



DEALERPOINT

Official Publication of the Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association | 1928-2012 | Volume 28 Winter 2012



INSIDE:

- BRIAN EWALD, WISCONSIN DEALER OF THE YEAR, TIME QUALITY DEALER NOMINEE
- FOUNDATION'S PEDERSEN FUND TOPS \$100,000

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**A publication of the
Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers
Association focusing on the human side
of the membership and trade.**

Our Mission:

The Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association, an organization of licensed dealers of new and used motor vehicles, is dedicated to advancing the common good of its members, consumers and their communities by promoting professionalism and prosperity through education, advocacy, information and service.



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DEALERPOINT

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Volume 28 • Winter 2012

FEATURES









A Family Affair 4

*L-R: Craig, Brian, Dan and
Tom Ewald with father Emil's
1998 TMQDA award.*

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A Family Affair

BY CHRYSTE MADSEN

To say this year's recipient of Wisconsin's Time Quality Dealer of the Year Award has made it a family affair is most certainly an understatement. Brian Ewald, of Ewald Chevrolet Buick in Oconomowoc, our 2012 winner follows in the footsteps of father, Emil Ewald our 1998 recipient and brother, Craig our 2002 Wisconsin winner.

While the Ewald family is the first in Wisconsin history to experience this "TMQDA trifecta" once you know the family it is very easy to understand why they have been chosen by their peers for this honor.

When Craig Ewald, President of Ewald Automotive Group and Brian's older brother, was asked why he thought his family had now produced three TMQDA state winners he replied, "It's how we do business. Because we were raised and mentored by our father who taught us to live by the Golden Rule... treat others as you wish to be treated."

"It's all about people — developing, motivating and maintaining a good workforce... keeping customer satisfaction levels high as well as employee satisfaction... giving back to your community and doing the right thing. It has to come from the heart... it can't be manufactured."

"All of this," Craig went on to say, "is why Brian is such a deserving recipient of this year's award. When the tough times came, the bankruptcies, Brian never wavered during the crisis. He maintained profitability. More than that he took care of our people, making sure there were no layoffs. Everybody loves Brian. Brian is an excellent businessman. And I've watched him as he's become an outstanding parent and grandparent."

Younger brother Dan, Managing Partner and President, runs Mayfair Rent-A-Car and its ten locations as well as their fleet company, **Ewald Fleet Solutions**. Dan reiterated how their father, Emil, instilled an excellent work ethic in everyone but no one was made to feel they had to work in the family business yet they were all drawn to it from a young age because of a love for the industry.

The recurring theme of "everyone loves Brian" was stated again with a smile. "Brian," said Dan, "is just easy to be around and he takes the employees' problems to heart."

On a family level, Dan sees him as an excellent role model for his kids, a successful parent who "painted a vision for his children in the family business."

Tom, the youngest brother in the family, is the Managing Partner at the Venus Ford dealership and also in charge of the variable sales operations in all six of their dealerships. Tom says all the brothers are very close. One example of that is when their father suggested they consider joining the Free Masons. They did and all four are active members. In addition to the overall values they learned from their father, life as a Free Mason added a special dimension of balance. Brian has found great strength in the way he has applied those principles in his life as have his brothers.



Tom said, "Dad is a good communicator. He had a vision for all of us. He has done a great job of challenging us to bring out our very best and to be successful in our endeavors."

"As for Brian," Tom continued, "he has an outstanding rapport with our employees. He has a great sense of value. He is very committed to his family, friends and work."

Emil Ewald, the family patriarch, began the family business in 1964 with the Plymouth franchise at 29th and North in Milwaukee. In 1966 he picked up the Chrysler and Imperial franchises and relocated to the Hwy 100 and

North location. Emil is still active in the business and quite humble about the growth and success the family has achieved. His philosophy to his sons, as he stated, has always been, "I'll help you as much as I can, but you'll do the work yourselves."

Brian's response to his family's kind words about him was best summed up in his short speech to the WATDA Board of Directors in December. "The TMQDA Award is a group award for us, because, as partners, we all contribute to our company's success. My role in our group has been a rewarding one, but I couldn't have reached this point in my career without the support of my brothers and partners in addition to my father. Their guidance, love, strategic approach, ideas, tactics, experience and realistic, conservative viewpoint keep our company moving at a steady pace for improvement each year. This is a prideful moment for me because I know how hard all of us, as dealers, work to do the right thing."

