryBus” — Plainfield school district’s mobile library.

The bus travels around town bringing books and special guest readers to the community.

In 2017, Dattco provided in-kind services to convert a decommissioned school bus into a “Smart Bus” for Newington public schools.

The Smart Bus travels around the district (and visits other districts) to provide students and community members with access to technology they wouldn’t otherwise have.

Each summer, Dattco donates a bus and driver to the New Britain Public Library to bring library services to the community.

The “Traveling Books” bus makes stops across the city, all summer long.

“We believe community involvement is just a part of being a good corporate citizen,” Gibson said.

For more information about Dattco, visit www.dattco.com.

Follow Jack Lakowsky on Twitter - @JLakowskyTC.



Family Owned Since 1986!

EDUCATIONAL PLAYCARE

Childcare and Schools for Young Children



The Future of Childcare and Preschool is Here!
Enroll with this ad for free registration!
(up to \$150 value!)

860-580-5353

28 Wilbur Cross Way, Storrs, CT 06269

Email: StorrsEPC@EducationalPlaycare.com

Website: EducationalPlaycare.com

