

As the economy continues to drive forward, the need to get from one place to another remains in place



Christine Santora, All-Star Driver

As the Connecticut economy continues to drive forward, thanks to state, county and municipal efforts designed to spur business development, professional training and a less overwhelming real estate environment, one thing remains in place: the need to get from one place to another. Executives, employees, job-seekers, college students - most of us have to hit the road a few times each in order to keep the wheels of our own personal economies turning. Even those of us who use mass transit have to turn on an engine for a few minutes each day.

It's no surprise, then, that one of the Constitution State's fastest-growing and most resilient companies is entirely dedicated to making it as safe as possible for new drivers - both the young and the old - to get behind the wheel and hit the road.

All-Star Driver, the state's largest driving school, has grown at an impressive rate over the last two years and now holds classes in 70 locations throughout Connecticut, including a recently opened branch in Hartford. "It's our first location in the Capital City, and we like to think of it as a validation of our capital plan," said general manager Brandon Dufour, who helped drive the company's success with strong leadership, employee-centered initiatives and community involvement.

"All of our locations are easily accessible to the people who reside in those areas, our staff is highly motivated, and our students are always pleasantly surprised that hitting the road with us is actually stress-free and enjoyable," Dufour said.

In terms of business management, Dufour and his team are proponents of outside-the-box thinking. "Just because driving schools and driving courses have been operating in basically the same ways for generations does not mean we have to," he contends. "In fact, we believe that most schools should take a page from the outside-the-box playbook. If they try new things, they might find that their instructors are engaging more with their students, and that, in turn, will lead to more success in and out of the classroom."

The school has found a successful balance between high-quality training and a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere.

Dufour was able to grow All-Star Driver in a fairly short amount of time to its current size, and to reach its impressive level of achievement, by investing in a new fleet, increasing employee wages, and inspiring the staff by letting them know how much the company is behind them with recognition and improvement initiatives.

In addition to the recent Hartford branch debut (which serves Bloomfield, Windsor and other nearby communities), a Norwalk branch opened several months ago, making that one the fourth in Fairfield County alone.

All-Star Driver was a driving force in student transportation for more than 40 years before expanding into new driver training, which was a natural progression of its proven expertise. With 70 locations, frequent recruitment to fill new positions, and an active calendar of events in the communities in which it operates, the company's most decisive lesson is clear: success doesn't always depend on a proven formula, but simply on moving forward.

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