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Detroit Auto Scene®

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Mary Barra

Barra Looks to 'Strong Year' for the Auto Industry in 2015

The year 2015 should be a strong year for the car industry and a strong year for General Motors.

That's what GM CEO Mary Barra said in a small media roundtable held at GM headquarters on Jan. 8.

She said the company expects light-vehicle sales in the United States to reach a range of 16.5 million to 17.0 million units in 2015.

The last time industry sales reached 17 million units was in 2001. The industry delivered 16.5 million light vehicles last year, Barra said.

"The U.S. economy and vehicle sales have been rebounding since 2009, and we believe there is still plenty of room for the auto industry to grow," Barra said.

"The strength of the labor market, better job security and the recovery in home prices have consumers feeling pretty good about the future, so we expect people will continue to replace their older cars and trucks. The recent sharp drop in fuel prices and rising incomes should only add to their confidence.

"The most important change we see coming is the return of younger and first-time buyers to the market."

Strong real GDP growth, Barra said, is expected to create new job opportunities in 2015 – as many as 200,000 new jobs per month. That should drive higher labor force participation and better job prospects for recent college graduates.

Third-party studies reinforce this view, said GM spokesman Jim Cain. Third parties include the National Association of Colleges and Employers, which said in its "Job Outlook 2015" report that employers plan to hire 8.3 percent more new college graduates from the class of 2015 for their U.S. operations than they did from the class of 2014.

"A growing jobs market and new vehicles that exceed expectations for fuel economy and high technology are the best ways to rekindle the love affair America's youth have historically had with cars and trucks," Barra said.

Barra said Chevrolet is particularly well-positioned to attract new customers in 2015 since it has reentered the mid-size pickup segment with the Colorado and launched seven small cars and crossovers in the last four years, including the Spark, Sonic and Cruze, which all posted their best-ever annual sales in 2014, as well as the Trax, which began arriving in showrooms in December.

The Trax, Barra said, is GM's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Customers Now Can Create One-of-One Viper

Fans of the Viper will be glad to know that Dodge has kicked up personal service to the next level, according to Fiat Chrysler spokesman Dan Reid.

The brand is giving its Viper flagship "an unprecedented level of exclusivity" with its new "program that gives Viper customers the opportunity to create their very own one-of-one American hand-built exotic performance car," said Reid.

The new Dodge Viper GTC model, Reid said, can be custom-tailored with more than 25 million unique build combinations. Customers will be able to configure their one-of-a-kind Vipers at drivesrt.com

Options include 8,000 hand-painted exterior colors, 24,000 hand-painted custom stripes, 10 wheel options, 16 interior trims, 6 aero packages, as well as a host of standalone options, Reid said.

Dodge will send a complimentary 1:18-scale Viper speed form replica to buyers to confirm their color selection. Each one-of-one Viper will feature a personalized instrument panel badge with the customer's chosen name to commemorate their design.

Reid said that Dodge is also offering a new Viper Concierge service, which provides an exclusive point of contact throughout the custom Viper build process.

All "sold" customer orders include live Viper Ambassador Owner's Portal online build tracking.

Reid said that this allows customers to follow along the build process with VIP

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

It's possible to special-order a Viper GTC with 8,000 different colors.

GM Retail Sales Up 23 Percent

General Motors dealers in the United States delivered 274,483 vehicles last month for the automaker's best December sales in seven years, said GM spokesman Jim Cain.

Total sales were up 19 percent compared to a year ago. Retail sales were up 23 percent and fleet deliveries were up 6 percent.

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2015 Buick Encore

Fiat Chrysler Sales Up from Last Year

Fiat Chrysler reported U.S. sales of 193,261 units, a 20 percent increase compared with sales in December 2013 (161,007 units), and the group's best December sales since 2004.

The Chrysler, Jeep, Ram Truck and Fiat brands each posted year-over-year sales gains in December compared with the same month a year ago, said

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2015 Chrysler 200

Ford and F-Series Keep No.1 Ranking

Ford continues as America's best-selling vehicle brand for the fifth consecutive year and the F-Series remains the best-selling vehicle for the 33rd straight year and best-selling truck for the 38th year in a row, said Ford CEO Mark Fields.

