

# PRO

TM

December 2012  
www.promonthly.com



**INDY EXPO**  
Page 22

**PORTABLE RESTROOM OPERATOR**

## *Flipping* **THE FLEET**

Louisiana's Ace Enterprises reloads,  
refreshes service trucks for success

Page 10

## *Rising to* **THE OCCASION**

JOTS Rentals provides soaring service  
for the Great Texas Balloon Race

Page 26

**Ace Enterprises Inc., Baton Rouge, La.**

**Owner:** Braden Jones

**Founded:** 1982

**Services:** Portable sanitation, trash collection, roll-off trash and onsite storage containers

**Employees:** 42

**Associations:** Portable Sanitation Association International, Associated Builders and Contractors, Better Business Bureau

**Website:** [www.aceenterprisesinc.com](http://www.aceenterprisesinc.com)



# Flipping THE FLEET



**A complete turnover of work trucks and a concentration on professional service keep Louisiana's Ace Enterprises ready for any challenge** *By Eric Brothers*

Ace Enterprises drivers are (from left) Lambert Weisse, Steve Williams, Michael Whitehead, Butch Crisler, Willie Head, Patrick Roberson, Randy Allen, Josh Tanner and Sonnijo Diez. They are shown with new vacuum trucks from Keith Huber and PolyJohn Enterprises restrooms awaiting delivery. (Photos by Tim Mueller) >>>

**W**hen Braden Jones saw a pattern of breakdowns in his vacuum service fleet at Ace Enterprises Inc., near Baton Rouge, La., he decided on a bold business move: Replace the entire fleet of 12 portable sanitation rigs in one fell swoop.

What prompted this unusual action? Jones summed it up succinctly: "When your trucks are breaking down every day and you can't keep a truck on the road to keep a customer happy, you have to do something about it."

Making a fresh start with his route-running vehicles is one of a number of interesting moves Jones has made since taking over the 30-year-old family business in 1999.

The company started in 1982 with one truck and 25 restrooms. In recent years, the 35-year-old Ace Enterprises president shepherded the company through a significant growth spurt, all the while focusing on what he says is the key to success for any portable sanitation company: impeccable customer service.

"I grew up in the business, but I always knew I wanted to take it, run with it and make it bigger," Jones says. "I saw a good opportunity to perfect it. I'd come in and say, 'OK, we're running three delivery trucks a day. Let's see how we can maybe cut that to two trucks, but still do the same job or better and keep all the same service.'"

*(continued)*



<<< Ace owner Braden Jones (right) and employee David Remoro add supplies to a PolyJohn Enterprises hand-wash station as they deliver portable sanitation equipment to a business in Baton Rouge, La.

“If you flip your trucks every two years, their value stays up, and I was able to sell all of my other trucks at a good price ... I keep my fleet all identical: white bodies, white wheels; real clean looking.”

**BRADEN JONES**

### TRUCKS BY THE DOZEN

A move toward greater efficiency has been marked by the company’s commitment to upgrade trucks – evidenced by the major fleet overhaul in 2011. At the time, the fleet suffered a variety of engine-related issues. “I have customers to service, and when you don’t service them, you’re not going to keep them,” he notes. As part of the plan, Jones decided to switch cab-and-chassis brands to Peterbilt.

“A Peterbilt has always been known for its class, but it’s also a very reliable truck,” Jones continues. “The little bit more that I paid for them has been well worth it because I have had no more reliability issues.”

Jones hasn’t kept trucks for more than two years, which is about 150,000 miles by his calculations. “If you flip your trucks every two years, their value stays up, and I was able to sell all of my other trucks at a good price,” Jones says. At the same time, newer trucks mean less unanticipated downtime.

All of the new vacuum trucks are 33,000-pound GVWR Peterbilt 337s, powered by 300-horsepower Paccar PX-6 engines and fitted with Allison 2500 RDS automatic transmissions. Mounted on the trucks’ frames are custom-built Keith Huber Princess II tanks made of stainless steel, a material Jones prefers for its acid-resistance. Vacuum is provided by Masport HXL-75 pumps.

“I keep my fleet all identical: white bodies, white wheels; real clean looking,” Jones says. The fleet also includes 13 front-loader refuse trucks

to service commercial customers’ solid-waste hauling needs, part of the company’s business since 1996. Jones is converting those trucks to Peterbilt also, which he’s done with about half of the total so far.

To maintain the fleet, Ace Enterprises has three full-time technicians who can change tires, brakes, hoses and oil, and one of the techs is certified to perform major engine overhauls.

### IN THE YARD

In an effort to improve service ergonomics and efficiency, Jones has developed a new flatbed restroom delivery vehicle built by Keith Huber with a stainless steel vacuum tank. “I wanted to be able to work on this truck easily, so I designed this tank for operators as well as those who repair them when they break,” he adds.

With so many deliveries and pickups over time, Jones wanted to improve the workflow with a task-specific design, eliminating some of the lifting that can cause injuries and lost time among technicians. At the same

Route driver Steve Williams prepares to pump a restroom at a construction site in Baton Rouge, La. >>>



## Extending a helping hand

In 2005, when Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast, a lot of people in the portable sanitation industry locally were suddenly out of business. Most of the available stock of portable restrooms in southern Louisiana was damaged or destroyed, and the extensive flooding ruined trucks and other equipment.

“They didn’t have anything left,” recalls Braden Jones, owner of Ace Enterprises in Baton Rouge, La. Businesses in Baton Rouge responded to help colleagues downstate. “We went down there, providing toilets and roll-offs for the state police and others.” When the local PROs tried to get back in business, they had few if any restrooms in inventory. Jones continues, “So they’d call us for help – and we just became friends.”

