



# INTERVIEW

## TIA LEONHARD,

marketing and branding specialist, Mid-State Truck Service

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, *Badger Common Tater*



**NAME:** Tia Leonhard

**TITLE:** Marketing and branding specialist, and connected technology manager

**COMPANY:** Mid-State Truck Service

**LOCATION:** Marshfield, WI

**HOMETOWN:** Marshfield

**TIME IN PRESENT POSITION:** Three months, and with Mid-State Truck Service for two years

**PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT:** V&H Truck, Inc./ I-State Truck Center

**HOBBIES:** “When I’m not at work, it’s normally a safe bet to guess that I’m with my horse, whether just out at the barn or traveling to shows. I also like all things outdoors, from spending time with my dogs and camping to snowboarding in the winter.”

*It was the first day of September, in 1965,* when Mid-State Truck Service, Inc., founded by Frank Vandehey, became an authorized International Truck dealership in Marshfield, Wisconsin. And not too long thereafter, commercial truck leasing and rental, as well as the International School Bus franchise for the state of Wisconsin, were added to the company profile.

In the late 1980’s business grew, resulting in the expansion to two additional Wisconsin-based locations, Wisconsin Rapids and Plover.

After 34 years as general manager and president, Frank retired, in 1999, and turned ownership over to his two sons, Jon and Tom Vandehey.

Following in their father’s footsteps, in 2005, Jon and Tom expanded the Mid-State Truck footprint further and acquired four more Wisconsin-based dealerships, in Abbotsford, Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire and Wausau.

Almost a decade later, the need to continue meeting high market demands resulted in the consolidation of the two Chippewa Valley locations into a new, larger, and more efficient facility.

In 2013, Mid-State Truck Service announced the addition of the Isuzu

Commercial Truck product line, adding regional support for sales, service, and parts, as well as truck leasing and rental.

“In 2016, a much-needed expansion was finalized at our Plover facility,” says Tia Leonhard, marketing and branding specialist for Mid-State Truck Service, “doubling the shop’s size as well as updating other areas, all geared towards creating a better customer experience.”

**Above:** When a customer or employee comes to Mid-State Truck Service, the company does its best to make that person a partner or team member for life,” says Tia Leonhard, marketing and branding specialist working out of the Marshfield, Wisconsin, location, who’s shown in front of an International truck cab. The Plover location of Mid-State Truck has the largest concentration of potato and vegetable grower customers.





In early 2020, Mid-State Truck Service once again expanded its dealership network and acquired two Minnesota locations, one in Duluth and the other in Virginia.

Today, Mid-State Truck Service has eight locations that are still dedicated to the communities they serve.

**With so many locations, does Mid-State Truck still operate and feel like a family-owned business?**

Even with eight locations, our teams all communicate and work together on a daily basis. The Vandehey's have instilled the core value of being a family-focused company from the very beginning.

They go above and beyond to make sure their team members, families, and customers are taken care of to the highest standard.

**Why was the company able to expand to eight locations? What has been the secret to its success?**

The Vandehey brothers say Mid-State became the eight-location organization it is today by never turning its attention away from those it has pledged to support.

When a customer or employee comes to Mid-State Truck Service, the company does its best to make that person a partner or team member for life.



In the lobby of the Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, location is a display giving some history of the company. On September 1, 1965, Mid-State Truck Inc., founded by Frank Vandehey, became an authorized International Truck dealership in Marshfield.

**Mid-State Truck Service is a member of the WPVGA Associate Division and attends the Industry Show in Stevens Point each February. Has the company always been involved in agriculture, and why is that important?** We've always been involved in the agriculture industry as it is a huge part of our area, with several of our locations being in rural communities.

A good amount of what we do touches some aspect of the agriculture industry in one way

or another.

**Why is it important for you and the company to be a member of the WPVGA?** Being a member of the WPVGA helps us by supporting the industry. It gives us a great opportunity to work closely with our customers' needs to help them be as efficient and profitable as possible and to be able to keep up with industry challenges, goals, and needs.

*continued on pg. 10*

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continued from pg. 9

It also provides great networking opportunities.

