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## Deficit-Burdened Avondale Schools See Light at End Of Tunnel in 2014

After grappling with a serious deficit for a number of years, the Avondale School District expects to be out of the red in the near future.

District officials announced at a June 24 school board meeting that the district is poised to exit deficit financing at the end of the 2013-14 school year. The district is projecting a fund balance deficit of slightly over \$1 million to end the current school year.

At the lowest point in its financial fortunes in the district's history, the district showed a deficit of more than \$2.45 million. The shortfall originated in the 2006-07 school year and, according to district sources, was caused by reductions in State Aid, a \$1.8 million property tax settlement, and rising health care and retirement costs.

"This has been a journey that allowed us to protect programs and student achievement while we adjusted to the financial realities around us," said Avondale Superintendent Dr. George Heitsch. "Through it all, the Avondale staff continued to rise to their level of professional training to successfully meet the needs of our students."

Heitsch also praised the Avondale School Board for taking steps to bring the district out of its deficit.

"Under the leadership of school board president Sid Lockhart and former president and current Board Member Cynthia Pettit, the Avondale School Board has ably guided the district to financial stability and continued student achievement.

"I commend the entire board for their commitment to advancing Avondale and the community as a whole," he said.

Avondale School District encompasses portions of Auburn Hills, Bloomfield Township, Troy and Rochester Hills.

## Golf Clinic Serves As Low-Key Way To Grow Network

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Chamber of Commerce. "It has the potential to be a powerful business tool, allowing professionals and clients to spend hours of uninterrupted time, establishing a relationship and trust.

"We hold several golf events throughout the year because of this. Women asked for skill development in this area to boost their networking opportunities."

The chamber has scheduled two other golf events, a co-branded event July 25 at Paint Creek Country Club with the Orion Area Chamber of Commerce, and Open...Fore Business, set for Aug. 15 at Fieldstone Golf Course.

# Classic Packards Gather at Club's National Meet Nearby

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rained on. The show ran until 1:30 p.m. and the rain didn't start until 4:30 p.m., so people had plenty of time to get their cars tucked away.

Luksik said, compared with the 2012 Packard Club National Gathering in Williamsburg, Va., the number of cars and people in attendance was up about 60 percent.

"Everybody likes to come to Detroit, because it was the home of Packard for so many years," he said.

A bustling week of activities began Sunday, June 23, as club members had the option of attending an Ice Cream Social at Stahls Automotive Foundation (museum), about 30 miles from the hotel in Chesterfield. The museum is said to be the home of more than 100 of the finest collectible cars from important time frames in automotive history.

On Monday, June 24, club members headed out to the Packard Proving Grounds on Van Dyke in Shelby Township, where, in addition to a tour of the grounds and a picnic lunch, guests were treated to a presentation by "The Ladies of Packard," three very special guest speakers – Margaret Dun-

ning, who is 103 and still drives her 1930 Packard roadster she has owned for more than 65 years; Fran Hale, who shared her memories as a secretary at Packard from 1942 to 1954, and as executive secretary to PMCC President Hugh Ferry; and MaryEllen Dohrs, an industrial designer who was instrumental in the interior design of the 1955 and 1956 Packard Caribbean and Packard 400.

The Monday evening welcome party featured an Open House at Cranbrook Art Museum a short distance from the hotel, where Brian Kaufman, videographer for *The Detroit Free Press* showed his documentary on the history of the Packard Plant.

On Tuesday, June 25, club members had a choice of bus tours to the Flint area or to Detroit. Flint sights included visits to the Sloan Museum and the attached Buick Museum. In Detroit, the tour included the Packard Plant just east of downtown, where visitors were able to see what the plant looked like when it closed in 1956, just before Packard moved to South Bend, Ind., when it merged with Studebaker.

Wednesday, June 26, featured swap meets where Packard owners could get parts for their clas-

sic rides; and organizers also held technical sessions where owners could learn about repairing their cars and keeping their Packards on the road, followed by an evening dinner cruise down the Detroit River.

Centenarian Dunning, who celebrated her 103rd birthday during meet week, was the unquestioned queen of the river cruise. Dunning was a passenger on one of three boats ferrying club members down the river to view stately homes on the Canadian and U.S. sides of the river formerly owned by Packard executives and their families.

At one point, the boats converged so that the hundreds of passengers could all sing "Happy Birthday" to Dunning. The birthday gal wowed fellow passengers after she accepted the invitation from the skipper of her boat to come up to the wheelhouse.

Luksik reports that Dunning, without cane or walking aid of any kind, climbed three sets of stairs and then took a turn steering the boat along the Canadian shoreline.

In terms of Packard pride, Thursday, June 27, was the culminating event that gave all owners a chance to compete for awards and trophies at Rochester Park in Rochester.

"We handed out 38 trophies to the cars that won events in their respective classes," said Luksik.

One thing to notice about the Packards at the meet – these cars are driven, not just backed out of a trailer. Some of these cars have been "part of the family" for years, taken on memorable family outings, proms, weddings and cruises.

