

Mavs take commanding 2-0 lead

SPORTS / D1



Women-owned trucking firms on the rise

BUSINESS BREAK

Zargawi lived almost an hour

WORLD / A2



The Capital



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MAKING A NAME

SKY gains reputation for neurological rehabilitation. **Page 6**



ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

BUSINESS BREAK



Out of the office, but can't get away

Kent Rutter's rural hiking vacation was shaping up to be too much of a good thing.

The trip to the Shenandoah National Park would provide much-needed time out of the office — but it was so far from civilization that he couldn't count on having reception to check messages with his BlackBerry or cell phone.

So the Houston lawyer found a truck stop three miles away where he could check his office e-mail each day in case of any emergencies. And he asked a colleague to be available to answer clients' questions.

"Now I'm really looking forward to it, more than I've looked forward to any vacation in a long time," the 35-year-old says of his upcoming trip. "I'm glad I won't have to stop in the middle of a hike and answer my BlackBerry."

In today's 24-7 work environment, getting away from the office for a little R&R can be difficult, if not impossible. The same technology that enables many of us to log on from home or leave work early for a doctor's appointment without missing an important call creates virtual chains to our offices. At the same time, the more high-level your job, the more your colleagues and your clients

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WORKLIFE
By Lisa Singhania



By Andy Carruthers — The Capital
Joni Suller moved Eagle Express — a trucking firm specializing in retail distribution — from Baltimore County to a 40,000-square-foot location in Harmans last month. The firm is adding to a growing number of women-owned trucking transportation firms in Anne Arundel County.

Women take the wheel

Female truckers overcome obstacles in male-dominated industry. **Page 2**

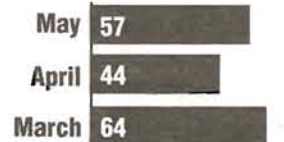
OUTLOOK

Real estate

New listings:



Housing sales



Business licenses



Sources: MRIS, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Capital research

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Which financial statements are key?

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Fire up eager young employees and watch them grow.

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SMALL TALK

Businesses forced to pass on price hikes to customers.

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www.annearundelbusinessbreak.com

Women keep on trucking

Female drivers overcome obstacles in male-dominated industry

By **KATIE ARCIERI**
Staff Writer

Joni Suller was just a girl who needed a break. Stuck in a dead-end job as a customer service agent for Bell Atlantic in the 1990s, she longed for something more but was going nowhere fast.

That changed after her brother, Rick, owner of a company known as Brunner's Delivery Service, encouraged her to jump into the trucking business.

Not afraid to start from scratch, Ms. Suller took the plunge by quitting her job, buying a van and making a go of it in 1997.

"I was like OK, let me give it a try," said the Pasadena resident.

That initial try — followed by the years of obstacles she faced in a historically male-dominated industry — has led to a thriving company called Eagle Express, a trucking firm expected to rake in \$4 million this year.

The firm relocated last month from Baltimore County to a 40,000-square-foot building at 7449 Shipley Ave. in Harmans, adding to a growing number

of women-owned trucking transportation firms in Anne Arundel. According to the county's "Directory of Minority & Woman-Owned Businesses," there are at least five other women-owned firms that provide trucking services in the county.

Jas Trucking Inc. is based in Lothian, and there's Jones of Annapolis Inc. on Generals Highway. Providing hauling and dump truck transportation, K L Phillips Trucking LLC is in Pasadena. Mikelly Enterprises Inc., which specializes in local freight trucking, is on Veterans Highway in Millersville. In Crofton, ProMoving USA provides overnight trucking services, according to the directory.

Anne Ferro, president of the Maryland Motor Truck Association, didn't have exact figures but said more women have gotten into the trucking business over the past 10 years.

"Women are certainly one of the target groups for getting into the industry," she said. "It's great independence, to be your own boss when you're inside that cab."

But getting trucking businesses off the ground is no easy task, said Kay

(See TRUCK, Page 9)



By Andy Carruthers — The Capital

Joni Suller, owner of the Eagle Express trucking firm, talks to folk lift operator Robert McElroy at her company's new 40,000-square-foot location on Shipley Avenue in Harmans.

TRUCK

(Continued from Page 2)

Phillips, owner of KL Phillips Trucking LLC in Pasadena.

Ms. Phillips said she's worked hard to gain respect in trucking circles, especially when she was just a newbie trying to make a name for herself.

"I wasn't out there driving with them before I started a company and they thought I hadn't paid my dues," she said. "You work a little harder, work a little more vigorous, as a woman."

Ms. Suller knows what it means to work like a dog. In 1997, she was ready to run some freight for a company that promised her work.

After getting the runaround for a month, the deal collapsed but that didn't stop her from pushing forward. She started knocking on the doors of larger trucking firms, asking for any extra work. The response wasn't exactly positive.

"They said, 'Oh, this little girl and this van want to carry freight,'" Ms. Suller said.

Finally though, Ms. Suller landed a job delivering medical products to Virginia. She was making crumbs, but at least it was work.

By hauling medical products in a 16-foot truck, Eagle Express grossed \$18,000 in the first nine months of 1997. Then, Ms. Suller caught her big break, and was hired to deliver retail products for 60 Fashion Bug stores in Maryland. In the last quarter of 1997, her company made \$192,000, she said. James Rosa, director of transportation for Charming Shoppes, the parent



By Andy Carruthers — The Capital

Inside the new location of Eagle Express in Harmans, Will Hartley of Baltimore moves a pallet of windows across the room to a waiting truck on the dock.

company of Fashion Bug, soon expanded Ms. Suller's duties to deliver to stores in Virginia, Delaware and Pennsylvania. Mr. Rosa called Ms. Suller a "unique individual" whom he has tremendous respect for because she's built a business in a male-dominated industry.

"I certainly have a lot of personal respect for her," he said. "She would not have gotten past me if she could not have done this."

Soon, Eagle Express began delivering for such businesses as Modell's Sporting Goods, Nine West and Phillips-Van Heusen, further carving out its niche as a retail distribution carrier. And the company's 18,000-square-foot space in Baltimore County was

no longer adequate to handle the growing business.

Last year, though, county economic development officials helped Ms. Suller find a vacant 40,000-square-foot location on Shipley Avenue that fit her needs. Eagle Express moved in last month, transferring 35 employees to Anne Arundel.

Although she has sacrificed time with her family members to build the business, Ms. Suller said it will ultimately benefit them in the end.

"I want my kids to just keep this going and make more of what I have," she said.

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— **James Rosa**,
director of
transportation for
Charming Shoppes