Ford Motor Company's U.S. sales totaled 2,480,942 vehicles in 2014, primarily due to the all-new F-150 changeover and a

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2015 Ford Escape

2014 New Car Sales Likely To Approach 2000 Record

DETROIT (AP) – Confident in the economy and cheered by cheap gas, Americans are likely to push new car sales to their highest level in a decade this year.

Analysts expect sales to reach 17 million for the first time since 2005. That's close to the record of 17.3 million set in 2000.

Low gas prices are giving buyers more confidence, whether they're buying their first subcompact or upgrading to a larger SUV.

Gas prices started this year at an average of $2.23 per gallon, down 33 percent from the beginning of 2014, according to AAA.

The Energy Department estimates that lower gasoline prices will save U.S. households $550 this year.

Popular new vehicles, like the Jeep Cherokee and Subaru Outback, are also drawing buyers.

Sales have now grown for five consecutive years – a rarity in the volatile auto industry.

While sales are growing, the pace has slowed from double-digit increases in 2011 and 2012. That's good news for buyers, who can expect to see bigger discounts in competitive segments like midsize cars as automakers fight to steal sales from each other.

Alec Gutierrez, an analyst with the car buying site Kelley Blue Book, thinks sales could stay in the 17-million range for the next two or three years if interest rates stay low and the U.S. economy remains healthy.

December, with its holiday discounts and warmer-than-usual weather, brought buyers out in droves, with sales up 11 percent over the previous year. Automakers reported December and full-year sales last week.

For all of 2014, sales were up 6 percent to 16.5 million vehicles, according to Autodata Corp. That was the biggest year for the industry since 2006.

Back then – as now – the Ford F-Series was the country's best-selling vehicle and the midsize Toyota Camry was the best-selling car.

The top-selling SUV was the Ford Explorer, but it was only No. 14 among all vehicles sold, according to Ward's AutoInfoBank. In 2014, two smaller SUVs – the Honda CR-V and the Ford Escape – cracked the top 10 in sales as customers turned away from small and midsize cars when car-like handling and low gas prices made such vehicles more appealing.

Toyota, Fiat Chrysler and General Motors all reported 2014 sales increases, and Nissan, Subaru, Hyundai and Honda reported record numbers for the year.

Ford's sales were flat, but the Ford brand remained the top-selling brand in the U.S. Among major automakers, only Volkswagen's sales fell.

Here are more details about 2014 and trends to watch for this year:

• BEST-SELLERS: General Motors – with its Buick, Chevrolet, Cadillac and GMC brands – sold the most vehicles in the U.S. in 2014 despite a scandal over the delayed recall of faulty ignition

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2014 Jeep Sales Up 39 Percent as Brand Passes 1 Million

The Jeep brand recorded sales of more than 1 million units across the globe in 2014, setting an all-time record for the third consecutive year. Sales of 1,017,019 Jeep vehicles bettered the brand's 2013 record of 731,565 by 39 percent.

"2014 marks the fifth consecutive year that Jeep vehicle sales have increased both globally and in the U.S. market," said Mike Manley, president and CEO – Jeep Brand.

"While we are especially pleased with the way the new Jeep Cherokee is resonating in the marketplace, the fact is that every vehicle in the Jeep lineup recorded significant worldwide sales gains.

"While achieving 1 million vehicle sales in 2014 was certainly a milestone, 2015 will be a transformational year in the globalization of the brand, as we begin local manufacturing in Brazil and return to local manufacturing in China after an absence of nearly a decade. We will strive to continue our sales momentum in 2015 with a full lineup of capable and efficient SUVs – including the all-new 2015 Jeep Renegade as it arrives in showrooms in markets around the world."

In addition to its 39 percent global increase, Jeep sales rose 41 percent in the U.S. in 2014, with a record 692,348 total sales, said Chrysler spokesman Ralph Kisiel.

Jeep sales rose 40 percent in the Europe, Middle East & Africa region and 42 percent in the Asia-Pacific region in 2014. In China – the world's largest automobile market – sales rose 49 percent.

