

Oxford High Team Triumphs At Ford/AAA Auto Contest

Our neighboring community to the north, Oxford, should be quite proud of its own.

The two-man student team from Oxford High School took home the first place trophy at the Michigan state final of the annual Ford/AAA Student Auto Skills competition, held April 24 at Macomb Community College Expo Center in Warren.

Joshua English and Michael Doell, both 17, took top honors for flawlessly diagnosing and repairing the deliberately planted electrical and mechanical “bugs” in the 2013 Ford Focus SE they were assigned in just 29 minutes, 10 seconds. Their instructor is Dan Balsley.

A total of 31 Michigan schools had teams competing in the contest, diagnosing and repairing identically equipped and “bugged” Ford Focus cars.

For finishing in first place, English and Doell each received a trophy and a \$10,000 scholarship.

“It was a great contest. There was a lot of excitement,” AAA Michigan spokeswoman Nancy Cain said. “We had a lot of spectators.

“The winning team was the first to close the hood, and drive their car to the judging area. They had a perfect car, so there was a big round of applause for them.”

She noted that isn’t always the case. Sometimes, the first team to finish has failed to make all the repairs without mistakes. The first-place rank goes to the first team to correct all the bugs without mistakes.

The Oxford team will go on to represent Michigan at the national Ford/AAA Student Auto Skills Competition, which will be held at Ford World Headquarters in Dearborn June 11.

Cain said they will have a chance to win their share of hundreds of thousands of dollars in



Winners Michael Doell, left, and Joshua English, both of Oxford.

additional scholarships and prizes up for grabs, and perhaps get a start to their automotive careers.

Capturing second place was the team of Matt Schultz and Jimmy Ritzenheim of Dickinson Iron Technical Educational Center in Kingsford, winning trophies and prizes. Third-place

honors went to Ethan Westfield and Coby Nykerk of Careerline Technology Center in Holland, who also took home trophies and prizes.

Cain said that including the state and national contest, millions of dollars in scholarships and prizes will be awarded for this year’s competitions.

AH Townhall Sets Hiring Guidelines

The Auburn Hills Chamber of Commerce is holding a Talent Townhall 8-10 a.m. Wednesday, May 22, at Oakland University, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, Rochester, in the Gold Rooms.

Featured speakers are Ron Watson, assistant vice president of human resources, Oakland University, and Todd Lancaster, president, YourSource Management Group.

Attendees will learn what makes an employee a good fit and discover the secret to ensuring long-term employment success.

Members and non-members can register by visiting the website at auburnhillschamber.com. Attendance qualifies each individual for 1.5 HR Certification Institute credits.

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Best SUV Ads Tell Stories, Solve Problems

by Irena Granaas

About a dozen business professionals attended the recent Phoenix Marketing International web conference, “Key Trends Among the Top Performing Automotive SUV TV Ads,” and learned how the top-performing ads connected with their target audiences and resulted in sales.

GM, Ford and Chrysler all had a notably effective TV ad for an SUV, based on results provided by the marketing analysis firm.

Phoenix performed an online analysis of TV ads tested from January to December 2012, representing more than 70,000 evaluations of 385 TV ads tested online.

SUV ads were divided into luxury and non-luxury categories. Out of five luxury brand ads found to be most effective, Cadillac was the sole domestic brand ranked in the top five. Two domestic automakers, Ford and Chrysler (Jeep), made the top five in most effective non-luxury brand TV ads.

According to Brian Maraone, who leads Phoenix’s automotive research practice, Phoenix Automotive is the preeminent source of market information on consumer vehicle purchase motivations. The firm’s subscription-based syndicated research studies track product or service usage, purchase behavior, brand perceptions, advertising and publicity impact.

Maraone said webinar participants were able to type in questions to the webinar system during the presentation and ask questions at the end. Phoenix ranked ads based on marketing effectiveness.

Phoenix insights on the most successful ads indicated they used relatable situations, kept viewers engaged and focused on feature functionality or vehicle capability.

