

RVS FOR LESS

GOING THE EXTRA MILE TO SERVE THEIR CUSTOMERS

In a world where #vanlife has made camping in vans aspirational, it is only fitting to find an RV dealer that was spawned from a van conversion business, even if the RVs on the lot are a far cry from the tiny-

house lifestyle of the camper van. Butch Burson, owner of Tennessee-based RVs For Less (RVsForLess.net), was customizing vans and cars when a customer asked him to work on some buses. That business

transaction turned into a friendship and, after that friend bought a campground, it got him into campers, too. With a small lot to work from, Butch and his wife Karen knew they didn't have the space to sell every kind of camper, so they decided their niche in the industry would be fifth wheels. They have been the No. 1 dealer for DRV Suites for 12 years and among the top for Hampton destination trailers in their region.

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Just as it took the Bursons time to find the right place in the market for their business, they take the time to find the right RVs for their customers. The Bursons say they spend an average of eight hours getting to know each customer. They ask buyers what they are looking for, how they plan to use the RV, and ensure they buy a camper that matches up with their tow vehicle. But they don't stop there.

"When people come here, we encourage them to spend a night or two on our lot to let us do a thorough walk-through with them so they can understand how the camper they are buying works," says Karen. "We like to hook the camper up to their truck and pull it for them. If they've never driven a camper before, we have a mall that



Owners Butch and Karen Burson



General Mgr. Ken Rife

has closed down and we can take them there and we can do some driving lessons with them in the parking lot. We also give them a free starter kit.”

The service doesn't stop when the customer drives off the lot. They are given the cell phone number for Butch and the general manager, Ken Rife, and are encouraged to call if they run into any problems. “We ask them to call us first,” says Karen. “Often, it's something we can help them with or walk them through. If it's an issue we can't walk them through, or they can't seem to fix on their own, then we say you got to call an on-site person or take it somewhere. We truly care about our customers.”

EXPANDING THEIR REACH WITH RVUNIVERSE

About five years ago, RVs For Less began advertising with RVUniverse, which Butch credits with helping them reach new customers. “We set our business up

to be a worldwide company, not just in the United States, and we've sold overseas,” he says. “RVUniverse gets us out to more people. We sell high-end fifth wheels. It's a specialty market, so we're getting customers from California and Washington, all these different areas and RVUniverse gets us into those areas.”

“We get emails that we know are coming through RVUniverse and probably get more inquiries from there than other companies we advertise with” Karen adds. “We definitely are seeing an increase in sales from us advertising with RVUniverse.”

HOPEFUL FOR THE FUTURE

The RV industry has been on a wild ride in recent years with a pandemic-fueled boom for travel trailers and entry-level campers as families looked for ways to travel safely, but recent interest rate hikes and spikes in fuel prices lead to some uncertainty about where the market will head next. While Butch and

Karen are concerned about what the future might hold, they say they also feel like they are in a pretty good position, especially with their service offerings. “We've had customers who bought a camper, found that they liked going out camping, but realized they bought the wrong thing and need to look for a better camper, and that's where we step in,” says Butch, noting that their fifth wheels are four-season campers that attract a lot of people who choose to camp year-round.

“We also stay busy because, in addition to selling new campers, we service them,” Butch adds. “We get people coming back all the time just for us to check their unit over and provide upgrades and customizations. We make sure we put them in the right camper from the beginning, so they aren't constantly trading up. I don't want to be a revolving door where they are back here every year for a new product. We want our customers to be happy with their campers for years to come.”