Brian, as did all of the Ewald sons, began working at the dealership with his Dad around the age of 12 sweeping floors and cleaning out the sewers. As he put it, "Whatever anyone else didn't want to do, I did." Brian, as did his brothers, attended the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and for the last three of four years commuted home to work a 40 hour work week in addition to a full academic load. Brian married his high school sweetheart, Betty Del Moro, on October 25, 1975 and they were blessed with two children Cortney and Brett.

In conversation with Betty concerning Brian she told numerous stories exemplifying what a kind, wonderful husband and father he is. As for Brian, well, let him tell you in his own words... again from his speech to the WATDA Board. "I also categorize this award as a group award because personally, I couldn't have done all of the things I have done without my wife, Betty Jo. We have been together for over 40 years, since high school, and she has been my support system through life's biggest challenges and most celebrated moments. She helped to raise our daughter and son, who are active participants in our company, and provided a warm, loving home to come home to at the end of the long days. She provided a keen listening ear to my concerns, doubts and fears and helped me sort them out with a fresh perspective. I owe her much gratitude and thanks and love her very much."

And, fittingly, the third generation is stepping out in style within the Ewald group. Craig has two sons already involved, Eric and Jay. And Brian is very proud to have both of his children, Cortney and Brett, showing the work ethic so familiar to the family business! Brett has recently been promoted to

Assistant General Manager of the Oconomowoc store and Cortney is the Corporate Learning and Talent Development Director. They describe their Dad as having a strong moral compass and always being consistent and positive in their lives. Which seems to include the use of a shop-vac for landscaping purposes? You'll have to ask Brian about that!

Brian and his brothers attribute this recognition of their success in large part to the foundation given them by their Dad which may be best stated this way:

- Keep a high level of communication
- Keep a clear delineation of duties
- Keep a high level of respect and trust between family members
- Always work toward a balance of family and business

As each of the Ewald brothers stated in one way or another, "No matter who receives an award in the Ewald family, the award is a team effort."

Perhaps the most telling moment and best explanation of the psyche of the Ewald clan came when Brian asked Cortney to help write his speech for the WATDA Winter Board Meeting where he was announced as the Time Quality Dealer for 2012. Cortney handed him the speech she had written and Brian immediately sat down and crossed out the "I"s and "me"s... only to replace most of them with "we." Typical Ewald! Congratulations Brian... and Emil and Craig and Dan and Tom and all of your children and spouses, your 400 employees and your thousands of customers. ●

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Anonymous Gift Takes Pedersen Innovation Fund Over \$100,000 Mark

Early in December, the Foundation received an anonymous gift to make the Pedersen Innovation Fund appeal the most successful ever in our history. Thank you to all our contributors over the past year. Your generosity will make a difference to thousands across Wisconsin! ●

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WISCO – See You at the Show

In our industry today auto and truck dealers look for ways to save money on their purchases and operations to help generate more profit in their dealership. WISCO exists to do just that for its members. Now more than ever WISCO members should be looking to WISCO for help in these areas. One of our biggest challenges in saving our membership money on their purchases is educating them on all the products and programs we have available. The annual show is an excellent way to do just that. The 41st annual WISCO Show will be held on Saturday March 17, 2012 at the Chula Vista Resort and Waterpark in Wisconsin Dells. Attendees will see our vendors' product offerings, new products, and will be able to take advantage of money saving specials. Many of our suppliers, including our major equipment manufacturers, have developed "WISCO Show Specials" on their products. Often these specials



yield the year's best pricing available anywhere on these products. This should be of particular interest for items seen at the NADA Show in Las Vegas. Look to your Co-op to save you money on these items.

There will be 100 vendor booths to browse at the WISCO Show which runs 9:00-5:00 on Saturday. Door prizes will be given out throughout the day. Saturday night will start with a cocktail reception followed by a dinner and dance. We are very excited to have back Boogie and The Yo-Yo's as our entertainment. Their hi-energy entertainment and superior musical talents guarantee a good time for our members. The WISCO Show is, and always has been, free for our members. The only expense for attendees is the cost of their room if they stay overnight.

