Chicago Auto Show
draws crowds, raves

Enthusiastic crowds swelled attendance at the 2003 Chicago Auto Show, and area dealers awaited what

DriveChicago.com segues from Web to print

DriveChicago.com in Print debuted at February’s Chicago Auto Show, where 40,000 copies of the new publication were distributed to show-goers. Another 10,000 copies were placed at retail outlets.

The circular showcases the inventories that appear on the Internet of DriveChicago subscriber dealers. DriveChicago.com in Print portrays 20 vehicles per page with four-color vehicle photos and descriptions.

“We feel, as a DriveChicago board, that this publication has been a resounding hit,” said Mark Scarpelli, who serves on the entity’s board of managers. “There’s a lot of buzz about this. We feel it will be a success.”

Scarpelli said the new circular will print once again in March; then accelerate to two editions each in April, May and June; and culminate with weekly issues beginning in July. The publication is available free at area Shell gas stations, Dominick’s and Jewel groceries, Blockbuster movie rental stores and Bally Total Fitness locations.

Bill Jacobs, seated, holds his award as a 2003 Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award nominee. The president of the Bill Jacobs Automotive Group is joined at the Feb. 1 awards presentation by CATA President Jerry Cizek, second from left, and representatives from Time magazine and the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.

Jacobs honored for TMQDA nomination

William T. Jacobs Jr., proprietor of eight area dealerships, was among 64 dealers nationwide honored as recipients of the 2003 Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award, in a Feb. 1 ceremony as part of the annual NADA convention and exposition.

The award recognizes new-car dealers for exceptional performance in their business coupled with distinguished community service.

“The recipients of this prestigious award,” said NADA Chairman Alan Starling, “do a lot more than just sell cars and trucks. They work diligently and untiringly to help their communities and their industry and are an inspiration to all of us.”

A panel of faculty members from the University of Michigan Graduate School of Business Administration selected five finalists. John Bergstrom, a Chevrolet-Buick-Cadillac dealer from Neenah, Wis., was named winner of the 2003 award. Jacobs earned the nomination of the Chicago Automobile Trade Association.

Jacobs grew up at his father’s dealership and, as the years progressed, held
Auto Show
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

subsequently is regarded as the launch of the dealers’ spring selling season. The only thing lacking at McCormick Place was snow; the city’s lakefront sidestepped two storms that buried areas just miles away.

Plentiful media coverage showcased the nearly 1,000 vehicles on display. Some of the show highlights:

$28,900 disbursed in Auto Show ACE awards

At what marked the final appearance of Oldsmobile at the Chicago Auto Show, a salesman who has worked in the carmaker’s display at the last 22 Chicago Auto Shows collected five Awards for Customer Excellence, including the final day’s award.

Edward Kucic, representing Ettleson Cadillac-Oldsmobile-Buick, has sold the Oldsmobile line since 1981. In fact, the first car Kucic owned was a 1955 Olds.

Effective salespeople at the just-concluded auto show netted a combined $28,900 under the ACE program. Salespeople at all vehicle exhibits were evaluated each day by incognito judges who rated the salespeople using various criteria. The prize, $100 cash, can be won by only one salesperson a day at each exhibit.

Joining Kucic as a five-time winner is Dave Dymond of Bernard Isuzu. Six others won an ACE three times: Dan Alfaro of Max Madsen Mitsubishi, Len Donnells of Joe Rizza Acura, Jim DuMont of Feeny Chrysler-Jeep, Bill Fleming of Patrick Pontiac-GMC, Mike Sargent of Napleton’s Auto Werks of Indiana, and George Zouganelis Jr. of Community Oldsmobile in Wilmington.

Food drive nets 12 tons

Late weekday crowds benefited the Chicago Christian Industrial League by contributing more than 24,000 pounds of canned food. The CATA extends a $5 discount off regular adult admission to those who bring three cans of food Wednesday through Friday at the show.

“Food drives tend to center around holiday seasons, but hunger is a dilemma that goes on year-round,” said Jerry Cizek, general manager of the Chicago Auto Show and president of the CATA. “It’s the belief of the CATA board of directors that we can help those in need by offering this weekday discount to show patrons.”
Consumers sue automakers over Canadian import restrictions

A lawsuit filed Feb. 20 charges DaimlerChrysler, General Motors, Ford, Honda, Toyota, the NADA, and the Canadian Automobile Dealers Association with breaking antitrust laws by conspiring to prevent Americans from buying cars imported from Canada.

