

## California company finds success in move to Henderson

**HENDERSON, NEV.** – Nancy Munoz of Specialty Vehicles knows a thing or two about being a successful business person.

In 1998, Munoz's Specialty Vehicles was the recipient of the 1998 World Trade Award given by the Los Angeles International Airport and the Los Angeles Port Authority. Two years later, Munoz received the International Business Woman of the Year Award given by the National Association of Women Business Owners.

But after 21 years of running the company in Huntington Beach, Calif., Munoz decided a move to Henderson, Nev., in 2003 would benefit her company. And, as with most things Munoz has done in business, the move was a success.

"We absolutely love it here," said Munoz of being located in Henderson. "We're glad we made the decision to move."

Specialty Vehicles is a distributor of people-moving transportation vehicles – such as trolleys, trams, mini-trams and buses – to organizations all over the world. Each vehicle is designed and built to meet the customer's needs and exact specifications. The company also offers used vehicles, customer support, parts, warranty claims, retrofitting and refurbishment.

Because of the nature of the business, the 9/11 tragedy hit Specialty Vehicles hard. With clients such as the Singapore Zoo, Disneyland and Sea World, the travel and tourism industry stopped buying after the terrorists attacks and Munoz and her company were challenged.

"Our CPA and our attorney said we had to look to get our costs down to nothing," Munoz said. "Finally, they said I had a choice. I could either fire everyone and come to work by myself or we could move to a new

place. We chose the latter and we are glad we did."

The reason for moving from California and to Henderson was simple – cost. Because Specialty Vehicles competes on national and international levels, it is crucial to keep its business costs down to stay competitive with its pricing.

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*General Manager, Specialty Vehicles*

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According to Munoz, the move to Nevada has significantly decreased her costs, particularly on insurance. In California, product and general liability insurance ran in excess of \$100,000 for the company while in Nevada the cost is \$38,000. She also added that the company enjoyed a substantial savings in worker's compensation payments. "All of those savings go to the bottom-line," Munoz said.

But that's not the only benefit the 10-employee company has received. According to Munoz, Specialty Vehicles now owns its Henderson location – a 15,000-square-foot facility – for half of the monthly payment the company was paying for rent in Huntington Beach in a building that needed constant maintenance.

"Everything is new here [in Henderson]. It's nice and clean," said Munoz, who was born and raised in

California.

Located adjacent to Las Vegas, Henderson made a name for itself in the 1990s as being the fastest-growing city in the nation. In fact, Henderson – known for its master-planned communities and high-quality of living – has been at the front of Nevada's growth spurt, growing from just 60,000 people in 1990 to currently over 240,000. That population would make Henderson the 14<sup>th</sup> largest city in the state of California – larger than such cities as Irvine, Glendale and San Bernardino.

Prior to making the move to Henderson, Munoz and her team did a quite a bit of research on locations throughout Arizona and Nevada. However, the advantages of being a Nevada-based corporation made the company's leaders focus purely on Nevada and, ultimately, Henderson.

Munoz added that the City of Henderson's commitment to assisting businesses in relocating is welcomed by those businesses looking for a new home.

"It's been a good experience working with the City of Henderson," Munoz said. "They've been very proactive in helping us to be successful and you can tell they are truly concerned about our needs."

Since the move, Munoz said other benefits have become evident. "Another added bonus was that all the employees could not own houses in Southern California because of the high costs," said Munoz, who said all but one employee made the move with the company to Southern Nevada. "Now, all of our employees own their own houses. And, because there is no state income tax in

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# *HENDERSON ECONOMIC NEWS REPORT*

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## **CON'T – SPECIALTY VEHICLES**

Nevada, it was like all of our employees received raises.”

Specialty Vehicles has also benefited from the addition of business from local businesses and organizations, such as Nevada Business Bus Lines and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. “The market was saturated in California so we didn’t bother to go after the work,” Munoz said. “In Nevada, it’s an added value.”

But of all the unexpected benefits and bonuses of the move, one stands out above the rest – people love to visit Las Vegas. And with Henderson and Specialty Vehicles being just

minutes from Las Vegas’ McCarran International Airport, Munoz said her customers are visiting her like never before.

“Our customers thought it was great that we were making the move,” Munoz said. “Everyone wants to come to Vegas. I have seen more of them since we have moved than I saw in the first 20 years of doing business.”

According to Munoz, customers from as far away as the Caribbean, Singapore and China have come to visit her since Specialty Vehicles relocated to Henderson. “We have a joke around the office on Fridays and

Mondays. We are always trying to guess who is going to drop by because they were in town,” Munoz said. “And it’s great to see them in person. The most important thing in business is having that one-on-one relationship with our customers.”

All joking aside, Henderson was been a perfect fit for Specialty Vehicles.

“All of these little things help,” Munoz said. “It’s been a very good move for our company.”

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