



# CATA Bulletin

DRIVE **CHICAGO** .COM  
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## Chicago helps with income tax filings for low-wage earners

Chicago dealers should alert their employees about a city program that helps low-income Chicago residents fill out their tax forms, get tax credits and invest any refunds before they are spent.

The program is an effort to help more eligible taxpayers use the Earned Income Tax Credit, which refunds some or all of the federal income tax paid by low-income workers.

"Millions of dollars are going unclaimed because people don't know about it or how to claim it," said Sue Hales, a spokeswoman of the Internal Revenue Service.

The project provides free tax preparation at 25 sites in Chicago and 18 sites in the suburbs. Tax preparers also help taxpayers sign up for free bank accounts.

More than 900,000 Illinois families may be eligible for the tax credit but only about 750,000 take advantage of it, IRS and other officials said.

A single taxpayer earning up to \$11,060 is eligible. Families with two children

may earn up to \$34,178 and still take advantage of the credit, which can be as high as \$4,140. The EITC awareness campaign also is informing employees about the Child Tax Credit. That credit now is worth up to \$600 per child and is available to more families, even those who do not owe income taxes.

Employers can help by notifying their employees about the EITC and the availability of credit by printing information on pay stubs and displaying posters, and by enlisting employees to serve as volunteer tax preparers at organizations that help low-income families file for the credit.

"We're trying to get more people involved," said Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley. "It's a way to help families."

To participate, call Myer Blank, executive director of the Chicago Tax Assistance Center, at 312-744-1000.

To find a free tax preparation center, call 311, Chicago's non-emergency information line. Outside Chicago, call 312-409-1555.

## Chicago Auto Show sets for 2003 edition, Feb. 14-23

Since 1901, Chicago has distinguished itself as the nation's foremost consumer automotive exposition, and this year's 95th edition will be no different.

The 2003 Chicago Auto Show, open to the public Feb. 14-23, will feature more than 1,000 cars, trucks, SUVs and the always-ready-to-steal-the-show concepts.

"We know that not everyone likes everything," said 2003 Chicago Auto Show Chairman Bob Van Iten. "But that's the beauty of our show. There truly is something to entertain every member of the family and inform anyone who is in the market for something new in his driveway.

"The auto industry is bringing a bumper crop of new products to a public that is eager to look, to buy or just to dream."

"Despite news reports we hear and see nightly that say the economy is stalled, last year the industry sold more than 16 million vehicles, the fourth highest in history," said Chicago Automobile Trade Association Chairman

Mike McGrath. "That's an amazing testimony to the ongoing love affair Americans have with their cars and their ability to go virtually anywhere they want, whenever they want.

"We see a brighter year for America and our industry, and this show will help shine the light of excitement as we enter the spring selling season."

### First Look for Charity

The 12th First Look for Charity precedes the public show on Thursday evening, Feb. 13, from 6:30-10:30 p.m. The black-tie gala benefits 17 local organizations and is a highlight of Chicago's social calendar. Last year, the event gave attendees a relaxed view of the nation's largest auto show as it raised \$1.8 million.

"As a Chicagoland new-car dealer, I'm particularly proud of 'First Look' and the millions upon millions of dollars we've been able to give to very worthwhile groups," said Van Iten. "Our area dealers have demonstrated a century of commu-

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## Auto Show

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nity involvement, and this special night speaks volumes about how they care for those who are in need.”

Pontiac Division of General Motors and the Chicagoland Pontiac dealers have donated a 2004 Grand Prix to be awarded to someone in attendance at First Look.

“Actor Anthony Edwards will draw the winning ticket, but the real winners are the charities,” said Van Iten. “In his role in the hit NBC series ‘ER,’ he spent a lot of time in Chicago, and we’re so pleased that he’ll join us again in the Windy City.

Charities participating in the event are Advocate Hope Children’s Hospital, ALSAC/St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Alzheimer’s Association, Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago, Campagna Academy, Children’s Memorial Hospital, Clearbrook, The Cradle, and Cure Autism Now Foundation.

Also, the Ray Graham Association for People with Disabilities, Illinois Spina Bifida Association, Little City Foundation, March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Misericordia Heart of Mercy, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the United Negro College Fund

Tickets for First Look are available at the door or in advance by calling 630-424-1636. Any tickets purchased after Feb. 5 will be held at Will Call at the event.

### Special Days and Features

While any visit to the Chicago Auto Show is special, some days are of particular note. Tuesday, Feb. 18 will feature programs and a ticket bargain. **Women’s Day** offers a \$5 discount off the full \$10 admission for all women, who are invited to visit manufacturer displays where ongoing seminars on purchasing, leasing, servicing or just plain enjoying their vehicles will be held.