The show weekend is a good blend of business and fun for our members and their spouses, especially at such an excellent venue as the Chula Vista. We hope to see you along with your managers at this year's show. Plan now to attend. WISCO has reserved a block of rooms at the Chula Vista with a special group show rate of \$139 for a tower room. The room includes waterpark passes for each occupant. Phone number for reservations is 888-223-8921. Refer to the WISCO Show block of rooms, code 41337 to receive the special group price. Another option for anyone looking for a less expensive option is Amber's Hideaway 2 ½ miles south of the convention center. We have a block of rooms there for \$69. Phone number for reservations at Amber's is 855-879-2623. Call soon as both blocks will only be held until February 15th. Plan now to attend. You can save your dealership money and have an enjoyable week-end with your fellow WISCO members. ●

Reaching Out With Community Challenge Grants

BY GARY BEIER, FOUNDATION DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Part of the mission of Foundation of the Wisconsin Automobile and Truck Dealers is to enable dealer-members to support charitable causes in communities throughout Wisconsin. The Community Challenge Grant Program was initiated over a decade ago to do just that. To date, we have supported you with 143 of these grants. The program along with your partnership has created a statewide base of support to help you help others.

The positive impact of the matching grant program is what it can accomplish. Pam Ross, President of Opportunity Development Centers noted that our grant through Mark Toyota will help them provide jobs and adaptive technology that will support as many as 600 individuals with disabilities over the coming year. The initial challenge grant that we were able to provide was increased ten-fold through Mark Olynik's efforts with the Toyota Foundation.

Jerry Brickner was able to match our grant to provide a seat for a deserving Wausau area World War II veteran on the April 2012 honor flight to Washington D.C. Patrick Puylear of the Never Forgotten Honor Flight program writes that some 600 veterans have been given the opportunity to see their memorial at the nation's capitol over the past two years.

The Community Challenge Grants are offered annually in summer. Reach out to us and make your plans to become a part of this program in 2012. We look forward to working with you and your local charities. ●



Mark and Patti Olynik present challenge grant to Pam Ross, ODC President. Inset; Mark and Patti with Pam, touring ODC facilities.



Jerry Brickner, Brickner Motors of Wausau, presenting a \$500.00 matching grant check from The Foundation to Jim Campbell, Co-Founder of the Never Forgotten Honor Flight, Inc. in Wausau. Mr. Brickner was a guardian on Never Forgotten Honor Flight's third flight in April of 2011.

This fall 19 grants were made that include:

| Recipient | Sponsor |
|---|-----------------------------|
| La Crosse Area YMCA | Dahl Ford |
| Eau Claire Community Foundation | Eau Claire Ford |
| Feeding America-Eastern Wisconsin | Andrew Toyota |
| Above & Beyond Children's Museum | Van Horn Chevy |
| Big Brothers & Sisters of Central Wisconsin | Life Style Motors |
| Mind Over Matter | Keyes Chevy |
| New Richmond Community Foundation | Johnson Motor Sales |
| Opportunity Development Center | Mark Toyota |
| Honor Flights, Langlade County 4H and St. Vincent De Paul | Brickner Group |
| Coulee Region Humane Society | Brenengen Chevrolet |
| Play Time Productions | Goben Cars |
| Neighborhood House of Milwaukee | Hall Imports |
| Tri-County Boys & Girls Clubs | Sondalle Ford |
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| Fond du Lac Boys & Girls Clubs | Holiday Chrysler Dodge Jeep |
| Mukwonago Library | Horter Chevrolet |
| Elmbrook Humane Society | Soerens Ford |

The Foundation

of the Wisconsin Auto & Truck Dealers

SAVE THE DATES

Thursday, March 8, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.

Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and a brief program | The Grosverner Pelican Bay

Friday, March 9, 2012 at 9:00 a.m.

Business Update featuring NADA Chairman, William P. Underriner,
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CenterStage

AWARDS, HONORS, MILESTONES

Bernard's Northtown in New Richmond held its grand opening and ribbon cutting on November 9. The building project included two new service bays, additional space for new car delivery, a waiting lounge and the service desk. Parts of the existing building were also renovated with the project.

Cernohous Chevrolet, Prescott, recently hosted a centennial celebration in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of Chevrolet. A fixture in Prescott since the early 1900's, Vincent Cernohous began as a blacksmith, wagon maker and sleigh maker for 52 years. A Chevrolet dealer since 1932, today the Cernohous family third generation is in charge, and working on plans for expansion and remodeling to meet current Chevrolet facility standards in 2012.