Accordingly, two cars received "Long Distance" trophies. In the post-World War II category, a 1956 Packard Caribbean whose owner drove it 1,100 miles to attend the meet collected the trophy. And in the pre-war category, judges awarded the Long Distance trophy to a 1936 Packard driven 680 miles for the meet.

Vendors and businesses near the park were pleased, Luksik reported, with many doubling their average amount of customers for the day.

About judging day, Luksik commented, "We were very happy that people took the time to come visit us and learn more about Packards . . . A lot of people think Packard was a part of GM or some other American car company, but it was an independent automaker, manufacturer of what is arguably the most prestigious car built in America, and it all happened in Detroit."



1931 Buick 50 Series

## Buick Picks Its 'Best of Decades' List To Help Mark 110 Years of Regal Cars

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Buick's first decade honor goes to the 1904 Model B. The first one of the line was sold to Dr. Herbert H. Hills of Flint, decades before the brand developed its reputation as a "doctor's car."

• 1913-1922: The 1916 D-45 Touring was the top-selling model in 1916, a year when Buick switched its lineup from four- to six-cylinder engines. Sales tripled that year and reached six digits for the first time. Buick became the top-selling brand in the industry a few years later, with five-passenger touring models remaining most popular.

• 1923-1932: The 1931 Series 50 was the best-selling model in the year of another upswing of powertrains – from six- to eight-cylinder engines. The more powerful engines, paired with a major design overhaul the year before, helped boost Buick's image during the Great Depression.

• 1933-1942: Harlow Curtice became Buick's president in 1933, and three years later, a model range including the 1936 Century showed his revolutionary vision for the brand. Its streamlined designs were a dramatic change and Buick's engines grew more powerful, making the Century the first Buick to reach 100 mph. Sales grew from 53,249 in 1935 to 168,596 in 1936 and continued to rise in the years to come.

• 1943-1952: Buick's most iconic design features, including signature waterfall grilles and port-holes, date to the 1949 Roadmas-

ter. One of the most collectible Buicks of all time, the Roadmaster even became a Hollywood star in the 1988 film, "Rain Man."

• 1953-1962: Buick celebrated its 50th birthday with the 1953 Skylark, an opulent, limited-production convertible with advanced design and technology. Each had Italian wire wheels and the owner's name engraved on the steering wheel. The same year also marked the first year of Buick V8 engines and a new twin-turbine Dynaflo automatic transmission.

• 1963-1972: Buick's most famous production design is the 1963 Riviera, a powerful sport coupe said to be inspired by a Rolls-Royce that Buick design boss Bill Mitchell saw through a fog in London.

• 1973-1982: Amid an oil crisis, the 1975 Regal offered a standard V6 engine at a time when other mid-size sedans offered only gas-thirstier V8s.

• 1983-1992: Buick's lightweight, high-tech V6 engines, mixed with the brand's success in NASCAR, resulted in the brand's most iconic performance car, the 1987 GNX. Its 276-hp turbocharged and intercooled V6 delivered 0-60 mph acceleration in just 4.6 seconds, according to *Car and Driver* magazine.

• 1993-2002: A 1999 Century was Buick's first model built in China for the local market. Although Buick has a long reputation as a prestigious brand in China (one in six cars on Shanghai roads in 1930 were Buicks, according to the city's govern-



1949 Buick Roadmaster



1953 Buick Skylark

ment), production there has driven the brand's success over the past decade. China is now Buick's largest market, with 700,007 vehicles sold in 2012.

• 2003-2012: The 2008 Enclave luxury crossover ushered in Buick's current design language and brand focus. Along with the LaCrosse luxury sedan, which went on sale as a 2010 model, the Enclave introduced buyers to a new era of Buicks with "leading design, quietness, quality and safety."

Personally, Richards said, his favorite Buick of all time is the Grand National, a variant of the Buick Regal that came out in the 1980s.

He said he liked its "more performance"-oriented ride.

His favorite current Buick is the Enclave. He said that, as a father of three, he likes how it's a "nice people hauler."

Overall, Richards said, Buick's brand has made something of a comeback in the last five years. The average buyer age dropped from 64 to 57.

Sales in May of 2013 were up 9.9 percent compared with May of 2013.

Calendar year-to-date, brand sales are up 16 percent com-

pared with the same time in 2012. That beats GM's overall sales increase number of 9.9 percent, Richardson said.

And Buick's brand in China is also doing well.

Last year, the company sold 700,000 Buicks in China, compared with about 180,000 in North America.

"Buicks are seen as status symbols there," Richards said. "In China, people pay cash for cars, and the vehicle is supposed to say something about the buyer and the buyer's family."

Overall, as much as Buick has a storied past, it also has a bright future, Richards said.

## Golfers Mix It Up At Summer Event

The Auburn Hills Chamber of Commerce, along with the Orion Area Chamber of Commerce, presents a Summer Social member networking golf outing July 25, 3 p.m., at Paint Creek Country Club in Lake Orion.

Cost of the program includes nine holes of golf plus cart, followed by a complimentary reception. For additional information or to register go to auburnhillschamber.com.