**In addition to new and used, medium and heavy-duty commercial truck sales and leasing, what are some other dynamic areas of the business?** Each Mid-State location offers full-service shops for all makes and models that employ OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer), ASE (Automotive Service Excellence), and Diamond Edge certified technicians that take care of everything from routine maintenance to emergency breakdown service.

Our parts departments house over \$5 million in parts, encompassing an extensive all-makes parts inventory, and each is an Authorized International®, Isuzu®, CAT®, and Cummins® parts dealer.

In addition to a wide selection of new and used, medium and heavy-duty commercial trucks, we are also an IC (International Coach/Chassis) bus dealer for Wisconsin and were named 2022 IC Bus Dealer of the Year.

**Congratulations! What, in your mind, sets Mid-State Truck Service apart? What does the company offer**



**that others don't necessarily?** Our history is what sets us apart. Over the years, Mid-State Truck Service has been able to expand by providing outstanding maintenance service, a comprehensive line of medium, heavy, and severe-duty trucks, as well as school and commercial buses.

We believe in hiring the best employees and investing in them with the training and tools necessary for success. All these parts, services, capabilities, and investments make sure trucks stay on the road!

**Above:** From left to right are Frank, Tom and Jon Vandehey. The founder of Mid-State Truck, Frank retired in 1999 and turned ownership over to his two sons, Tom and Jon.

**Are you only selling to businesses and not private or individual sales? Is that what "commercial" implies?**

Mid-State Truck Service will help anyone looking for a truck, whether it is new or used. From hundred-truck fleets, down to individual owners, we are here to help.

**What truck brands do you specialize in?** We are an International and Isuzu certified dealer, as well as IC, Collins, and Diamond buses.

**Do certain Mid-State Truck locations specialize in sales or services that others don't? What about the Plover location?** Our Plover location sees our largest concentration of potato and vegetable growers. Marshfield houses our body and reconditioning shops, while our frame shop that provides axle installation and frame lengthening is at the Abbotsford location.

**Does being an Idealease member (with Tom sitting on the Board) help with leasing and renting?** Idealease of Central Wisconsin is our lease and rental company that allows us to be

An advertisement for M.P.B. Builders, Inc. featuring a large white commercial building with multiple bays. The text includes the company name, a tagline, a list of services, contact information, and a website. There is also a logo for Butler Star.

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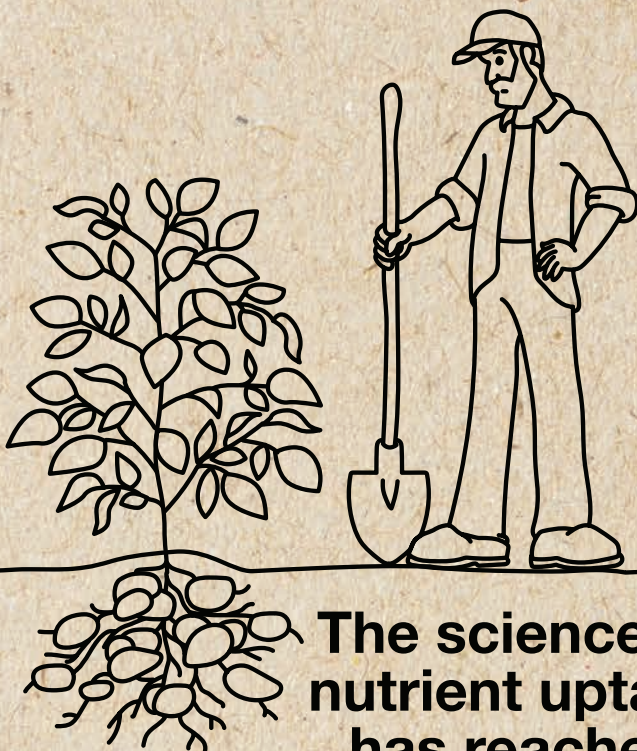
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continued on pg. 12





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able to provide additional options to our customers.

Tom sitting on the Board doesn't particularly affect our leasing and rental capabilities, however we have a team that focuses on all things lease and rental, including monitoring the fleet for breakdowns to help facilitate repair efficiency.

**Why is service after the sale important, particularly in the agriculture end of the business?**

Mid-State is invested in providing our customers service and support that is second to none.