Jeep vehicle sales were led globally and in the U.S. by Grand Cherokee (279,567 global; 183,786 U.S.), Cherokee (236,289 global; 178,508 U.S.), Wrangler (234,579 global; 175,328 U.S.), Compass (134,629 global; 61,264 U.S.), and Patriot (122,387 global; 93,462 U.S.).

2014 marked the fifth consecutive year of increased Jeep sales, both globally and in the U.S. In 2013, the brand recorded increases of 4 percent global and 3 percent in the U.S., Kisiel said. The previous three years saw increases of 19 percent global/13 percent U.S. (2012), 41 percent global/44 percent U.S. (2011) and 24 percent global/26 percent U.S. (2010).

When asked about how the Jeep brand did around the world in 2014, James Morrison, director of the Jeep brand, said that Jeep's brand image is "well defined" with Jeep drivers worldwide.

"The Jeep brand is interpreted as giving its drivers freedom and adventure," Morrison said. "And that boils down to how these vehicles are designed and how they're built."

2015 Jeep Wrangler Sahara Limited

Turton and Roosa Named to Key GM Public Policy Posts

General Motors kicked off the new year by making two key appointments to the Global Public Policy team.

Dan Turton is named U.S. vice president, Federal and Administration Affairs, and Bryan Roosa has been appointed executive director for North America.

Turton, 47, is responsible for GM's federal policy strategy and will oversee GM's relationships with all executive branch and congressional officials, said GM spokeswoman Laura Toole.

"With more than 20 years of experience in government affairs, Dan is a proven leader and will be pivotal in driving the long-term U.S. federal strategy for General Motors," said Bob Ferguson, senior vice president, GM Global Public Policy.

Turton will report to Ferguson and will be based in the GM office in Washington, D.C. His move is effective Jan. 12, 2015.

"I am thrilled to join General Motors and its Federal Affairs team," said Turton. "I look forward to continuing to build strong ties across both aisles in the Congress, and with federal agencies, to advance the priorities of one of America's most important companies."

Turton joins GM from Entergy, where he most recently served as vice president of Federal Governmental Affairs and head of its Washington office. At Entergy, he was responsible for developing and implementing the company's engagement strategies with elected officials and key policymakers, Toole said. Previously, he held positions in the White House Office of Legislative Affairs and the House Committee on Rules.

Roosa, 52, currently GM's executive director of State Government Relations, will become the executive director for North America, effective Jan. 1, 2015. In this expanded role, Roosa will oversee GM's government relations in Mexico and Canada, and will continue to oversee those activities at the U.S. state and local level, Toole said.

"As the leading automotive manufacturer in the United States, GM also plays an important role throughout the entire North America region," said Roosa.

"I am excited to work with GM's outstanding teams in Canada and Mexico to foster important relationships with their governments and elected leaders."

Roosa joined GM in 2002 and has served in a variety of roles on the Public Policy team. He currently represents GM on the board of directors for the Michigan Economic Development Foundation and the Michigan Manufacturers Association.

He also is a principal of the State Affairs Group of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and serves as vice-chairman of the GMPAC.

Prior to GM, he worked as a staff member in the Michigan Senate.

Fiat Chrysler Sales Increase 20 Percent in December

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

company spokesman Ralph Kisiel.

The Chrysler brand's 53 percent increase was the largest sales gain of any of its brands and the brand's best December sales since 2007. The group extended its streak of year-over-year sales gains to 57 consecutive months.

"Our best December sales in a decade pushed our full-year sales over the 2-million-unit threshold for our best annual sales since 2006," said Reid Bigland, head of U.S. Sales.

"Last year marked our fifth consecutive year of annual sales growth in the U.S., and once again, we were the fastest-growing automaker in the country."

Eleven Chrysler U.S. vehicles set records in the month of December, including all three Ram Truck brand and three Jeep brand vehicles.

The Ram pickup truck, Ram ProMaster and Ram Cargo Van each logged their best-ever December sales. The Jeep Patriot had its best sales month ever, while the new Jeep Cherokee and Jeep Wrangler logged their best-ever December sales.

