

# Tech Center News™

WARREN, MICHIGAN – EST. 1976

VOL. 37 NO. 29

News of the Automotive, Supplier and Defense Community

MARCH 25, 2013

## How New Program Brought Customers to Buick

GM's Experience Buick leasing program – which comes with a two-year term with a single monthly payment that includes entertainment, safety and maintenance features – has led Buick to double its leasing business as a share of total sales over the last 12 months.

Launched in mid-March of 2012, Experience Buick leases come with such extras as SiriusXM satellite radio, OnStar Directions and Connections, designed to make the leases more attractive to the public.

According to customer data collected late last year, 55 percent of Experience Buick customers are new to the brand. That number rises to 63 percent for the Regal luxury sport sedan and 66 percent for the Verano compact luxury sedan. Including leases and sales, a higher per-

centage of customers in 2012 were new to Buick – 43 percent – than any year on record.

About 74 percent of customers polled said Experience Buick played a major role in their decision, and that each element – maintenance, two-year term, satellite radio and OnStar – were all among their top 10 decision factors. Two-thirds of the customers indicated they would definitely consider another Buick for their next vehicle.

Dealers in some cities have seen even more dramatic lease penetration with Experience Buick. From mid-March last year through February 2013, leasing as a share of sales was up 23 percentage points in Los Angeles, 19 percentage points in San Francisco, 15 percentage points in Miami and 11 percentage points in Atlanta.

“When this was introduced, I knew it was going to be special for us,” said Mark Naszaradi, general manager at Williamson Buick in Miami. “Our city is a very lease-dominated market, so we knew if we could get the word out about Experience Buick, it'd be a great thing.”

“Since then,” said Naszaradi, “we've gone from averaging about 30 Buicks each month to as high as 80 in September, with a majority of our customers trading in import brands. And leasing has risen from 30 percent of our business to more than 70 percent.”

Naszaradi is confident that Experience Buick's momentum will continue. “Within the next year, we'll start seeing these customers coming back, and with everything that's included in these leases, the experience

they're getting, we've gotten feedback that they'll stay with us.”

When the Experience Buick customers who leased vehicles in March 2012 return in 2013, every model in the Buick showroom will be new or significantly updated, with redesigned Enclave, LaCrosse and Regal models, a Verano with an available 250-hp turbocharged engine and new safety features, and the all-new Encore luxury small crossover.

“Our vehicles and our dealership facilities deliver on what today's luxury car customers expect,” said Brian Sweeney, vice president of Buick Sales and Service. “Experience Buick gives customers a low-commitment, all-inclusive way to see that we're a modern and inviting brand with five unique and appealing models.”



Lidia Gulausky

## Defense Suppliers Gather to Network And Discuss News

by Jim Stickford

Members of the Michigan chapter of the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) had the chance to meet, mix and hear the latest news at a special mixer held in the GM Heritage Center in Sterling Heights March 20.

Chapter President Nancy Loerch said they have these get-togethers every once in a while to give members a chance to network and to share news of value within the defense community. She said they gather hundreds of members from many different companies, as well as from the government, to talk with each other about the issues of the day in a relaxed setting.

One attendee was Tom Labada, director of business development at Waltonen. He attended the mixer with a colleague at Waltonen, Shawn Morrissey, who is a retired U.S. Army colonel.

Labada said Waltonen is an engineering firm that employs about 200 people. It's based in Warren and about 40 percent of its business comes from the auto industry, 40 percent from defense and 20 percent from aerospace.

“I've been a member of NDIA for about five years,” Labada said. “For the military, we work on anything from combat vehicles to the Air Force's A-10 plane. Right now, we're re-engineering that plane and recertifying the tooling process.”

The A-10, known as the Warthog, was developed as a tank-buster back in 1971. The plane hasn't been made in years, but it is still used by the Air Force, Labada said, adding that many of the designers are dead and a lot of the companies that made parts are gone or they just can't find the specs for the plane after 40 years. As a result, he said, companies like Waltonen are working to almost reverse-engineer the plane and re-develop tooling techniques to build spare parts.

“The NDIA is excellent at helping us keep up to date on what's going on in the defense industry based around Detroit,” Labada said. “The defense community here is both large in numbers, but small like a community where we all know of each other. Defense also plays a large part in the overall Detroit technology and engineering community, so it's good that we can get together and talk at events like this.”

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## Suppliers Exceed GM Expectations, Earn Automaker's Major Awards

General Motors recognized 83 of its best global automotive suppliers last week during its 21st annual Supplier of the Year awards ceremony at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit.