Don Litchfield, of **Litchfield Auto Sales**, Eau Claire, celebrated his 88th birthday November 1, 2011 and also announced that he's "thinking about being done. I'm getting kind of old to still be doing this," he said. "I'll do it until I liquidate the building." Don has been involved with the car business since about 1929, when he was a kid, washing cars and doing chores around the garage. His father, Thomas Sr.



was in on the ground floor when Chrysler Corporation started. He was granted a DeSoto dealership in downtown Eau Claire where he was operating a garage. Eventually they opened Litchfield Truck Sales and Service, which offered 24 hour service with eleven mechanics and nine gas pumps and included a café, run by his sister and brother-in-law for 28 years. In the mid-70's Chrysler Plymouth asked Litchfield's to build a large building at an estimated cost of \$1 million to keep the dealership. They rejected the offer and the franchise went to another Eau Claire area dealer.

In more recent years Don has been successful in used car sales though Don acknowledged how challenging that business has become, due to the reduction in new car production and fewer low mileage rental cars to build inventory. "I've never thought about getting out of the business all these years," he said. "It has always put groceries on the table."

Baird GM, Ripon celebrated forty years in business in November, 2011. Lee started out with a partner in a used car store called Able Wheels in 1971, right next door to the Pontiac Buick dealership where he worked during high school and college. His partner sold out his part of the business in '76. Then the Ripon Pontiac dealer went out of business so Baird borrowed some money and applied for a Pontiac, Buick, GMC franchise, which they were awarded in '77. Another growth opportunity came in 1983 when the local Chevrolet Olds dealer went out of business. Baird successfully applied to represent all GM brands under one roof. The showroom and exterior of their store is slated for the mandated GM updates within the next two years. Lee and son Chris who work side by side in the business both feel that the reason for their continued success is their community support, family feel and accountability of a local business to their customers than the look of their facility.

Lakeland Toyota, Sheboygan has donated the lease of a 2011 Honda Accord, to the Two Rivers Police Department for use in their Drug Abuse Resistance Education D.A.R.E. program.

Fillback Ford Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram, Richland Center, held a ribbon cutting and open house to celebrate the Chrysler store acquisition and consolidating of the Ford and Chrysler locations. Local officials, including the mayor, staff and customers were on hand for the celebration.

Andrew Dahl of **Dahl Ford**, Onalaska, handed over a set of keys for a heavy duty truck to the Mississippi River Valley Conservancy (MVC) matching funds they raised with \$10,000 from the Dahl Family Foundation. The truck will be used for land restoration and management projects. The weight bearing load of the truck is significant as MVC needs to haul a 200-gallon water pumping unit for prescribed prairie burns. ●



Shirley and Don Litchfield, Eau Claire, attending a WATDA Used Car Conference.

From Around the State

Please send your news From Around the State to jfarmer@watda.org.

Don Goben Cars recently opened in Green Bay at 1952 E. Mason St. The dealership will specialize in single-owner, late model and low mileage cars, trucks and SUVs. Owner Dan Goben's family has owned dealerships in the Madison market in 1966. Dan has 18 years experience in the automotive industry.



Jim Olson Motors, Sturgeon Bay plans to open a Chrysler, Dodge Jeep Ram dealership on April 1 leasing the former Bergstrom Automotive property on Green Bay Road. Olson said this will give his employees an opportunity to grow, make way for 15 to 20 new hires and allow his business to offer additional services.

Pioneer Ford is moving to a new Platteville location at 1035 E. Business Highway 151 at Phillips Blvd. The move is expected to be complete in late spring or early summer and will allow for a larger fleet of vehicles for sale and additional employees. The move coincides with Pioneer's 50th anniversary year.

Neuville Motors of Waupaca will have a new look this spring. Major remodeling plans have begun with most of the interior work completed by March and the exterior work by May. An addition will include an enclosed area for delivery of vehicles, a new greeting area, showroom and offices. There will be a new lounge area with larger restrooms as well as a wall to divide the reception area and service bays.

Wheeler's Automotive of Marshfield has purchased M&H Chevrolet of Medford. Mary Jo Wheeler-Schueller is the president and principal of Wheeler's Chevrolet of Medford. Her brother Daniel Wheeler, and Mark Hoffman, owner of the former M & H Chevrolet will serve as partners in the business. ●

Join our Summertime Dealer Point Virtual Car Show!

