

# FINDING SUCCESS ALLOWS COMPANY TO GIVE BACK

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In 1970, Western Materials Handling & Equipment was launched in Calgary, becoming the first Toyota forklift dealership in Canada. Today, 45 years later, it still proudly waves its flag while becoming a much-decorated dealer, winner of many awards from Toyota for its manner of doing business.



*BRIAN WATSON/ CALGARY HERALD*

**Western Materials Handling's Kyle Hudson, general service manager, CEO Kirk Hudson and president Lloyd Cunningham take pride in four decades of business excellence and in providing support to the community they serve.**

The company was started by Lee Miller, who was soon after joined by mechanic Kirk Hudson, who along with three partners purchased Western Materials Handling ( Westmat) in 1979 when Miller retired.

Hudson is now the sole owner and has taken on the role of CEO but has passed the day- to- day running of the company to Lloyd Cunningham, the president who also started as a mechanic 40 years ago. Hudson's son Kyle is general service manager, helped by a large fleet of fully equipped service vehicles and welding trucks that will do in- shop repairs or travel to site.

The Calgary company branched out into Edmonton in 1972 and since then has opened additional dealerships in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie and Red Deer.

Hudson says the relationship with Toyota, the largest forklift manufacturer in the world, has been exceptional and Western Materials Handling remains as its exclusive forklift dealer in the province. The firm also represents two other makes: Load Lifter and Kalmar.

It means that customers can choose to purchase or rent equipment that will lift from 1,360 to 45,000 kilograms, depending upon the usage. And Westmat has qualified, experienced staff that will help the customer to decide which is the best forklift for their needs. Often it is the environment that dictates what surface will they travel on, what hazards are nearby, the choice between an electric- driven model, propane or diesel — as well as options like cabs and safety equipment for specialty handling. Staff conduct a site survey to assess needs to provide the most cost- effective solution, either by sale or by lease.

Provincial law dictates that drivers of forklifts must have an operators' licence and Westmat has trainers certified by Occupational Health and Safety to train them and issue licences, either at any of the Westmat dealerships or on- site.

Westmat also offers an extensive used- equipment fleet numbering 300 and a huge inventory of factory parts that are the key to minimizing downtime. The success of the well- managed company over the years has allowed Kirk Hudson to give back to this community in many generous ways.

His big commitment is to children, joining other Calgary business people in promoting and supporting the Business Fore Calgary Kids annual golf tournament over the past nine years, for eight years as platinum sponsor and now title sponsor for the charity that has raised \$ 2 million in its 10- year history — with no overhead. Thanks to other companies like Westmat, every dollar raised goes to help children through a variety of local charities.