At first glance, it may seem odd that Ace Enterprises works with potential competitors, but as Jones says, “The people I work with, I don’t consider them my competitors. Yes, they’re in my region, but not at my back door.”

This friendship born of adversity continues to this day. One example of the ongoing cooperation occurs during New Orleans’ famous Mardi Gras celebration. “My guy down there normally gets 180 to 240 toilets from me every year,” Jones says. “I help him out with whatever he needs: restroom trailers, trucks, whatever.”

Helping others is not limited to friends in the business. Closer to home, Jones and “his guys” donate their services to charitable causes, such as providing restrooms for an autistic children’s walk.

Ace Enterprises general manager Glen Elrod Jr. moves a restroom into place while delivering a load for a St. Patrick's Day parade in Baton Rouge. >>>

time, the trucks, sporting Masport HXL-75 pumps, can provide vacuum service as well as restroom transport.

Ace Enterprises has about 2,700 restrooms, all made by PolyJohn Enterprises. Hand-wash stations, hand-sanitizer stands and holding tanks are also supplied by PolyJohn. Ace's equipment includes a variety of restroom trailers. The fleet includes 12-, 16- and 24-foot restroom trailers from ACSI (Advanced Containment Systems, Inc.), 14- 18- and 28-foot models from JAG Mobile Solutions and a 16-foot unit from American Engineering.

Most trailers are standard offerings from the manufacturers, but Jones says he customized the recent additions from JAG and ACSI. The lavatories feature hands-free dryers so there's less paper towel waste and fewer service issues, he says. Plus, foaming soap now being used is more effective for hand-washing and doesn't have to be replaced as often.

Jones wondered if the Xlerator brand hand dryers really needed the heating element to be effective in usually warm Louisiana. Without the need to heat the air, the dryers require less energy (4 amps versus 15 amps), so standard 110-volt current at 20 amps can supply power to run the dryers, air conditioning and lights.



Ace Enterprises also offers portable holding tanks for commercial jobsites, specifically for office trailers. This business fits nicely with the need for hand-wash stations and portable restrooms for workers at those jobsites.

Ace offers a range of roll-off containers aimed at commercial clients. Overall, Jones says about half of his business is handling liquid waste, the other half, solid waste.



Owner Braden Jones hands out hats from his company's float during a St. Patrick's Day parade in Baton Rouge, La. >>>

## EMPLOYEE RETENTION A KEY

“Our motto, ‘Where Service Matters,’ has always been about putting customers first,” Jones says. “My people take pride in what they do.”

Jones says employee turnover rate is non-existent. “I haven’t had anybody leave in over eight years. All I’ve done is hire since then.” He depends on his current employees to refer new hires. “All of my guys are friends of other friends,” he explains. “Once they get on board, it’s like a big family.”

There are family events, too. In April, the company has a huge crawfish boil for employees, and in December it hosts a Christmas party.

Jones says there’s no secret to attracting and retaining valued employees. He provides a good salary and supplies workers with good trucks and equipment. At the end of the year, if there is money left over, he hands out bonuses because his people “worked hard and made it all possible.”

Ace Enterprises also provides employees with a 401(k) retirement plan and health insurance. While these benefits require more effort and expense on behalf of the company, they encourage employee loyalty.

“Service. Period. Do your job ... Your word and your work is everything. So, if you’re not at a customer’s location on time and don’t do your work properly, then you won’t be in business tomorrow. It’s short, simple and that easy.”

**BRADEN JONES**

## TAKIN’ CARE OF BUSINESS

Attracting and keeping customers is especially important to a service-focused business. “About 90 percent of our business comes by referral,” Jones says. The remaining 10 percent is from Internet search and phone book.

Ace Enterprise’s website answers a lot of customer questions upfront. “It doesn’t look like a lot of thought went into it, but when someone calls for portable toilets or a (container), restroom trailer, large or small roll-off, front loader, hand-wash station or trailer, they can see the actual product and say, ‘That’s what I want.’ My goal is to show everything exactly as you’ll get it.

“I don’t do much advertising at all,” Jones says. “My key is service. Do your job and the customers will come to you.”

The proof of success is to be found in some of Ace Enterprises’ long-term customers. “I’ve been supplying toilets to the state fair for 15-plus years, our balloon festival for many years as well,” Jones says. “There are many events I do every single year.”

Jones is a stickler for professionalism. His advice for other portable restroom operators is concise: “Service. Period. Do your job.” He said his approach is not just for his industry – it applies to any business.

“Your word and your work is everything. So, if you’re not at a customer’s location on time and don’t do your work properly, then you won’t be in business tomorrow. It’s short, simple and that easy.” ■

## MORE INFO

**Advanced Containment Systems, Inc.**  
800/927-2271  
[www.acsi-us.com](http://www.acsi-us.com)

**Allison Transmission**  
[www.allisontransmission.com](http://www.allisontransmission.com)  
(See ad page 5)

**Ameri-Can Engineering**  
574/892-5151  
[www.ameri-can.com](http://www.ameri-can.com)

**JAG Mobile Solutions, Inc.**  
800/815-2557  
[www.jagmobilesolutions.com](http://www.jagmobilesolutions.com)

**Keith Huber, Inc.**  
800/334-8237  
[www.keithhuber.com](http://www.keithhuber.com)

**Masport, Inc.**  
800/228-4510  
[www.masportpump.com](http://www.masportpump.com)

**PolyJohn Enterprises**  
800/292-1305  
[www.polyjohn.com](http://www.polyjohn.com)  
(See ad page 39)