

# Have play room, will travel

*Local entrepreneur profiled in international limo magazine*

By DANETTE DOOLEY

SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM

When Ross Squires set out to add a children-friendly limo bus to his fleet of vehicles, he turned to his daughters, seven-year-old Brianna and four-year-old Cassie, for suggestions.

"I measured out, on our basement floor, the size of the inside of the bus and I started using that as a play area for my two kids. We rigged up a slide and some gym mats to see what we could do with that amount of space," Squires says.

He also invited parents of his children's friends to give feedback.

"The excitement I was getting from everyone who saw what I was doing — I knew it was a wonderful idea for a mobile kids' party room," Squires says.

Once convinced of what he wanted, Squires — who owns and operates Memories Forever on Thorburn Road — contacted limousine companies in Canada and the United States.

"A lot of people wouldn't even take on the job; they thought it was a massive project," he says.

In the limousine business for more than two decades, Squires — who refers to himself as "a risk taker from Day 1" — wasn't about to let his idea die.

After seeing a limo bus on YouTube built by Dominick Vitelli of Quality Coachworks in California, Squires contacted the coach builder to see if he'd be interested in his proj-

ect.

Vitelli was up for the challenge.

It took about four months for the limo bus to be refitted to Squires' specifications.

"There were daily conversations on the phone, e-mails back and forth, drawings that I'd fax to them ... and after some trial and error, we finally got a working prototype," he says.

"The Coach" is a 42-passenger limo bus with a hidden hatch behind the driver's seat that leads to a secret rainbow-coloured maze in the luggage area of the bus.

"It's designed with fold-away walls so that if I need to use that area for storage or for luggage, we can still do that," Squires says.

The vehicle's fold-away seats create a large play area for "park and play" children's parties.

There's also a slide, balance beams, tumble mats, laser lights, an asthma-friendly fog machine, and a

cable-and-pulley zip line that takes children for a ride from one end of the bus to the other.

The coach is easily transformed from a children's playroom to an adult rec room, Squires says.

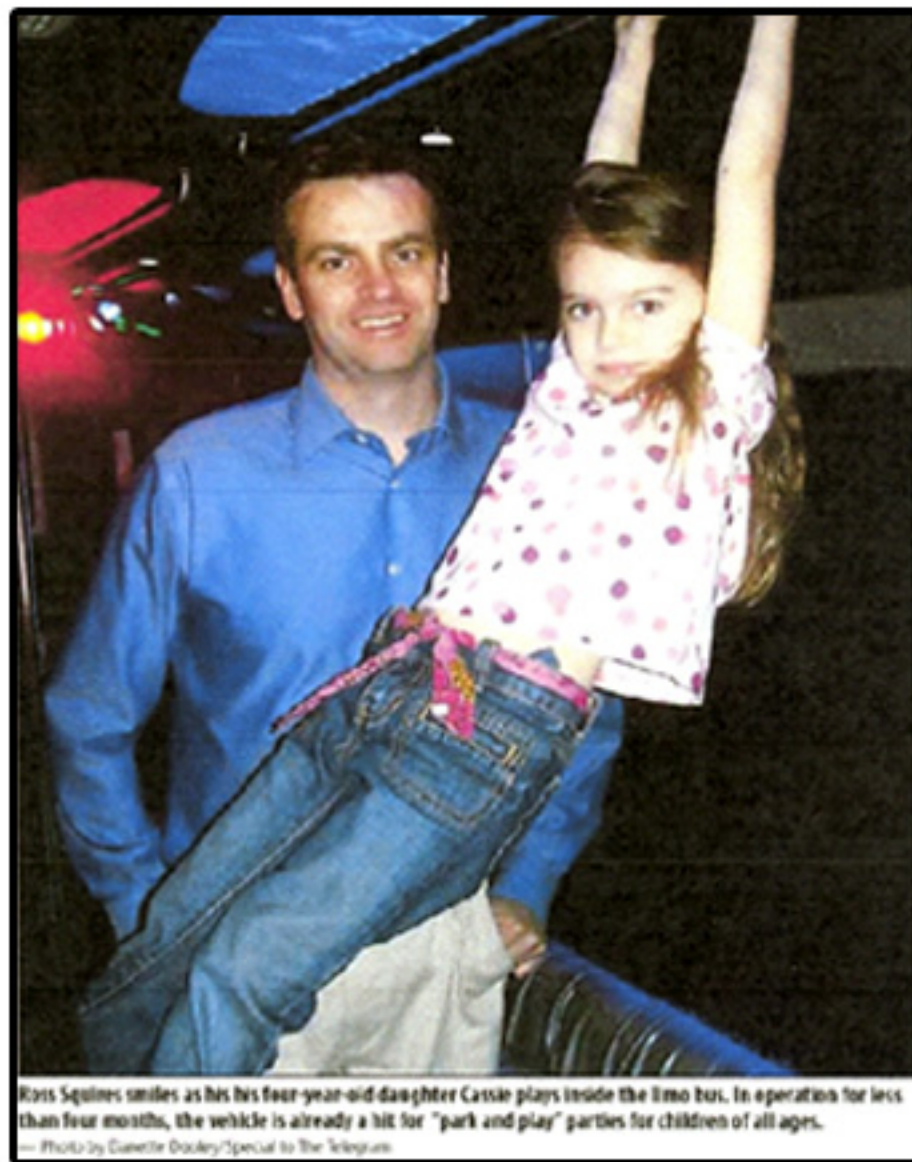
For grownups, the limo bus is equipped with three dance poles, a sound system, several televisions and a wraparound bar (with more than 100 drink holders) along the full interior of the vehicle.

Although the coach has only been in operation since August, Squires has already hired four additional part-time drivers.

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Ross Squires, owner,  
Memories Forever



Ross Squires smiles as his four-year-old daughter Cassie plays inside the limo bus. In operation for less than four months, the vehicle is already a hit for "park and play" parties for children of all ages.

— Photo by Danette Dooley/Special to The Telegram

## Business growing

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The extra staffers were needed to accommodate limo bus parties that now take place every day of the week rather than merely on weekends.

The coach is featured in the September issue of the California-based Limousine Digest.

Touted as "the voice of the luxury ground transportation industry," the magazine is distributed internationally to subscribers.

Liz Hunter, Limousine Digest's associate editor, says the magazine puts the spotlight on unique vehicles that "go beyond the norm" on a regular basis.

The section is titled "Stretching the Limits," Hunter says.

"When people can bring their creativity to a vehicle and also make it useful to the public, we feel it is important to showcase that, which is why Ross and his kid-friendly coach fit the mould entirely for this section," Hunter says.

While the outside of the bus looks like any other, Hunter says, what Squires has done to accommodate so many different types of groups, is what caught her attention.

"Every operator in the limousine industry needs to diversify in this economy, and Ross was a prime example of how thinking outside the box could really put you ahead in business," Hunter says.

For more information on the coach, visit [www.memoriesforever.ca](http://www.memoriesforever.ca).