The suit, filed by a group of U.S. consumers, states that several automakers have stopped honoring warranties on Canadian cars resold in the U.S. The lawsuit, filed in San Francisco, says the industry illegally restricts competition by refusing to honor warranties on vehicles bought in Canada for use in the United States.

The factories say they are losing out on more profitable U.S. sales when Americans buy cars intended for the Canadian market.

Automakers set lower prices in Canada because consumers there have less money to spend than American buyers.

The suit seeks class-action status on behalf of all consumers who bought cars at authorized U.S. dealerships. A similar suit was filed in Chicago.

First Look for Charity raises record sum

Seventeen area charities shared in more than $2.2 million raised by the 2003 Chicago Auto Show’s benevolent event, First Look for Charity, and one attendee left with a promissory note for a yet-to-be-built 2004 Pontiac Grand Prix.

The amount raised eclipsed the 2001 record sum by about $400,000. The 12-year-old black-tie benefit is held the evening before the auto show opens its 10-day public run.

“First Look for Charity is a great instrument for the area’s new-car dealers to show the positive impact they have on their community,” said Bob Van Iten, chairman of this year’s auto show. “All the benefiting charities are involved locally, so the money that’s raised in Chicago stays in Chicago.”

As the name of the event implies, those who attend First Look for Charity are part of the premier viewing of each year’s auto show.

A highlight of the evening is the drawing for a new vehicle, the event’s grand prize. This year’s event awarded the Grand Prix to Chad Woehrle of Addison. Woehrle pledged that his first act in his new car would be to “take a long drive.”

Proceeds of Woehrle’s ticket benefited Children’s Memorial Hospital. In all, 17 Chicago area charities profited from the event.

Tickets to the fund-raiser are $175 each. For the event, the auto show floor is replete with a variety of food and beverage stations.

Conducting the test drive correctly

To maintain profitability, regardless of the economic climate, a dealership staff must conduct itself properly every time a prospect or customer visits the dealership. A system should exist to identify proper behavior, and the system should be followed every time.

One crucial element of a sales system is the test drive, which is the customer’s opportunity to experience firsthand all the features and benefits described in the vehicle presentation. The test drive can make or break a sale, so it is worthwhile to establish and adhere to certain guidelines.

**When planning the demo drive, always**

- Accompany the customer;
- Check the demo vehicle for cleanliness and proper operation;
- Use a preplanned route that highlights vehicle features;
- Avoid heavy traffic, where possible.

**For the salesperson’s safety, always**

- Review the person’s driver’s license and make sure it is valid;
- Fill out a demonstration drive “agreement” that includes the prospect’s name, address, phone number and details about the demo vehicle;
- Inform management of the route to be taken;
- Bring another salesperson, if there is a concern about riding alone with the customer;
- Insist that the customer operate the vehicle lawfully.

**When conducting the demo drive, always**

- Take the wheel first, to let the customer observe the features and the feel of the new-vehicle ride;
- Run through the operation of controls and features;
- Focus on features that match the customer’s expressed expectations and needs;
- Change drivers at a midway point;
- Point out features as the customer drives;
- Allow a few minutes of silence, then answer any questions or concerns;
- Subtly ask trial closing questions, like “Is there any additional equipment you’d prefer to have in your new car?” or “Based on all we’ve looked at, would you say this car fills your needs?”

This article was adapted from an NADA management guide, “A Dealer Guide to a Winning Sales System.” Copies can be ordered at 800-252-6232 ext. 2. Cost is $10 to NADA members or $20 to nonmembers, plus shipping.
Marketplace


Service Director Leader, trainer, motivator. Maintain highest standards of service quality, customer support, facility maintenance to enhance dealership image, create repeat business and referrals. Winner of district, regional, national service awards. Anonymous.


Résumés of all candidates on file at the CATA. Call 630-495-2282 to obtain a copy.

Congratulations!

Joe Kean, principal of Friendly Ford in Roselle, has been named to Ford Division’s 2003 National Dealer Council.

The council represents smaller Ford dealerships and serves as the primary communication link between Ford Division and Ford dealers.

‘Drive Chicago,’ the radio show, 9 a.m. Saturdays on WLS 890 AM