“Suppliers play a critical role in our business and we're thrilled to recognize those we consider to be world-class,” said Grace Lieblein, GM vice president, Global Purchasing and Supply Chain.

“Each winning company consistently exceeded our expectations by being innovative, delivering high-quality products and services on time and by creating outstanding value.”

The Supplier of the Year award is given to less than 1 percent of GM's approximately 18,500 suppliers around the world. The winners are recognized for delivering innovative technology, superior quality, timely crisis manage-

ment and competitive, total-enterprise cost solutions.

In addition to the Supplier of the Year awards, GM introduced a new honor called the Overdrive award. Four companies received the award, which recognizes suppliers who have undertaken extraordinary initiatives that drove exceptional results for GM's business.

“The Overdrive Award recognizes those world-class companies that have truly gone above and beyond,” Lieblein said. “They have not only met the demands of our business, they have also demonstrated through their actions a great commitment to their communities.”

The companies have headquarters in 17 countries with regional manufacturing and support services all over the world. Of the 83 recipients, five are cer-

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## MCC Partners with Macomb County To Attract and Retain Businesses

by Ross Raybin

Macomb Community College has long been a staple of education in Macomb County and was recently recognized by officials for their commitment to Macomb.

The college was named the 2013 Economic Development Partner of the Year by the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development during the first-ever Macomb Business Awards held last month.

“It was a great surprise to all of us,” said Holger Ekanger, director of workforce and continuing education, engineering and advanced technology at MCC. “I don't think anyone expected the award.”

The college has partnered with the county for roughly 25 years now and helps attract and retain businesses to the area.

“We all work together to make the county an attractive place to live and work,” said Ekanger.

It's done through something called 4M, which includes the Macomb County Planning and Economic Development Department, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board (Michigan Works!) and MCC.

According to Ekanger, 4M was formed about two-and-a-half years ago and is a smaller, solidified version of a former entity geared specifically to Macomb County.

“We know each other well,” he said. “We look at the unique needs of employers and how to best meet those needs.”

One way they achieve this is through development programs at the college. Some of the programs are designed specifically

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## Jay Leno Drives TARDEC's Alpha Combat

by Jim Stickford

Jay Leno's “Jay's Garage,” looked a little different recently.

There, for all to see, was not a souped-up, aerodynamic Mustang or a racecar-like Corvette Stingray, but a hulky armored-car-looking combat vehicle that looks more like a tank than a racecar.

The vehicle, TARDEC's FED Alpha, was making a guest appearance on Leno's Website, “Jay's Garage.”

FED stands for Fuel Efficiency Demonstrator and two vehicles, an Alpha and a Bravo were built under the aegis of the U.S. Army's Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC).

Project engineer Rachel Agusti said the Alpha was designed in Van Buren Township and the Bravo was designed in Sterling Heights. She likened the two vehicles to concept cars that would get heavily tested by the Army so that they would know which technologies helped improve fuel efficiency.

Neither the Alpha or the Bravo



The U.S. Army's new FED Alpha “concept” vehicle.

will be going into production, Agusti said. But should a company like General Dynamics ever wish to design a new vehicle in the same class as the Alpha and Bravo FEDs, they would know which technologies worked.

Agusti said the Alpha was “key turn” running by September of 2010. The Army finished testing it at the Chelsea Testing Grounds in July of 2012. The vehicle was then taken to the Army's main

testing grounds in Aberdeen, Md., for further testing.

The Bravo was “key turn” running by December of 2011. It was just sent to Aberdeen for its final testing.

“These vehicles are really just research and development projects,” Agusti said. “Once all the testing has been done, we will take that information and share

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## Social Media Seminar Set For April 12

Michael Bernacchi, marketing professor at the University of Detroit-Mercy, will present “Social Media – The Ultimate Feedback Loop: Opportunities & Challenges” at the Marketing & Sales Executives of Detroit (MSED) professional development seminar on Friday, April 12.

Bernacchi will discuss successful social media strategies and tactics for business, as well as its effects on corporate culture and strategy.

The professional development seminar will be held at the Management Education Center located at 811 West Square Lake Road in Troy. The event will begin with registration, networking and breakfast at 8 a.m., the presentation at 8:30 a.m. and a question-and-answer session and networking at 10 a.m.

Cost for the event is \$55 for MSED members and \$70 for non-members. To register or receive more information, contact Meeting Coordinators at (248) 643-6950 or visit the MSED website at [www.msedetroit.org](http://www.msedetroit.org).

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