The Chrysler 200, Dodge Dart, Dodge Challenger and Dodge Journey each posted their best-ever sales in the month of December, Bigland said. The Fiat 500L turned in its best sales month since it was launched in June 2013.

Full-year Fiat Chrysler sales were up 16 percent in 2014, compared with annual sales in 2013, Bigland said.

The Jeep and Fiat brands each recorded their best-ever annual sales in 2014.

Fiat Chrysler finished the month of December with a 72-day supply of inventory (537,731 units). U.S. industry sales figures for December are projected by Fiat Chrysler to be an estimated 17.3 million units Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate (SAAR).

Chrysler brand's increase was driven by the new 2015 Chrysler 200 sedan and the Chrysler Town & Country minivan, Bigland said. Sales of the 200 were up 187 percent. For the second straight month, the 200 outsold combined 200/Dodge Avenger sales from the previous year. Sales of the Town & Country were up 10 percent compared with the same month a year ago. It was the minivan's best December sales in seven years.

The Chrysler brand's annual sales increased 2 percent, compared with sales in 2013, Bigland said. It was the brand's best annual sales since 2008. The Town & Country had its best annual sales since 2007.

Sales of the Ram pickup truck were up 32 percent in December; its 56th consecutive month of year-over-year sales gains. It was the pickup truck's best-ever sales for the month of December and its top sales month during 2014. Ram Light Duty pickup sales increased 45 percent in December while Ram Heavy Duty pickups were up 9 percent.

The Ram Truck brand's annual sales increased 28 percent in 2014, its best full-year sales since 2005. The pickup truck turned in its best annual sales since 2003.

Jeep brand sales were up 19 percent, the brand's best sales performance ever in the month of December and its 15th consecutive month of year-over-year sales gains.

Full-year Jeep brand sales were up 41 percent, the brand's best-ever annual sales performance. The Jeep brand sold 692,348 units in the U.S. in 2014, handily beating its previous annual record of 554,466 units in 1999.

Fiat brand sales were up 1 percent, the brand's best-ever sales in the month of December.

Three Dodge brand vehicles set sales records in December. Sales of the Challenger were up 72 percent, the muscle car's best-ever sales in the month of December and the largest percentage sales gain of any Dodge brand model in the month.

Likewise, Bigland said, the Dart and Journey each recorded their best-ever sales in the month of December.

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Chevy Display at NAIAS Goes Full Throttle

"Chevrolet is putting the show back in the North American International Auto Show."

That's how GM spokeswoman Cristi Vazquez described Chevy's new display that features six 20-foot-tall, transparent screens with coordinated LED lighting and music.

The display will tell stories about the brand's cars, trucks and crossovers.

Nine chapters in the new show will include highlights of Chevrolet's dependability, performance, belief in the power of play, available in-vehicle Wi-Fi technology through OnStar 4G LTE and others, said Vazquez.

"We've reimagined the auto show by putting the show back at the center with state-of-the-art technology," said Tim Mahoney, chief marketing officer for Global Chevrolet.

"The display is designed to connect with attendees and show how the brand continues to find new roads."

The center aisle, or Main Street, features the latest vehicles from Chevrolet – the Corvette Z06, Trax and, of course, the Colorado, 2015 *Motor Trend* Truck of the Year, Vazquez said.

The Main Street part of the display leads visitors to the Chevrolet Theater that contains a massive, high-resolution, 73-foot-long, 20-foot-tall display, and the latest introduction, the 2016 Chevrolet Volt.

A safety experience in the theater will show how Chevrolet vehicles are designed to prevent, protect and respond to help keep vehicle occupants safe on the road, Mahoney said.

Next to the theater, virtual reality technology will provide a driving experience of crash avoidance technology like available Lane Departure Warning and Forward Collision Alert.

During select public days, regional organizations will present ways they are using their ingenuity to make a difference in their community during The Possibilities Project feature presentations.

Participating groups include United Way for Southeastern Michigan, Greening of Detroit, De-Tread and others.