“While women are directly involved with the vast majority of automotive purchases, some feel that manufacturers are only targeting males,” said Chicago Auto Show General Manager Jerry Cizek. “In reality, females are very high on the priority list for anyone who is serious about selling product. The seminars held on Women’s Day help clear up questions that some are shy about asking.”

As an extension of the charitable aspects of the exposition, organizers will again feature **The Chicago Auto Show Food Drive**, which benefits the Chicago Christian Industrial League and its programs to feed the hungry. The drive will be Wednesday through Friday, Feb. 19-21.

“Patrons who bring three cans of food to the auto show will receive a \$5 discount off the full \$10 admission,” said Cizek. “Food drives tend to center around holiday seasons,

but the problem goes on year-round. It’s the belief of the CATA’s directors that we can help those in need with this program by offering this weekday discount to show patrons.”

DriveChicago.com is sponsoring “**Kids’ Concept Cars**” at the show, a contest to spark the imagination of the next generation of car designers. Children of all ages will be encouraged to take a seat in the DriveChicago.com display and draw their favorite cars from the show—or a creation all their own. Their artwork will be digitally scanned and featured on the DriveChicago.com Web site. At the end of the show, CATA officials will choose a winner in each of three age categories. Winners will receive \$50 gift certificates from Toys “R” Us. Contestants and auto company recruiters can log on to DriveChicago.com on Feb. 25, to see the winning entries.

### Online Ticket Sales

The program to buy Chicago Auto Show admission tickets online began two years ago and in 2002 grew to the point where show organizers had to increase the number of scanners for those who had purchased their tickets in the comfort of their home.

“We thought it would spark interest and cut down on some of our box office lines,” said Chairman Van Iten, “but we never expected it to fly the way it has. Before long, you’ll probably see more lines for scanning Internet tickets than for traditional papers tickets purchased on-site. That’s fine with us, obviously, as it contributes to making the entire auto show experience more pleasant for our patrons.”

To buy a ticket online, go to DriveChicago.com and click on the ticket icon. A credit card, a computer and a home printer is all that’s needed to produce a bar-coded ticket in the blink of an eye.

Auto show hours are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily except Feb. 23, when the show closes at 8 p.m. Box offices close one hour prior to show closing each day. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for senior citizens. Pre-teens also are \$5, or free when they accompany a paying parent.



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Listings of items for sale are subject to the approval of the CATA. Candidates for employment must submit a full résumé to the Editor.

Review past editions at <http://cata.drivechicago.com/>

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## Dealers must keep communication open to deflect unions: attorneys

When employees intent on unionizing confront a business owner or president, he too often views that act as the first sign of trouble. Rather, it represents the sound of the second shoe dropping. Such disconnection between managers and subordinates is fertile ground for unions to sprout.

Various unions represent workers at about 35 percent of the Chicago area's 600 new-vehicle dealerships, a figure markedly higher than the 13 percent unionization rate nationally, and the local unions actively seek additional inroads. What radiates from dealership management often determines whether a union can take root.

"People are reaching out, and the question is, are they going to reach out to a union or are they going to reach out to you?" David Radelet told an audience of 40 dealers, general managers and service managers at a CATA seminar Jan. 29. Radelet's law firm, Franczek Sullivan, represents CATA dealers in employment matters, including fights to deflect unions.

Radelet and three colleagues led the seminar, which traced scenarios of when and where union organizers typically contact employees; what employers may do that unwittingly causes them to recognize a union; and what an employer can do in the days before an election to help the dealership turn back a union.

### Simple steps can help employers deflect unionization

#### Adopt appropriate corporate policies and practices

- Prohibit solicitors on dealership property during work hours.
- Control bulletin board postings.
- Enforce policies against harassment.

#### Maintain employer-employee communications

- Be visible and accessible
- Establish formal and informal procedures to overcome problems and complaints.
- Distribute up-to-date employee handbooks.
- Conduct periodic attitude surveys.

#### Review employee pay and benefits

- Stay in-line with competitors.
- Listen to suggestions for no-cost/low-cost perks

#### Enforce discipline fairly

- Be consistent.
- Allow for an informal appeals process.

#### Administer employee evaluations

- Get meaningful training for those responsible for performance evaluations.
- Document all incidents, establish a paper trail.
- Explain why raises or promotions were not awarded, or feelings may fester.
- Conduct exit interviews.

Effective communication is the foundation for remaining union-free. Managers must be attuned to their subordinates and be able to detect office vibes to measure the organization's health.

Radelet recounted one instance of a dealer who called him upon being served notice of a unionization petition. To measure the service manager's level of engagement with his technicians, Radelet posed a series of questions: What are the technicians' names? Are they married? Do they have children? Hobbies? Tellingly, the first question could not be answered completely.

The goal is not an ongo-

ing coffee klatsch in the service bay. But knowing such details creates personal ties in a workforce that help to promote dignity, credibility, respect and trust—human needs a union seeks to fill when there is a void with management.