We are planning a virtual car show for the Summer issue of Dealer Point! Please submit a photo of your vehicle along with a paragraph or two giving us some of the finer details of your pride and joy. We welcome classic cars, trucks, tractors, special unique vehicles-show us what you've got so we can create an interesting show for our readers. Submit electronic pictures (300 dpi is the preferred resolution) to jfarmer@watda.org or snail mail them to Julie Farmer, Dealer Point, PO Box 5345, Madison, WI 53705-0345. Be sure to mark actual photos with your name and a mailing address if you want us to return the photo. ●



Julie & Dave Farmer's 1948 F-1 pickup, sporting a '56 grille (minus 14") and a custom box with a 289 under the hood.

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Student Technician Profile – Ming Lor

BY GARY BEIER, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Ming Lor started his career ten years ago when a college friend introduced him to the idea of becoming an automotive service technician. As he says, "I wasn't too sure what I wanted to do but I always liked working on my own cars and knew that I wanted to learn more about it." He says there is always a lot more to learn and he is doing just that.

Ming was working on the general service line at Sears Automotive when he applied for the Foundation of WATDA Automotive Technician scholarship and was selected. The tuition award for the Automotive Service Associate Degree program at Fox Valley Technical College came with a great set of tools from Snap-on, which he describes as "awesome" and then the long-term payoff, an entry-level job in the service department at Kolosso Toyota in Appleton. Barb Kolosso commented on Ming's ability to learn quickly. She said, "He really is a quick learner. We're lucky when our scholarship student becomes a long-term employee."



Mr. Lor's quick mind and able skills have led him to one more professional award. He has recently qualified for full certification as an Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Master Technician and will soon be sporting that famous star on his uniform. He likes the work and especially his ability to move around repairing vehicles and then testing them on the road. "It gives me a chance to see a lot of different things," said Ming of his day-to-day routine. He attributes a lot of his professional success to the Fox Valley instructional staff. "My teachers were definitely knowledgeable" commented Ming, adding, "the academics were a challenge but the hands-on work brought it all together. The program at Fox Valley Tech was great!"

Bill Kolosso describes Ming as, "a nice, young technician who is a hard worker and fast learner. He was into major jobs almost immediately after his graduation." Ming joined the dealership during his first year of school and fit in quickly.

Thanks to Kolosso's commitment to the technician scholarship program and Ming Lor's hard work, everyone wins. ●



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A division of Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association

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NADA Director's Report

BY KEN VANCE



A friend recently took my hand and with a sincere saddened look told me he sure hopes things improve in 2012. He said he had been worried about our business and how tough the economy had been. I responded by saying thank you for your concern but actually business has been very good.

Where were you when I needed sympathy in 1981 when we completed the purchase of our first store? My wife and I were sitting in the parking lot behind the bank after signing a 18.5% interest rate capital loan. She turned to me and said, "I don't profess to be a financial genius but how do you take a second on a second?"

You see we had bought 25% of the store we were currently buying three years previous. The bank had taken a second mortgage on our home. Though we had made good strides, we still had a balance due on that original loan. That day as we sat in that parking lot after her statement I started to laugh as did Roberta. We had to laugh or we would have cried. That was thirty years ago and needless to say, things have worked out very well.



Where, but in this great country of ours, could a railroad laborer's son dream about one day owning his own business? Although that was long ago, I give thanks daily for opportunity and guidance. May your 2012 be a blessed year. ●

By now, you have received a note from me about our upcoming NADA convention in Las Vegas. It is going to be a great meeting so give it some serious thought. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to give me a call at (715) 834-4162.