In this industry, downtime means loss of revenue for our customers, so we do everything in our power

to make sure we keep them on the road or in the fields.

We aim to build relationships with our customers to keep their trust that the Mid-State family is here to help them with any needs or issues that may arise. If they are in the peak of harvest and equipment goes down in the field, we want to be their first trusted call.



**Speaking of agriculture, what types of services do you provide to growers and agribusiness owners/truckers/shippers that are perhaps**

**Above and Left:** In its 14th year, Mid-State Truck's annual Truckers for Tots campaign supports the Toys for Tots mission of alleviating financial stress during the holidays and making sure children have something to open Christmas morning. In 2022, the Truckers for Tots campaign contributed over \$65,000 in new toys to local communities. The photos were taken at Fleet Farm in Stevens Point, November 30. Fleet Farm is the retailer for each of five shopping events that take place in different locations. At each event, participating employee volunteers and community members overflow their carts with toys that are then loaded onto a semi-trailer and taken to the local Toys for Tots distribution center.



**specific to those businesses?** We service everything from the machines that harvest to the trucks that transport the goods.

During harvest, our service department will service equipment in the field to make sure growers are able to complete operations even after a failure occurs.

Most recently, we even rebuilt the engine for the Spudmobile!

**Is community service or involvement part of the corporate culture, and if so, in what ways?** Mid-State is very involved in our local communities, from being part of chambers of commerce, Boys and Girls Clubs, and foundations, to our annual Truckers for Tots campaign that supports each local Toys for Tots Foundation.

*continued on pg. 14*

**Right:** Mid-State Truck has won several national dealer and dealer service awards. Company owners Jon (left) and Tom Vandehey accept one such award.





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## Interview . . .

continued from pg. 13



Then and now: In 1965, Mid-State Truck Service became an authorized International Truck dealership in Marshfield, and not too long thereafter, commercial truck leasing and rental, as well as the International School Bus franchise for the state of Wisconsin, were added to the company profile. Marshfield houses Mid-State's body and reconditioning shops.



We care about continuing to make our overall community a great place to live and raise a family.

**I see Mid-State Truck Service has won several national dealer and dealer service awards. Does that help the business' reputation and in what way?** It helps solidify the fact that we strive to go above and beyond in providing excellent service, facilities, and overall experience to our customers at every chance we get.

**Have supply chain issues hit the trucking industry hard?** As with all industries, we are seeing

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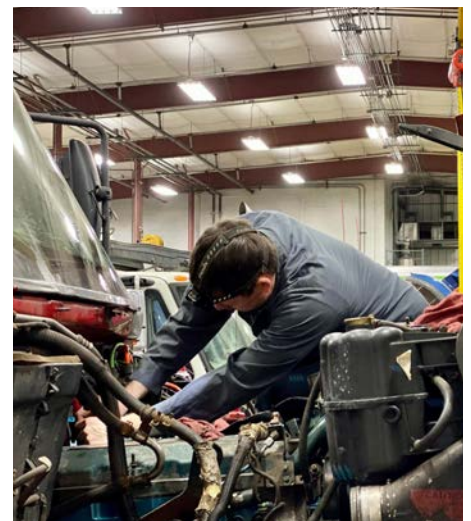
*"In this industry, downtime means loss of revenue for our customers, so we do everything in our power to make sure we keep them on the road or in the fields."*

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**– Tia Leonhard**



The HX Series of International dump trucks comes with a range of factory-installed lift axles.



A Mid-State Truck service technician works on an engine.





Several models from Mid-State are displayed at Wisconsin's Farm Tech Days.

supply chain issues in every facet of the business. It spans from parts availability to truck manufacturing.

**What about driver shortages?** We hear firsthand from the relationships we have created with our customers how driver shortages are affecting our industry. It is frustrating and creates challenges, but also highlights just how important these drivers are to keep our world trucking.

**How has Mid-State Truck Service been able to adapt and continue to do business in such an environment?** Mid-State Truck has a "yes we can" attitude. We don't stop searching or trying until we have a solution.

We look to offset any constraints by utilizing all industry manufacturers to source necessary components. We look to find the best availability and pricing options to get our customers back up and running as soon as possible. **BCT**

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Left to right: Sid, John, Jonathan, Carl, Nick and Cliff.

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