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FedEx mechanics form company to address maintenance needs at Tunica Airport

Memphis Business Journal - by [Einat Paz-Frankel](#)

With an entrepreneurial spirit and technical expertise he has acquired at **FedEx Corp.**, Michael Silvius opened the first maintenance shop at **Tunica Airport**.

Along with nine fellow FedEx mechanics, who continue to work for the giant shipper, Silvius' **Tunica Air Group** has been offering aircraft maintenance at the airport since October 2006, and business is picking up rapidly.

"We've doubled our revenues each month," Silvius, president of TAG, says.

When Silvius and his colleagues last year heard about Pan Am Clipper Connection starting a new scheduled air service from Tunica to Atlanta, they immediately saw the opportunity.

"We thought, who the heck is taking care of their planes?" says Robert Polly, vice president of operations for TAG. "We thought Pan Am was perfect since their planes are our FedEx expertise."

And so in May 2006, Silvius and Polly presented their business plan -- Cliff Nash, executive director of the airport, says it's the best he'd seen -- to the Tunica Airport Commission, and the rest is history.

"They welcomed us with open arms," Silvius says.

Last fall, Pan Am ceased to serve Tunica, but that doesn't deter Silvius and Polly, who say they're not doing it for the money.

"It's a new venture we want to build," Polly says. "It's like having a baby and watching it grow. There are a ton of possibilities."

More business could be coming their way after Tunica Airport finds a replacement for Pan Am. Tunica County and airport officials say the new carrier might fly to multiple destinations, not just Atlanta.

Silvius and his colleagues hope to offer additional services in the next few years.

"We would like to diversify, with flight instruction and possibly a charter airline," Polly says.

Charter airline Sky King, which operates a fleet of six Boeing 727 planes, is currently TAG's largest client.

"They integrate us more and more," Silvius says.



ALAN HOWELL | MBJ

Michael Silvius and Robert Polly have launched Tunica Air Group.

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But with TAG providing scheduled and unscheduled maintenance 24/7, other pilots increasingly choose to land at Tunica Airport for maintenance.

"Maintenance has always been our Achilles heel," Nash says.

Once the Achilles heel, maintenance has turned out to be a profit center for the airport. Aircraft landing at the airport for maintenance also purchase fuel, which is one of the airport's primary sources of income.

TAG performs repairs in a hangar space it leases from the airport. Depending on the type and size of the aircraft, TAG's services cost between \$50-\$100 per hour.

With rich military histories, Silvius and Polly don't complain about working hard -- they work shifts at TAG to cover all hours of the day while working full time for FedEx -- and credit much of their success to FedEx.

"We've learned the world from Fed-Ex," Silvius says.

Tunica Air Group

Aircraft maintenance

President: Michael Silvius

Employees: 10

Address: 211 S. Airport, Tunica, Miss.

Phone: (662) 357-7350

Web site: www.tunicaairgroup.com

ep@bizjournals.com | 259-1764

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