



Volume 108, No. 9

May 16, 2011

## Upcoming DealersEdge Webinars

The Chicago Automobile Trade Association has established a partnership with DealersEdge to provide high-quality training and informational Webinars that offer the content to CATA member dealers at a significantly discounted rate.

The rate for CATA members for the weekly presentations is \$149, half what is charged to users who do not subscribe to DealersEdge. Webinars premiere on a near-weekly basis.

Even for dealers who hold an annual membership with DealersEdge, the new relationship with the CATA represents a savings because DealersEdge offers its Webinars to its own members for \$198. Regular annual membership fees are \$397, and normal Webinar fees are \$298 for non-DealersEdge members.

Once purchased, DealersEdge Webinars and accompanying PDF files can be downloaded and viewed later—and repeatedly. No matter how many people watch at your location, each connection costs a CATA member just \$149. A telephone connection is not needed; and the fee includes both PowerPoint slides and audio.

To register for any of the DealersEdge Webinars, go to [www.cata.info](http://www.cata.info). On the tan bar across the top of the screen, click on Education/Careers and follow the drop-down menu to CATA-DealersEdge Webinars.

Coming topics:

Thursday, May 19 at 12 p.m. CDT

**“New Processes for Recruiting, Selecting & Training Salespeople”** You would think that with unemployment still high, filling those sales positions in your showroom would not be a problem. And indeed, if all you need are warm bodies, they are not hard to find. But

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## CATA Dealer Meeting & Expo details unfolding; event is June 22

A veritable Murderer’s Row of educational seminars and exhibiting allied members await at the 2nd annual CATA Dealer Meeting & Expo, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. June 22. Attendance is free but limited to dealers and their managers.

Dealership personnel can venture upstairs at the CATA headquarters in Oakbrook Terrace to learn from 12 “best practice” topics, each about 45 minutes in length. Concurrent presentations will begin at 10:15 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 2:30 p.m. And a special luncheon keynote address will be dis-

seminated live as that week’s Webinar of DealersEdge, the online training center.

Visitors also can roam the ground-level salons, to explore business opportunities with about 40 CATA allied members. The companies will be positioned à la trade show, in 6-by-6 booths, and many will be offering gifts.

But that’s not all. Attendees also will be treated to a buffet lunch and be eligible to win prizes. In 2010, gifts included complimentary advertising campaigns valued at up to \$7,500, and multiple retail and restaurant gift cards worth up to \$500.

## CATA to host Revenue Dept. forum

Leading representatives of the Illinois Revenue Department will appear at the CATA June 7 to review tax issues important to dealers.

The group is expected to discuss topics such as trade-in credits, goodwill repairs, sales to out-of-state purchasers, consumables, and inter-

im use exemptions. Audience questions will be permitted.

Scheduled speakers include persons from the department’s audit and legal divisions. An informational flyer and registration form to attend the event is posted on the CATA Web site, [www.cata.info](http://www.cata.info).

## General Assembly aims to wrap May 31

With a scheduled May 31 spring session adjournment, the Illinois General Assembly faces a sizable agenda. In addition to crafting the 2012 fiscal budget, lawmakers also are contemplating reforms to education, pension and retiree health care, and worker's compensation; ComEd rate changes; and revamped boundaries for new legislative districts.

Senators also are debating House Bill 880, which would create a Dealer Recovery Trust Fund, to help those harmed when dealers close without settling liens on trade-ins. The fund would be endowed by costlier dealer licenses.



## Walsh gets DEAC donation

Rep. Joe Walsh (R-III.), left, confers with Chicago Metro NADA Director Mark Scarpelli, center, and Colin Wickstrom, right, at Wickstrom Ford-Lincoln in Barrington on April 28 before accepting a \$2,500 donation from the NADA's Dealers Election Action Committee. At the dealers' suggestion, Walsh said he would champion efforts to soften proposed fuel economy (CAFE) standards for automobiles and light trucks. "What if you had a truly outspoken freshman congressman who took up this issue in a big way?" Walsh asked. "This is something I would love to be outspoken on." DEAC gives funds to candidates for federal office, upon the request of dealer associations.

## Webinars

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to truly capitalize on a rising demand for cars and trucks, you don't need just bodies; you need sales candidates who will be better-than-average, skilled performers with personalities that fit well with your culture. But where do you find the perfect fit for your sales staff? What selection process should you employ? And then, how to you hire and train these new players efficiently so that they can start helping you meet those objectives?

Thursday, May 26 at 12 p.m. CDT

**"Car Dealers and the Family and Medical Leave Act"** Employee lawsuits against employers over the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act have been growing at an alarming rate. The burden, as with most federal government mandates, falls on the employer to know what the law requires and how best to comply. Presenter Penny Phillips is a labor attorney with a lot of experience in this area who will spell out the dangers to auto dealers and how to best position your dealership against the possibility of costly litigation. Simple steps taken now can greatly reduce your potential liabilities.