The public will also have an opportunity to record a 20-second video with their ideas for a better tomorrow.

These video ideas will be shared via such popular social media formats as Facebook, Twitter, e-mail or text.

The display will also make attendees a part of the experience through social media, Mahoney said.

Visitors who take photos with My Chevy View in the display can share them through their own social media accounts and may find themselves on the larger-than-life screens.

Workers lay the groundwork for the NAIAS Chevrolet display.

Barra: 2015 Should Be Strong

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small SUV that offers seating for five passengers with available all-wheel drive and EPA-estimated fuel economy of up to 32 mpg on the highway.

The Trax also offers an available 4G LTE Wi-Fi hotspot and Siri Eyes Free control of the audio system with compatible smartphones.

The emerging small-SUV segment in the United States is estimated to grow more than 80 percent in the next few years, Barra said.

The Trax is already on sale in 67 global markets, where the vehicle has generated approximately 188,000 sales since its 2012 introduction.

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'We're Driving Innovation in Every Part Of Our Business' – Ford CEO Mark Fields

Ford Motor Company plans to use innovation to take it to the next level in connectivity, mobility, autonomous vehicles, the customer experience and big data.

The Dearborn automaker calls it the Ford Smart Mobility Plan.

Ford highlighted the program at the 2015 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

The company is not only creating advanced new vehicles with this program, but it's also helping change the way the world moves by solving today's growing global transportation challenges, said Ford spokesman Alan Hall.

Ford also announced 25 mobility experiments around the world this year "to test breakthrough transportation ideas to create better customer experiences, more flexible user-ship models and social collaboration that can reward customers," said Hall.

"Even as we showcase connected cars and share our plans for autonomous vehicles, we are here at CES with a higher purpose," said Ford president and CEO Mark Fields.

"We are driving innovation in every part of our business to be both a product and mobility company – and, ultimately, to change the way the world moves, just as our founder Henry Ford did 111 years ago."

Also at CES, Ford demonstrated SYNC 3, its most advanced vehicle connectivity system, while highlighting semi-autonomous vehicles the company has on the road today and fully autonomous vehicles now in development.

The first steps for Ford Smart Mobility are 25 experiments – eight in North America, nine in Europe and Africa, seven in Asia and one in South America.

Each experiment is designed to anticipate what customers will want and need in tomorrow's transportation ecosystem, Fields said.

"We see a world where vehicles talk to one another, drivers and vehicles communicate with the city infrastructure to relieve congestion, and people routinely share vehicles or multiple forms of transportation for their daily commute," Fields said.

> "There will be a Ford autonomous vehicle in the future..."
>
> – Mark Fields, *Ford CEO*

"The experiments we're undertaking today will lead to an all-new model of transportation and mobility within the next 10 years and beyond."

The 25 experiments address four global megatrends – explosive population growth, an expanding middle class, air quality and public health concerns, and changing customer attitudes and priorities – challenging today's transportation model and limiting personal mobility, especially in urban areas, Fields said.

Fourteen of the 25 experiments are Ford-led research projects, and 11 are part of the company's Innovate Mobility Challenge Series. The research projects include:

- Big Data Drive: Dearborn;
- Fleet Insights: United States;
- Data Driven Insurance: London;
- Remote Repositioning: Atlanta;
- City Driving On-Demand: London;
- Dynamic Social Shuttle: New York, London;
- Car Swap: Dearborn;
- Ford Carsharing: Germany;
- Share-Car: Bangalore, India;
- Rapid Recharge & Share: Dearborn;
- Data Driven Healthcare: The Gambia, West Africa;
- Parking Spotter: Atlanta;
- Info Cycle: Palo Alto, Calif.;
- Painless Parking: London.

With the Innovate Mobility Challenge Series, Ford invited innovators and developers around the world to create solutions for specific mobility challenges in North America and South America, Portugal, Africa, India, China, England and Australia, Hall said.

Challenges included finding technology solutions to identify open parking spaces in urban areas, better ways to navigate crowded cities and the use of navigation and other tools to help people gain access to medical care in remote areas.

