

Paralegal with Entrepreneurial Spirit Puts Skills To Good Use

New York City parking situation offers opportunity.

BY STEVE GUST

Hurried New York City motorists looking for that elusive parking spot probably don't have a better friend than Louis Camporeale, owner and founder of The Parking Pal Company.

The business, which helps car owners park legally, would not have come into existence without Camporeale's paralegal training. Shortly after receiving his paralegal certificate from New York University in Manhattan in 1994, he started formulating this idea while researching traffic statutes for an attorney. An article on the fines collected by the New York Parking Violations Bureau (PVB) and his own many experiences with parking tickets while going to college were additional inspiration.



Parking Pal Louis Camporeale: "When you know your rights — you can't be taken for a ride."

Camporeale decided it was time to use his training to give the public a chance to fight city hall. The vehicle for this, which is now his life's mission, is Parking Pal.

"I knew there was a good market for this because just about everyone in New York has gotten a ticket," Camporeale said. "Last year New York issued 9 million tickets for the city's 8.4 million cars."

Parking Pal, Camporeale said, gives motorists an advantage by knowing their legal rights.

One of Camporeale's many products is a special placard, for \$9.95, that can be mounted on dashboards, telling traffic enforcement agents that the vehicle is legally parked.

Other plastic-covered placards, selling for \$12.95, identify commercial and medical professionals. And he offers an instructional booklet entitled "How to Take a Photo for the PVB."

He puts out a newsletter to keep his 3,000 Parking Pal customers up-to-date on the laws. "The law can change and the public needs to know about the changes," he said. And his book, which is almost ready for publication, provides strategies for fighting tickets and tips on how to avoid them in the first place.

For example, many people don't know it's not illegal to park in front of broken meters. "In New York, you have sixty-eight thousand parking meters and fifteen percent of them may be broken at any time," he said.

Parking is big business in the Big Apple, with the city taking in fine revenues of \$356 million, much more than the second-highest city on the list — Los Angeles at \$80 million.

Many people don't know their legal rights, and it isn't easy to figure them out, Camporeale said. The New York City laws are 90 pages and the state statutes are 700 pages.

Most people don't know that in the absence of a sign, they are protected under Subsection 4-08, Subsection (a), General Provisions, Subsection (i), of the NYC Department of Transportation Rules. But Camporeale does and he wants everyone else to know also.

The parking-rights warrior conducts seminars and even writes a column on the subject for three smaller newspapers in the New York City area.

Camporeale plans another book, and hasn't ruled out starting similar businesses in other large cities. Until then, he's closely watching the law for any changes aimed at tapping into the wallets of New York City drivers.

Camporeale credits his paralegal training for his success in his quest against city hall and its multimillion-dollar parking-ticket venture.

"There's no doubt about it," he said. "Without my paralegal training, I would have never gotten into this." 🐾