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March 6, 2006

Indiana innovator

Who: Dallas Smith.



Zoom

Low to the ground: Dallas Smith invented a Z-Frame chassis that lowers the height of trucks. He also designed a low-riding shuttle bus, which makes it easier for elderly and disabled people to get on and off. - Photo provided by Willow Marketing

Company: Dallas Smith Corp.

Location: Greencastle.

The invention: Smith invented a Z-Frame chassis that sits about 8 inches off the ground, compared with a standard cargo van that is 24 to 26 inches off the road. A standard Ford F-450-/550 Super Duty Series truck can become a low-floor vehicle. Using the chassis in other applications, Smith designed the Dallas Smith Corp. Friendly Bus, a low-riding shuttle bus, which makes it easier for elderly and disabled people to get on and off.

Amount of money invested: Upward of \$2 million.

How you got the idea for the invention: Smith needed a new way to haul additional automobiles to stay competitive. His Axleless

suspension system allowed an additional car between the trailer's rear wheels. The low-floor feature came as a secondary benefit.

Where the product is available: The Boss Van and Friendly Bus can be ordered from Dallas Smith Corp. in Greencastle. Ford Trucks commercial truck dealerships throughout North America will handle all other orders for the Ford F-450/550 Z-Frame low-floor cab chassis vehicles.

Do you have other patents? Smith and his company have 15 patents on the Z-Frame low-floor chassis and its Axleless air ride suspension technology. In addition, he has 58 automotive industry patents, including robotic transport trailers, automatic car wash systems and all-wheel-drive vehicles. Smith also holds patents for fiberboard furniture dating back to 1950.

If you know someone whose business innovations or inventions are

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