Also at CES, Ford highlighted SYNC 3, the company's new communications and entertainment system, which is faster, more intuitive and easier to use with enhanced response to driver commands, Hall said.

"SYNC 3's more conversational speech recognition technology, a more smartphone-like touch screen and easy-to-read graphics will help millions of drivers connect with their lives and control their smartphone while on the road," Fields said.

The next-generation system builds on the capability of SYNC technology already in more than 10 million vehicles on the road globally.

SYNC 3 begins arriving on new vehicles this year.

Mark Fields delivered the opening keynote address at the 2015 CES show.

"Ford is delivering an easier way for customers to stay connected," said Raj Nair, Ford chief technical officer and group vice president, Global Product Development.

"SYNC 3 is another step forward in delivering connectivity features customers most want, and they tell us this kind of technology is an important part of their decision to buy our vehicles."

Ford also highlighted the semi-autonomous vehicles it has on the road today and fully autonomous vehicles now in development for the future.

"We're already manufacturing and selling semi-autonomous vehicles that use software and sensors to steer into both parallel and perpendicular parking spaces, adjust speed based on traffic flow or apply the brakes in an emergency," Nair said.

"There will be a Ford autonomous vehicle in the future, and we take putting one on the road very seriously."

Ford's semi-autonomous vehicle features available today include lane-keeping assist, adaptive cruise control, Pre-Collision Assist with Pedestrian Detection and active park assist – with Traffic Jam Assist coming.

A fully autonomous Ford Fusion Hybrid research vehicle is undergoing road testing, Nair said.

The vehicle uses the same semi-autonomous technology in Ford vehicles today, while adding four LiDAR sensors to generate a real-time 3D map of the surrounding environment.

The vehicle can sense objects around it using the LiDAR sensors, and uses advanced algorithms to help it learn to predict where vehicles and pedestrians might move.

"Our priority is not in making marketing claims or being in a race for the first autonomous car on the road," Fields said.

"Our priority is in making the first Ford autonomous vehicle accessible to the masses and truly enhancing customers' lives.

"Henry Ford taught us long ago that a good business makes excellent products and earns a healthy return," Fields added.

"A great business does all that while creating a better world. That is what continues to drive us each day."

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Ford, F-Series Keep No. 1 Sales Ranking

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planned 15 percent reduction in daily rental sales.

"With 2,480,942 vehicles sold, that was flat with a year ago, but a lot of that is explained by 13 weeks of downtime with our F-150 plants as we move to the changeover in 2014, and also a 15 percent reduction in our daily rental sales," said Ford spokesman Erich Merkle.

"We posted a gain in December and it was our best sales month since 2005.

"F-Series is still early on. The 2015 F-150 made up just over 5 percent of the retail sales mix of the F-150s in December, but they're turning really fast on dealer lots.

"It's the fastest turning vehicle in our showrooms now, with just an average of 5 days to turn, so we're doing everything we can right now to get as many of the new F-150s out to market as possible."

Sales totaled 220,671 vehicles in December, up 1 percent from a year ago and the automaker's best December sales since 2005.

"Fusion and Escape posted record years, and our newest products – including Mustang, Transit and Lincolns – are attracting strong customer demand," said John Felice, Ford vice president, U.S. Marketing, Sales and Service.

"Demand for the all-new F-150 also is very high, and it now is the fastest-turning vehicle in Ford showrooms."

Merkle said, "Fusion did a great job, not only for December, but if we look at the year for Fusion, we totaled 306,860 vehicles.

"That was the first time that the Fusion sold above the 300,000 mark as well."

F-Series sales were 74,355 vehicles in December and 753,851 vehicles for all of 2014.

Escape sales increased 5 percent in December versus a year ago – totaling 25,603 vehicles – for its best-ever December performance and record full-year sales of 306,212 vehicles.

Fusion also achieved record performance for the year, with sales of 306,860 cars.

Explorer sales totaled 16,632 vehicles in December, up 6 percent from a year ago, making 2014 Explorer's best sales performance since 2005, with 189,339 utilities sold.

Transit had a breakout month in December, with sales of 10,030 vans. This represents the vehicle's best month since its June launch.

