

FORTUNE

DISPLAY UNTIL MARCH 27, 2006

YOU DO WHAT?



KIDDIE-RIDE REFURBISHER

Damon Carson, 34, Kiddie Rides USA, Denver

THE COMPANY IS ALMOST 30 YEARS OLD, BUT I'M NEW. My wife and I bought it 18 months ago when it was on its last legs. Everybody has been marketing kiddie rides as vending equipment, a coin-operated piece at the supermarket, but that industry is pretty much dying. I see these rides as equal parts 60-second amusement rides for kids and nostalgic American icons for adults. Everything imaginable in the past 50 years has been captured in a kiddie ride. We sold a Ghostbusters kiddie ride to a large Ghostbusters memorabilia collector. I cold-called a marketing exec at Wells Fargo and told him I had really cool old stagecoach rides we could customize

for them. They ended up buying three. We strictly recraft old rides. We do not mass-produce them. The prices run anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000. People will call us real meekly and ask, Do you sell these to individuals? I say, Absolutely! People think that you need to be a vending company to buy these things. We've painted rides to look exactly like prized stallions or cherished automobiles and boats. Everyone loves something in miniature. Before this my wife and I owned a garbage company. No one gets excited about talking to the garbage guy. These days I can't tell who's more excited—me or the customer. — *Interview by Jenny Mero*

Photograph by William Lamson