

2013 Winter Blast Looking for Volunteers

Matrix Human Services, the designated charity of the 2013 Winter Blast is looking for 500 volunteers to help with the collection of food and other items during the festival.

This year's Winter Blast takes place between Friday, Feb. 8, and Sunday, Feb. 10, and is centered around the Campus Martius Park in downtown Detroit.

The event is sponsored by Quicken Loans, Blue Cross Blue Shield Blue Care Network of Michigan, the Michigan Lottery, The General Motors Foundation, Flagstar Bank, Greektown Casino, the University of Phoenix, Meijer, the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, Charter One Bank, MetroPCS and Meridian Health Plan of Michigan.

There will be live music played and the Motown Winter Blast Winter Experience will include ice sculptures, professional and amateur skating demonstrations, snow-shoeing, free skating on Campus Martius Rink, and marshmallow roasting.

Matrix director of volunteers Linda Garrison said they need people to help out with collecting food and other donated items and to help at the gate with the collection of money from those entering the festival.

Garrison said Matrix has been around since 1906. For many years, it was the League of Catholic Women, but the organization changed its name a couple of decades ago because they didn't want people to think they were limiting their help to just one denomination.

Garrison had served on the Matrix board of directors for 12 years, retiring from the position in 2011. In October of 2012, she went to work for the organization as a volunteer to serve as director of volunteers.

"We need volunteers for the general event to collect the canned goods, books and money at each entrance and to staff our information booth," Garrison said. "Last year, we had tremendous participation from supporters and staff. Everyone had a wonderful time volunteering and families enjoyed the event."

Garrison said the Winter Blast

is a relatively new event. It was developed to create an innovative backdrop for Super Bowl XL. It debuted in January of 2005 to kick off the official countdown to Super Bowl XL in Detroit.

This first-time event attracted more than 200,000 people and featured a special combination of entertainment and fun seasonal events that celebrated the city of Detroit.

The 2006 Motown Winter Blast was an even bigger hit, attracting

nearly 1 million metro Detroiters and out-of-town guests. The 2007-2010 Winter Blast continued to keep the spirit of Super Bowl XL alive in the city, and developed new programs designed to promote quality of life, economic impact, community service, Garrison said.

For more information on volunteering, Garrison suggested people can visit matrixhumanservices.com/go/motown-winter-blast-2013.

New Car Sales Off to Roaring Start

The January new-vehicle selling rate is off to a strong start in 2013, with the highest retail selling rate for the month of January in five years, according to a monthly sales forecast developed by J.D. Power and Associates' Power Information Network (PIN) and LMC Automotive.

January new-vehicle retail sales are expected to come in at 812,600 vehicles, which represents a seasonally adjusted annualized rate (SAAR) of 12.9 million units, and well ahead of the expected 12.4-million-unit annual level for 2013. Retail transactions are the most accurate measurement of true underlying consumer demand for new vehicles.

"The year is off to a fast start, which bodes well for the remainder of 2013," said John

Humphrey, senior vice president of global automotive operations at J.D. Power and Associates.

"Building on the momentum the industry has been gaining over the past two years, sales remain on a trajectory to return to pre-recession levels within the next few years."

Total light-vehicle sales in January 2013 are projected to reach 1,027,700 units, an eight percent increase from January 2012. Fleet share is expected to reach 21 percent, considerably lower than the 25 percent share in January 2012, signaling continued discipline in the industry-related rental car fleet sales.

North America light-vehicle production was 15.4 million units in 2012, which is 18 percent higher than in 2011.

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