2012 Calendar of Events

NADA Convention

February 4-7
Las Vegas, NV

Milwaukee Auto Show Gala

February 24
Frontier Airlines Center

Milwaukee Auto Show

February 25-March 4
Frontier Airlines Center

Foundation Event

March 8-9
Naples, FL

WISCO Show

March 17
Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells

WATDA Summer Board meeting

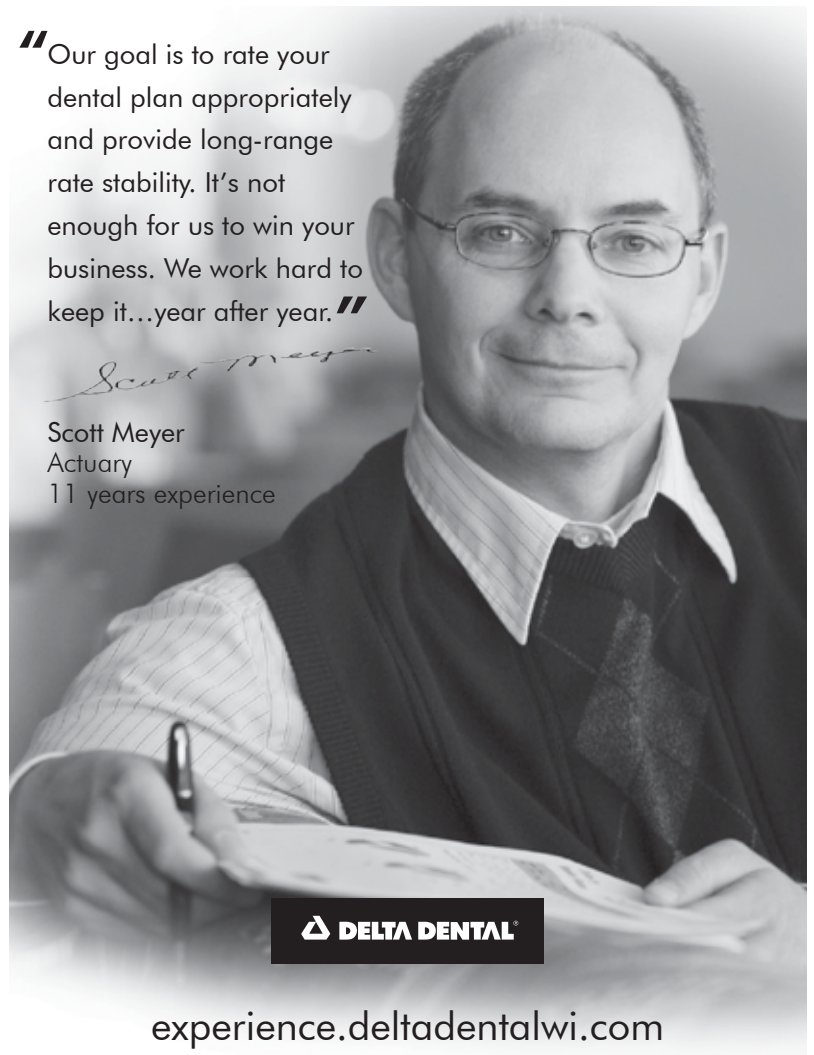
June 19-21
Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake, WI

Mark Your Calendar

Wisconsin is converting into an electronic-title-to-lienholder state resulting in substantial changes to many common dealership processes. The planned conversion date is July 1, 2012. WATDA anticipates offering training in June and will send more information as it becomes available.

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RawhideProfile

Each month a young man is selected as the Student of the Month by the staff of Starr Academy, Rawhide's private school. Winners are selected for their scholastic efforts, maintaining the high rank, helpfulness to others, and exhibiting a positive attitude.

Student of the Month: Theo The Path to Renewal

My name is Theo and I am 16 years old. I've been in Rawhide for 14 months. During my time at Rawhide, my three best memories would have to be playing basketball, skiing at Nordic Mountain, and Silver Birch winter camp.



The two most influential people at Rawhide that have helped me would be Brian Shay and Pat Stiller. Both were resident instructors in the Gillespie house. There were many reasons why each has been influential to me. Brian had many different ways of communicating with you that was like no one else. Pat because he and I had a lot of similar things we liked to do in our free time. These were things like fishing, hunting, working out, shooting hoops, and just being in the woods.

I think the programs at Rawhide are very effective because being here forced me to slow down, and process the things in my life that got me here in the first place. It has also helped me work on the things that will eventually get me home.

During my time at Rawhide I've come to know the Lord more and Rawhide has helped me get more involved in my faith. After Rawhide, I plan to join the military or go into graphic design. I am very thankful for all Rawhide has done for me. ~ Theo



The above testimonial was written by our current Student of the Month. Personal notes of encouragement are welcome.