Viewers responded favorably to an innovative solution to a common problem. Ads tend to be lighthearted, even talking about a serious issue like safety.

Ford made effective use of humor in a TV spot titled, “One Foot Forward,” which showed a man – with both hands full – reaching forward with his foot to open the liftgate on a 2013 Ford Escape.

Maraone said this is an example of a key TV ad trend people are going to see more of – storytelling.

“Rather than simply listing the features that a vehicle offers, advertisers are demonstrating the features in a way that communicates meaningful benefit,” he said.

“This Ford ad does so in a lighthearted way by introducing a particularly common problem – trying to open a liftgate with your hands full – and showing people carrying things and trying to get into their vehicles in real-life situations.

The ad introduces the problem, and then tells a story of a Ford engineer who solves the problem by developing the foot-activated liftgate on the 2013 Ford Escape.”

Maraone said the ad is relatable and meaningful to viewers. For example, one person said, “I like how this company thinks outside of the box with coming up with new features in its vehicles.”

“Why didn’t anyone think of that sooner? Like when I had two small kids and 10 bags of groceries?” commented another individual.

Chrysler scored a hit with a 2012 Jeep ad titled, “No Obstacles.” While remaining true to the Jeep brand as an icon for rugged off-roading, it coyly suggests that at times the Jeep might be a bit too capable.

“This ad is slightly different than the Ford ad in that instead of dealing with a feature used for convenience, it focuses on a feature for performance/capability (Select Terrain Dial),” Maraone explained.

“It demonstrates the vehicle’s performance by showing the Grand Cherokee driving through heavy snow without effort, and also works in a lighthearted joke. The ad concludes with the line, ‘Even heavy snowstorms won’t keep you from getting to work. Our apologies.’

“This ad is also relatable and meaningful to viewers, which came through in the open-ended comments: ‘Driving in bad weather is a concern for me. This car would make me feel safe to do so,’ said one viewer.

“‘It is unique and hits home for me because I always need to be to work on time even in bad weather,’ commented another.”

GM’s winning Luxury SUV ad was for Cadillac, titled, “Can Handle Close calls.” In the spot, a driver avoids crashing into a bus thanks to advanced brake technology.

Viewers watch scenes from the driver’s life flash before his eyes in the seconds before the car’s brakes engage.

“Similar to what we found in the non-luxury SUV category, ads with relatable stories, characters and situations can have more of an impact,” said Maraone.

“Whereas the most effective non-luxury ads tended to be more lighthearted or humorous,

we found that top-performing ads in the luxury category had a more serious tone,” he added.

“This Cadillac ad demonstrates how its innovative auto-dry brakes can prevent collisions when driving in slippery road conditions. The ad suggests that because the brakes are so effective in emergency situations, your life will have to flash before your eyes ‘even faster.’”

Maraone commented that viewers found the ad “impactful, relatable, and responded favorably” to the tense, real-life demonstration.

Among viewer comments: “I liked the imagery with the child, and the message of safety being




Top-performing ad featured Jeep in a winter storm.

important for your family’s sake had an impact.”

Said another person, “Very creative, clever way to show that

Cadillacs are very safe and include a new brake technology.”

“It was emotional. It had a story. Memorable,” said a third.



Heating for the Homeless

DID YOU KNOW?

- This intense winter weather is having a devastating effect on the homeless. Grace Centers of Hope beds are AT CAPACITY with 200 men, women, and children seeking warm, safe shelter.
- Grace Centers of Hope has been giving hope to the helpless since 1942, and is one of Southeast Michigan’s oldest and largest homeless shelters.
- Their annual “Heating for the Homeless” campaign is an effort to raise \$80,000 to shelter men, women and children from these bitter cold months.
- With the temperatures at their coldest, will you consider donating \$80 for Heating the Homeless? Your donation will help provide warm, safe shelter during these winter months.


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Tech News

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