Thursday, June 2 at 12 p.m. CDT

**"Converting E-mail Ups to Showroom Appointments"** One of the biggest challenges with sales leads via e-mail is to gain trust and move the potential customer from an "inquiry" to a "showroom appointment." Customers can use an e-mailed inquiry as a shield to hide behind, and it takes some strategy and skill to get them out of their comfort zone and into your showroom. Once you get your Internet lead on the phone, you should be able to convert two-thirds of inquirers into scheduled appointments.

## Congratulations!

Richard Schepel of **Schepel Buick-GMC** in Merrillville, Ind.; and Mike Ettleson of **Ettleson Buick-GMC** in Hodgkins were winners of the 2010 Buick Dealer of the Year award. Schepel also was named a 2010 GMC Dealer of the Year winner.

**Phillips Chevrolet** in Frankfort is a winner of Chevrolet's 2010 Dealer of the Year award.

**Carrs Honda Center** in Chicago and **Valley Honda** in Aurora reached the five-year milestone as winners of Honda Financial Services' 2010 Council of Excellence Award. Other area winners include **Community Honda of Orland Park**, **Pauly Honda** in Libertyville, and **Planet Honda** in Matteson (seven-time winner).

With the 2010 honor, **Muller's Woodfield Acura** in Hoffman Estates became a 10-time winner of Acura's Dealership of Distinction award. Four other area Acura dealerships that won the 2010 award were identified in the May 2 edition of this newsletter.

The CATA Bulletin is published by the  
**Chicago Automobile Trade Association**  
18W200 Butterfield Rd. Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181-4810

The CATA Bulletin is distributed via blast e-mail every other Friday except during the Chicago Auto Show, when it is not produced.

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

Review past editions dating to 1998 or search by subject at [www.cata.info](http://www.cata.info).

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**President, Publisher**  
**Editor, Director of Dealer Affairs**

## NADA charitable foundation funds companion dogs for veterans

By **MARK SCARPELLI**

CHICAGO METRO NADA DIRECTOR

The National Automobile Dealers Charitable Foundation has expanded its support for a nationwide program that provides skilled companion dogs at no cost to physically disabled children and adults. And for the first time, support is offered to U.S. war veterans injured in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Retired Army Sgt. Sam Cila of Riverhead, N.Y., was introduced last month to his new service dog, Gillian, following the foundation's first \$10,000 grant to the Wounded Veterans Initiative of Canine Companions for Independence.

"Gillian has rounded out my new team. She acts as my left hand. But more importantly, she's my teammate," said Cila, who lost most of his left arm from an improvised explosive device during an ambush in Baghdad in 2005. "Gillian has made me stronger as an individual because I can live a more active lifestyle with her at my side."

To contribute toward providing a service dog for a wounded veteran in your community, contact the NADA Foundation at (703) 821-7102 or [Foundation@nada.org](mailto:Foundation@nada.org).

### In other legislative and regulatory news . . .

- NADA representatives stressed the importance of **dealer-assisted financing** at an April roundtable that the Federal Trade Commission conducted in Detroit to examine consumer protection issues related to five areas of vehicle sales and leasing. The NADA was represented on each of the panels by dealers, the ATAEE, and attorneys who specialize in each of the subject matter areas.

The NADA team made a compelling case that problems identified by

consumer groups are not representative of the industry and therefore do not justify the imposition of a new rule, and that they already may be addressed through an array of consumer remedies that exist under federal and state laws. Most importantly, the NADA representatives explained in detail the extraordinary benefits that optional dealer-assisted financing provides to millions of consumers, including how dealers' access to multiple finance sources and their efficient pricing allows dealers to routinely offer consumers very competitive rates and, in many cases, secure financing for "unbanked" consumers who otherwise would not have the means to obtain transportation they need for employment.

"Even when dealer-assisted financing is not selected by consumers, its mere presence helps to create an intensely competitive market that significantly disciplines the rates that other finance sources will offer to consumers," said the NADA's Andy Koblenz.

- The NADA supports two bills seeking to reach a single, national **fuel economy standard** by prohibiting the Environmental Protection Agency and California from regulating tailpipe emissions. House Resolution 9, which passed the U.S. House on April 7, seeks to overturn a 2007 Supreme Court decision giving the EPA and California authority to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. A similar measure in the Senate failed to gather the necessary 60 votes to pass.

### In other NADA news . . .

- For the first time, pedestrians walking past the CBS "Super Screen" in New York's Times Square have been seeing **public service messages** from the NADA. A CBS representative approached the NADA with the unprecedented opportunity when space

became available after the network canceled the TV sitcom "Two and a Half Men" starring Charlie Sheen. The first message, "Let's Keep Them Safe at Every Age," reinforces the dealer association's position as a leader in promoting child passenger safety nationwide; and it highlights that America's new-car dealers have inspected more than 1 million child safety seats over the past five years. Another message stresses the National Automobile Dealers Charitable Foundation's commitment to the Wounded Veterans Initiative of Canine Companions for Independence. Both 15-second commercials appear once every hour, 18 hours a day, for 45 days on the 26-by-20 screen.