Transit Connect produced its best sales month ever, with 5,012 sales, a 32 percent increase from a year ago, Merkle said. 2014 was a record year for Transit Connect with sales of 43,210 vans.

Sales of the new Mustang continue climbing, with December sales of 9,511 vehicles, a 66 percent increase from a year ago. With sales increases coming in all regions of the country, Mustang posted its best December sales since 2006, Merkle said.

Lincoln sales of 9,690 vehicles were up 21 percent versus last December for the brand's best December results since 2009.

For the full year, Lincoln sales were up 16 percent, with 94,474 vehicles sold, making it Lincoln's best year since 2008.

MKC reached its best monthly sales since launch, with 2,310 sold. Navigator sales increased 90 percent in December, with 1,792 utilities sold.

"We had our best December sales for Lincoln since 2009, with sales up 21 percent. And, for the year, Lincoln had its best sales year since 2008," Merkle said.

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Offer Expires 3-1-15.

Customers Can Create One-of-One Dodge Vipers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

treatment via online updates.

"Customers can share their experience with friends and family as they pass each build milestone," Reid said.

The service also provides customized shipping options that include rapid transport via enclosed carrier.

"New owners can even choose to pick up their Viper at the Conner Avenue Assembly Plant in Detroit and take a tour of the facility," Reid said.

"The Dodge Viper is an iconic, one-of-a-kind, hand-built American Supercar with a 645-horsepower hand-built aluminum V10, a handcrafted body comprised of hand-laid carbon fiber, aluminum, magnesium and high-strength steel and a racing pedigree," said Tim Kuniskis, president and CEO, Dodge and SRT – North America.

"Because every Viper is handcrafted with such an extreme level of detail, we have the unique opportunity to make each one even more special by giving buyers the opportunity to customize each vehicle to their exact specifications. Now, Viper owners will be able to say their Viper is truly one of a kind."

There are more than 25 million ways for buyers to customize their one-of-a-kind Dodge Viper, Kuniskis said. To help buyers confirm their color choice, Dodge will provide a complimentary Viper speed form replica so they can confirm their color selections before their Viper is built.

In September, Dodge announced the 2015 Viper SRT, GT, GTS and TA models, with a starting U.S. Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) of $84,995.

Now, Reid said, for a starting U.S. MSRP of $94,995, the new 2015 custom Viper GTC model features all the content of the new GT model, and adds the ability to customize a '1 of 1' design, a personalized instrument panel badge, Concierge Service and Viper Ambassador Owner's Portal with exclusive shareable content to track the build of the car.

The new 1-of-1 customization program is available exclusively for customer orders (not for dealer stock), Reid said.

"No two customers can order the same configuration, including color in the same model year," Reid said. "Dealers will start taking orders in February. Production is scheduled to start at the Conner Avenue Assembly Plant in the second quarter of 2015."

Japanese Exec Nailed by Feds

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) – The U.S. Justice Department says a former sales executive with a Japanese auto parts manufacturer has agreed to plead guilty to fixing prices for parts sold to automakers in the U.S.

The federal government says Makoto Horie worked for Toyoda Gosei in Troy, Mich., and played a role in a conspiracy to fix prices and rig bids. The justice department says a plea deal calls for him to serve a year in prison and pay a fine.

Last fall, Toyoda Gosei Co. Ltd. agreed to pay a $26 million fine as part of the investigation into its sales involving automotive hoses, airbags and steering wheels.

A message seeking comment was left with the company Jan. 6. No court records were available indicating whether Horie has an attorney.

