



Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine
“America’s Fastest Growing Private Companies, 2014”
Inc. Magazine

Annual “500/5000” Award Listing

August 20, 2014: In its signature Fall “500/5000” issue, Inc. Magazine named NW Florida based Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine as “One of America’s Fastest Growing Private Companies.” Located in South Walton County, the company has grown its menu of services to include public transportation along Scenic Highway 30A, Panama City Beach during Spring Break, Seaside employee rideshare, and shuttle service covering the entire Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort.

Local business and community leaders privately funded all four programs.

“This is an award for our company, but more importantly, it’s for the entire community,” said Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine Owner John Finch. “I’d like to personally thank everyone who contributed to these programs and believed in the company. Like us, they know that changing the culture in this region means changing the way people get around.”

Lori Smith, Dir. of PR & Marketing for the Town of Seaside, FL, added, “It’s been encouraging watching the company grow, and to include our services as part of their expansion.”

Celebrating its 10 Year Anniversary, Mr. Finch started Sunshine as a “man and a van” operation solely to provide reliable airport transportation from the resort area of 30A to the former Panama City Beach Airport.

When it became obvious that offering a higher level of customer service to all airports was a need, he grew the company little by little, and now has a fleet of over 75 vehicles. That number makes Sunshine the largest ground transportation provider in NW Florida, and the only full fleet operator west of Tallahassee.

“Thank you, Inc. Magazine, for recognizing a small business in this part of the country. As recent statistics show, Walton County is growing faster than any county in Florida, behind only Miami-Dade. We look forward to growing along with it!



Transforming Your Tourism Transportation Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine

Your wedding ring and other precious jewelry need cleaning. A friend tells you about a new app that performs this service, so you download it. With a few clicks on your smartphone, at a designated time a complete stranger shows up at your house. Handing over your priceless family heirlooms, you watch as the person you've just met drives away. Would you use this service? I'm guessing most wouldn't, but guess what? Putting your safety in the hands of an app-based transportation network company (TNC), such as Uber, Lyft, and a handful of other startups, is identical to this scenario. Only instead of handing over jewelry to a total stranger, you're trusting them with your, or your family's life.

With this in mind, airports throughout the United States are bringing in preferred transportation providers. Northwest Florida's Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine is one such provider. When an RFP was put out by Northwest Florida's new Beaches International Airport (BCP), Sunshine Shuttle displayed the credentials necessary to staff an internal kiosk and maintain the required number of vehicles on-site. This enables the airport one point of contact for most ground transportation needs, and drastically reduces costs and time dedicated to policing the taxis on the curb.

Most legitimate companies servicing the Northwest Florida airports are single-owner operators, with one vehicle in their "fleet." Uber and Lyft fall into this category. This means multiple permits and insurance checks by the airport staff, and most importantly, no accountability on the part of the drivers. When a

flight is delayed, most cabbies call it quits for the night, leaving passengers stranded. We hear these stories all the time in desperate calls for transportation, once someone's booked ride doesn't show up to get them, often after a long and tiring flight too. Due to their contract, Sunshine's staff will not leave BCP until the last passenger has exited the terminal. Quite a change from the wild, wild, west days of the Redneck Riviera.

"We, as a community, have a responsibility to be ambassadors for the region," says Sunshine's Owner, John Finch. "We're the first point of contact when a visitor steps off their plane, and their last impression before heading home. If the people servicing our airports are unprofessional, using their personal vehicles for paid transportation with little attention to customer service, we will not see that visitor again, plain and simple."

By Carlton Proctor
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Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine operates more than 40 vehicles and has revenue of more than \$3 million.

Giving the Area a Lift

John Finch saw a need for reliable transportation services along the northwest Florida coast.

Finding reliable taxi service to and from northwest Florida airports was a recurring problem for Destin vacationer John Finch.

So the Memphis businessman, who moved to Walton County in 2004, decided to take matters into his own hands, launching Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine in Santa Rosa Beach with a single van and a lot of business savvy.

"I decided to start a cab company because it was an underserved market, and no one in the area seemed able to get it right," he says.

A decade later, Finch's company operates more than 40 vehicles, has 25 full-time and 50 part-time employees, annual revenue of more than \$3 million and recently was named to *Inc.* magazine's 2014 list of 5000 fastest-growing private U.S. companies.

Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine now provides a broad array of transportation services — from



John Finch

limos and buses to taxis and vans — along the coast from Apalachicola west to Pensacola. The company recently became the preferred transportation provider for Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport.

"John realized early on the area around Destin and Highway 20A linking Seaside and Grayton Beach was becoming more and more a major destination," says Alan Roberts, vice president of sales and marketing. "His mindset was there should be quality transportation services that match the quality of the resorts."

Last spring, Finch's company rolled out a 21-day spring break program offering free rides along the area's beach roads. The free-ride spring break program was so successful, Roberts says, that this season he expects to expand it to five vehicles and possibly provide the service throughout the summer.



Bill Johnson

Players

▶ **Enterprise Florida's** board of directors chose former PortMiami Director **Bill Johnson** to replace **Gray Swoope** as CEO. Johnson becomes

the governor's top economic ambassador. Swoope resigned in January to take a job in the private sector.

▶ **Skip Foster**, formerly publisher of the Northwest Florida Daily News in Fort Walton Beach, is the new

president & publisher of the Tallahassee Democrat.

▶ **Debra Jenkins** has been named corporate director of Risk Management for Baptist Health Care in Pensacola.

▶ **Ian C. Donkin** is the new

president and CEO of Farmers & Merchants Bank in Tallahassee. Donkin previously was the bank's COO.

▶ **State Rep. Clay Ingram**, R-Pensacola, is the new president and CEO of the Greater Pensacola Chamber.