Franczek Sullivan's Sally Scott said management should regularly make clear, through words and deeds, why workers are served better by management.

First, management should be competitive with the salary rates negotiated for unionized employees. Regarding benefits, nearly every health care and retirement plan offered at non-

union shops outshines the union plans.

Employees considering a union should be reminded that unions spend the money they collect from initiation fees, dues, fines and other assessments on property, administrative salaries, and vehicles for those administrators. For instance, Scott said Teamsters Local 731 has assets exceeding \$2 million.

Union organizers often appeal to workers by promising many things they may not, and often cannot, deliver. If unionization ultimately is ratified, the workers have won nothing more than the right to have the union negotiate on their behalf.

And the process to decertify a union is arduous. Scott said, "You can't just 'try on' a union."

A dealer can fend off thoughts of unionization by remaining visible and accessible. Healthy employer-employee communications can diffuse an us-versus-them mentality by workers.

Communications can be maintained through such mechanisms as periodic company and department meetings, bulletin boards, and formal and informal policies of conduct.

Dealers who are members in good standing for at least the past six months can qualify for legal representation that is three-fourths paid for by the CATA, to try to ward off unionization attempts.

## In Memoriam

William T. "Sandy" McKie, who for 30 years lived in Fox Lake and operated a namesake Chrysler-Dodge dealership there, died Jan. 18. He was 81.

McKie first ran a De Soto Plymouth dealership in Glen Ellyn, then directed Quality Chrysler-Plymouth in Wheaton until 1971. He then opened Sandy McKie and Sons, Inc., in Fox Lake. McKie was active in both the Wheaton and Fox Lake chambers of commerce.

McKie also was a past director of the CATA from 1988 to 1994, serving as vice president of the association in 1992-93.

Survivors include son William T. Jr., daughter Laurie, five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

## Measuring the performance of technicians

It is possible to measure a technician's productivity, efficiency and proficiency. But what does each measurement mean? A dealer must know that to determine if a technician's time has been allocated well and if they use that time well.

"Technician productivity" is the actual time worked in a day versus the number of clock hours available in that day. The National Automobile Dealers Association recommends 85 percent to 87.5 percent as a productivity guideline, since non labor-related activities can consume 15 percent to 20 percent of available time.

As an equation,  $\text{Productivity} = \text{Hours worked} \div \text{hours available}$

"Technician efficiency" is the actual number of hours a technician takes to perform the labor, as opposed to the number of labor hours sold. It boils down to the ability of a technician to beat a time standard published in a flat rate manual issued by the factory or an independent company. Top NADA 20 Group dealers recommend efficiency guidelines of 125 percent (factory manual) and 135 percent (non-factory manual).

$\text{Efficiency} = \text{Flat rate hours produced} \div \text{hours worked}$

"Technician proficiency" is a mea-

sure that combines productivity and efficiency, and compares hours produced to hours available. Proficiency provides the truest measure of a technician's use of time. The NADA recommends that technicians always be 100 percent proficient, with peaks to 120 percent.

$\text{Proficiency} = \text{Hours produced} \div \text{hours available}$

Learn more about the equations in a new NADA video training program, "A Perfect Match for Service Management: Profit, Productivity and People." The program can be ordered in VHS video and compact disk formats, and orders include an accompanying 20-page study guide.

To order the program, call the NADA at 800-252-6232, ext. 2. Cost to NADA members is \$189 plus shipping, plus \$10 for each additional study guide.

## Martin Boyer deflects unemployment claims

One hundred fifteen CATA dealer members reported a combined 537 unemployment claims to the Martin Boyer Co. during the fourth quarter of 2002. The company's efforts saved those dealers a total of \$852,930 in benefits by contesting the claims.

The claims activity among the CATA dealers in the fourth quarter more than doubled the previous quarter, said Paul Schardt of Martin Boyer.

The company monitors any unemployment claims against its clients. About 200 CATA dealers are clients of Martin Boyer.

Claims that can be protested and subsequently denied help minimize an employer's unemployment tax rate. The rate can vary between .06 percent and 6.8 percent of each employee's first \$9,000 of earnings. The average unemployment tax rate among Illinois employers is 3.1 percent, or \$279 a year.

"The unemployment tax is really the only controllable tax, in that it's experience-driven," said Schardt. An employee's claim affects the employer's tax rate for three years.

Client fees are \$2.10 per employee, per fiscal quarter. For the fee, Martin Boyer monitors all unemployment claims, files any appeals, represents the client at any hearings, verifies the benefit charge statements and confirms the client's unemployment tax rate.

To discuss retaining the company, call Schardt at 312-381-8241.

## Bulletin on hiatus

The CATA Bulletin will take a one-issue break on Feb. 17, in deference to the 2003 Chicago Auto Show.

The next edition is March 3.

