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Volvo Rents buys Tuff Equipment Rentals

By Erik Sanzenbach
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Volvo is coming to Slidell, Covington and Hammond.

Well, actually, it is Volvo Rents, which is a subsidiary of the Volvo Group that makes all those fine cars. Volvo Rents recently bought locally owned Tuff Equipment Rentals that has stores in Slidell, Covington and Hammond.

Tuff was owned by Ralph Kastner Sr., his son Ralph Kastner Jr. and his daughter Amy Barrios. Kastner Sr. first opened Tuff Equipment on Old Spanish Trail in 1998. The company rents out small to medium-sized construction equipment, or what Kastner Jr. calls "compact dirt equipment."

"It's our specialty, our niche," Kastner Jr. said.

As the company grew, they moved to Pontchartrain Drive. However, Katrina pretty much wiped out the building there. Today they are on 11 acres of land at the intersection of U.S. Highway 11 and Interstate 12. Later, the Kastners bought out an equipment rental company that had offices in Mandeville. From there, they moved the Mandeville office to Covington and opened up a new store in Hammond.

Why sell to Volvo Rents when Tuff Equipment is doing so well?



The owners of Tuff Equipment, Rental Ralph Kastner Jr., left, Amy Barrios and Ralph Kastner Sr. stand in front of their Slidell store, which will soon become Volvo Rents. (Staff Photo by Erik Sanzenbach)

"We're at the top of our game," explained Kastner Jr. "Either we grow and open more stores, or let somebody else do it."

The other reason the Kastners think it was a good move was because of Tuff Equipment's 54 employees at their three stores.

"We don't have to cut any jobs," Kastner Jr. said. "Our employees will grow with the company."

Volvo Rents is a fast-growing company, the

Volvo, they'll be getting in on the ground. It's exciting for my son and the employees."

The inventory will not be changed either. Kastner Jr. said Volvo Rents will add bigger trucks and bulldozers, but everything will pretty much stay the same.

Also, Kastner Jr. will stay on as regional manager of all three stores, and Barrios will stay on as divisional accounting manager. What about Ralph Kastner Sr.?

"I'm walking away," he said. But he added he would keep his hand in some of his real estate holdings.

The Kastners said that people will start to see the changes to the store within the next couple of months as the signs are changed, and new equipment comes in. But Kastner Sr. said their company's great reputation for service will not change.

"We're a team here. It's the people that makes it work," he said.

Kastners said. It owns about 70 rental stores across the country and Canada. They also have a franchise business, but Volvo Rents is moving to have all the stores company owned.

There are already three Volvo Rents stores in Louisiana, in Bossier City, Alexandria and Geismar.

"This is a great opportunity for our employees to move up in the company," Kastner Sr. said. "And with