



January 6, 2004

KOA's Franchisee of the Year

by Dennis Gaub, for KOA Kompass

The Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, KOA earned Franchisee of the Year honors for 2003, thanks to superior customer service – each campground visitor gets individual attention – and a commitment to constantly improve campground amenities.

The Bergeron family KOA, as Emile Bergeron prefers it be called, earned the top award among campgrounds throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico during KOA's annual convention last month in Reno.

Bergeron and his wife, Linda, and their son, John, and his wife, Lorelle, operate the campground. Visitors are almost certain to meet another family member during their stay: Simone, the 4-year-old daughter of John and Lorelle.

Emile Bergeron was a financial manager for an automobile company in New Hampshire, and Linda was a postal carrier before they bought the Gettysburg campground 12 years ago.

Bergeron attributed the campground's continuing success, capped by this year's top award, to two factors:

1. "The overall criteria we've always had is customer service. We go out of our way to serve the customer individually and to provide a facility they're looking for.
2. "Second, we really to strive to improve and change the campground. We try to do something new every year so there's something for our repeat customers."

The award generally came as a surprise to previous Franchisee of the Year winners since no finalists were announced. This year, KOA changed the process and nominated five campgrounds for the award, then sent letters to the finalists about three weeks before the convention.

"This year they felt, probably rightly so, that so many people were close and never knew it," Bergeron said. "The old standard of just being nominated as an honor alone certainly comes into play."

Still, when the Bergerons were called on the stage in Reno, "we were very, very surprised," Emile Bergeron said.

"We're a fairly small campground, and for a small campground to win is sort of like a double honor," he said.

Bergeron said he's not sure everyone appreciates the significance of the award: "There are 500 KOAs, and to be picked Franchisee of the Year is something really special."

KOA President Jim Rogers, in remarks before the award was announced, said qualifications the recipient must meet include having been in the KOA system for some time and compiling a record as a "team player." Also, the honoree needs to have demonstrated entrepreneurial drive and to have received high marks in camper satisfaction surveys.

Bergeron said developing the Gettysburg campground into a premiere facility wasn't easy.

"We have some real tough terrain to work with," he said. "When we bought the property, the original flatland area had already been developed and the only thing left was 40 acres

that are up a fairly steep hill.

"It's very rough, bouldery type land. I always tell everybody the glacier stopped there, dumped all the crap out and receded," Bergeron said.

When the Bergerons took over, the campground had 99 campsites and two basic cabins. Today, the Gettysburg KOA has 23 Kamping Kabins, Kottages and lodges – two of the lodges were added last spring. The Bergerons also remodeled the campground swimming pool in 2003.

Civil War history provides a natural marketing theme for the Bergerons since their campground lies one-half mile from the boundary of Gettysburg National Park and five miles from the park historical center.

The Bergerons also put considerable effort into feeding their guests. The campground offers pancake breakfasts every morning. It also has a deal with a nearby restaurant that allows campers to order from a menu in the campground general store and to have the hot meal delivered to campsites by campground staff.

[Newsletter Archives](#)

© 2004, Kampgrounds of America, Inc.