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Legislative Update

BY MARY ANN GERARD

Former Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus was fond of saying Madison is a few square miles surrounded by reality. The “Recall Walker-sign here” posters and people are ubiquitous as cheese and sausage at a Wisconsin Christmas cocktail party. Those collecting signatures are now calling voters, the street signings and door gatherings have been taken to a new level. All this in an effort to oust our Governor with the collection of over 540,000 signatures by January 17, 2012; and then likely force a recall election for sometime in the summer of 2012.



The reality we believe is that in many parts of the rest of Wisconsin the majority of citizens are people who think Walker kept his promise to balance the State Budget and reign in government spending. He promised and delivered change. For years Wisconsin's taxpayers have footed the bill for outsized pensions, Cadillac health care plans and very generous compensation plans for our state employees-providing benefits that were rarely comparable to the private sector.

The legislation to reform Wisconsin's collective bargaining, which was signed by the Governor in March 2011, did as he promised, balance Wisconsin's budget. The continuous rise in property taxes has also been halted and cities and schools now have more control over their budgets than they ever dreamed possible providing unheard of cost-savings. One auto dealer who also serves on his local school board in a small Northern Wisconsin community reported an annual cost savings of \$500,000 in health insurance for school district employees. Those kinds of numbers have been reported all over the state; Mayor Barrett in Milwaukee said the cost savings allowed him to preserve 300-400 jobs in the school district.

Much is being made in the press of the money coming into Wisconsin to support Walker. However, the National unions are funding the cause on the other side and this is a do-or-die effort on their part, so the sky is the limit in terms of funding.

Since the collective bargaining changes, Wisconsin has been smack in the middle of the bloodiest political fight to hit our country in decades. Every state except, perhaps, North Dakota and Alaska who survive on aid revenues is watching this fight playing out in a state mostly known for Badgers and Packers. We are at a critical juncture in funding state and local governments and the forces on both sides are gearing up for a battle.

No Wisconsin citizen lacks an opinion on Governor Walker and yet, you will all be bombarded by the political machinery spinning ads night and day.

Governor Walker seems undaunted by the criticism. He often says he believes he was elected to make the tough decisions needed to move Wisconsin forward. He has stood up for Wisconsin businesses and Wisconsin taxpayers.

More Lawsuit Reforms, Pro-Business Measures, Become Law

During the Wisconsin Legislature's Fall Floor Period, lawmakers in Madison sent dozens of new laws to Governor Scott Walker's desk for his approval. A number of these bills contained lawsuit reforms aimed at reducing the costs associated with litigation for Wisconsin businesses. Here's a description of new laws that may be of particular interest to dealers.

Trespasser Liability Act (2011 Wisconsin Act 93): Some states' courts have held landowners liable for injuries to trespassers. This measure cements Wisconsin's existing law, thereby preventing courts from making landowners responsible for injuries sustained by unwanted trespassers on private property.

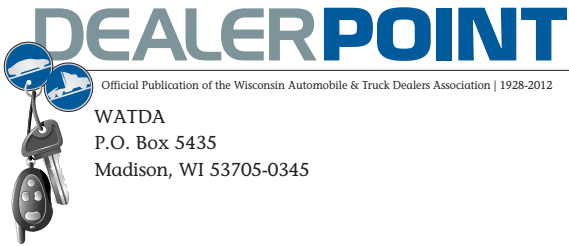
Reasonable Attorney Fees (2011 Wisconsin Act 92): Effectively limits “reasonable attorney fees,” which can be recovered by a victorious plaintiff, to three times compensatory damages. For example, if a plaintiff is awarded \$10,000 by the court, the court can only make the defendant pay up to \$30,000 in attorney fees incurred by the plaintiff. Drawn-out lawsuits and massive legal fees have been used in Wisconsin to force businesses to settle cases instead of defending themselves.

WHEDA Small Business Loans (2011 Wisconsin Act 79): Increases maximum amount of a small business loan from the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority to \$750,000. The previous maximum was \$200,000, which was too low to be useful in many business start-up and improvement scenarios.

Interest on Judgments (2011 Wisconsin Act 69): Changes in Wisconsin's unjustifiably high interest rate on court judgments from 12 percent to the federal prime rate, plus one percent. The interest rate was previously set at 12 percent in 1980, at a time when that was a reasonable rate. ●

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-  From Around the State
-  WATDA Foundation
-  NADA Director's Report
-  Legislative Update



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