- Enroll now for Spring **Dealer Academy** classes. Upcoming classes include:

- Dealer Candidate Academy, starting June 6
- General Dealership Management Academy, starting May 16
- Individual Academy classes (e.g., Financial, Parts, Service and Variable Parts 1 & 2) are also open to department managers, who may attend a week of classes even if they don't have a student in the Academy program. To learn more, call (800) 557-6232 or visit [www.NADA.org/nadauniversity/academy](http://www.NADA.org/nadauniversity/academy).

- NADA University **Webinars and Seminars** in May

- Wednesday, May 18, at 12 p.m. CDT, a complimentary Webinar, "One-Price Selling: In Sync with Today's Auto Purchasers," presented by Mark Rikess, CEO of The Rikess Group, a leading consulting and training organization for the retail automotive industry. To register, call (800) 557-6232.

## J.D. Power: How dealers are making customers happier these days

Customers are increasingly satisfied and happy after visiting a dealership and buying a car, according to a recent survey by J.D. Power and Associates.

Lexus ranks highest in customer satisfaction with dealer service among luxury brands for a second consecutive year, followed by Jaguar, Cadillac and Acura. Among “mass market” brands, MINI topped the list. Others in the top 5 are GMC, Buick, Chevrolet and Kia.

There is no mistaking an overall trend of happier car buyers and owners, said Jon Osborn, J.D. Power’s research director. Adjusting for changes in the way Power actually computed the survey results from 2007 to 2011, each year

has been better than the previous one, he said. “Over time, dealers are providing much higher levels of customer satisfaction than they have in the past.”

How are they doing it? Coffee bars. Free wireless Internet service. Online booking of appointments. Increasing the number of service bays and establishing longer hours to accommodate customers; some service departments staying open into the evening and on Saturdays. When it comes to selling the car in the first place? More communication online where the customer is more comfortable.

The goal is simple for dealers: They don’t want a customer who just had his

car serviced to worry whether the repair was done correctly. And dealers want the customer’s experience to be comfortable, convenient, even upscale.

J.D. Power examined consumers’ attitudes about their purchasing negotiations, their salespersons, the delivery processes, and the dealership facilities.

With their dealerships on a better financial footing, Detroit-brand dealers have more money to invest in nicer stores, and they can reward their salespeople for keeping customers happy rather than churning sales and service bills to keep up. Lounges with plush sofas and cappuccino bars are sometimes part of the recipe.

### Small mail: Production shortages are nothing new

By **JIM SMAIL, CHAIRMAN**

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL AUTOMOBILE DEALERS ASSN.

Everything old is new again.

Anyone who has been in the car business long enough knows that saying to be true. Both good times and challenging times are cyclical, and most of the crises we face today have been seen before. For a veteran dealer like me, that’s a good thing. It means I’ve sold cars under just about every condition there is, and I’m prepared to do it again.

Ever since the terrible earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster struck Japan on March 12th, the global auto industry has been braced for product shortages. Today, as manufacturers begin to form a clearer picture of the damage they received, we can expect some Toyota, Honda, and Subaru vehicles to be in short supply at least through the summer.

Other brands that source parts from Japan may also see shortages on their lots. All of this is hitting at the worst possible time, threatening our industry’s fragile recovery from the Great Recession.

Fortunately, dealers are nothing if not resourceful, and I am confident we will not only survive this period, but build stronger relationships with our customers as a result. You might be asking: how do you sell a car you don’t have on your lot? First of all, remember it’s been done before.

In 1974, during the first Arab oil embargo, demand far outpaced supply in my small Honda store. As Honda raced to churn out more vehicles for a market learning to appreciate fuel efficiency, I found myself learning how to sell cars I didn’t actually have. The trick, it turned out, was

no trick at all. It was simply customer service. I bent over backwards to get consumers the cars they wanted, and was able to make them understand that a 30 or 60 day wait was worth it to get a high quality vehicle with great fuel efficiency. My brother and I would keep one of every model on display and write an order, with a deposit of \$200 to \$500, made fully refundable if the customer changed his mind.

Shortages occurred again during the 1979 oil embargo and in the ‘80s under a voluntary restraint agreement. Each time, we prospered and grew by taking care of our loyal customers and working with them to get the car they really wanted from the brand they really wanted – not the one that just happened to be available.

Dealers can survive the coming shortage by remembering how we made it through the ‘70s and ‘80s. That means getting back to the basics of customer service and selling the value of our products. International nameplate dealers today have a strong and loyal customer base. If we focus on the customer, they will wait for the product that they know and feel comfortable with.

With the used car market being as strong as it is, offering a customer a guaranteed trade-in allowance for a period of 60 or 90 days may be part of the solution.

Shortages for desirable products are nothing new. The solution is having the right processes in place to take care of the customer. All indications are that production will be back to normal late in the 4th quarter. Until then, we can move forward as only American international automobile dealers know how. And we will be stronger, and wiser, for it.