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PATRIOT HIGH ALTITUDE 4X4 #J5-60066 LEASE FOR $112** /MO. 24 Mos. $600 due 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $3142**

January Cherokee Lease Specials! 131 Available!
2015 JEEP CHEROKEE LATITUDE #J5-70158 LEASE FOR $114** /MO. 24 Mos. $1400 due SALE PRICE $18,857**
2015 JEEP CHEROKEE LATITUDE 4X4 #J5-70107 LEASE FOR $137** /MO. 24 Mos. $1795 due SALE PRICE $22,052**
2015 CHEROKEE True North Edition #J5-70223 LEASE FOR $153** /MO. 24 Mos. $1995 due SALE PRICE $23,692**

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2014 Chrysler 300 AWD #C4-30676 LEASE FOR $115** /MO. 24 Mos. $1395 due 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $3991**
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2015 CHRYSLER 200 S AWD 24 Mo 1 PAY $4853** or LEASE FOR $123** /MO. 24 Mos. $1995 due #C5-10032
2015 CHRYSLER 200 C AWD 24 Mo 1 PAY $4885** or LEASE FOR $124** /MO. 24 Mos. $1995 due #C5-10051

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- Lowest Lease Payments!
- 80 Available!

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2015 DODGE DART GT SALE PRICE $19,042* or LEASE FOR $117** /MO. 24 Mos. $1995 due #D5-20032

2015 AUTO SHOW EVENT

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2015 RAM 1500 CREW CAB 4X4 EXPRESS 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $2784** or LEASE FOR $118** /MO. 24 Mos. $99 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! #D5-10052
2015 RAM 1500 CREW CAB 4X4 OUTDOORSMAN 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $3409** or LEASE FOR $124** /MO. 24 Mos. $895 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! #D5-10226
2015 RAM 1500 CREW CAB 4X4 OUTDOORSMAN 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $3613** or LEASE FOR $124** /MO. 24 Mos. $1095 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! HEMI! #D5-10193
2015 RAM 1500 CREW CAB 4X4 BIG HORN 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $3776** or LEASE FOR $113** /MO. 24 Mos. $1195 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! #D5-10045
2015 RAM 1500 CREW CAB 4X4 BIG HORN 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $4133** or LEASE FOR $111** /MO. 24 Mos. $1595 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! HEMI! #D5-10116
2015 RAM 1500 CREW CAB 4X4 LARAMIE 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $5357** or LEASE FOR $159** /MO. 24 Mos. $1995 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! #D5-10098

DODGE

2014 DODGE CHARGER R/T SALE PRICE $22,303* 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $3258** or LEASE FOR $123** /MO. 24 Mos. $695 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! Wheels/Tunes Grp! #D4-70149
2014 DODGE CHARGER R/T AWD SALE PRICE $24,736* 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $3316** or LEASE FOR $115** /MO. 24 Mos. $795 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! D4-70278
2015 DODGE JOURNEY R/T AWD 24 Mo 1 PAY LEASE $2780** or LEASE FOR $109** /MO. 36 Mos. $1995 due $1500 AUTO SHOW CASH! #D5-00140
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2015 GRAND CARAVAN SE SALE PRICE $19,108* #D5-40035
2015 GRAND CARAVAN RT SALE PRICE $24,029* #D5-40058
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LaNeve Replaces Retiring Felice as Ford VP, Marketing

Ford Motor Company has made changes in its senior leadership team.

"We continue to drive for product excellence and innovation," said Ford spokeswoman Susan Krusel.

John Felice, vice president, U.S. Marketing, Sales and Service, has elected to retire after 30 years at Ford, effective Feb. 1.

Succeeding Felice is Mark LaNeve, currently chief operating officer at Global Team Ford, the global advertising and marketing agency for the Dearborn automaker.

LaNeve, 55, will report jointly to Joe Hinrichs, executive vice president and president of The Americas, and to Stephen Odell, executive vice president, Global Marketing, Sales and Service.

"John has had a long and successful career as a key leader serving us around the world for more than 30 years," said Hinrichs.

"Among his many contributions, John led the Ford brand revitalization in the U.S., resulting in an unprecedented improvement in customer favorability, and was a strong advocate for our dealers, ensuring their participation in our business planning process and further strengthening our relationship with them.

"We thank John for his many years of service and wish him all the best going forward."

Felice joined Ford in April 1984. During his tenure, he served in a variety of management positions in the Marketing, Sales and Service organization in both the U.S. and Asia Pacific, including leading U.S. Ford and Lincoln Sales, U.S. Ford and Lincoln Marketing, and Asia Pacific Marketing, Sales and Service.

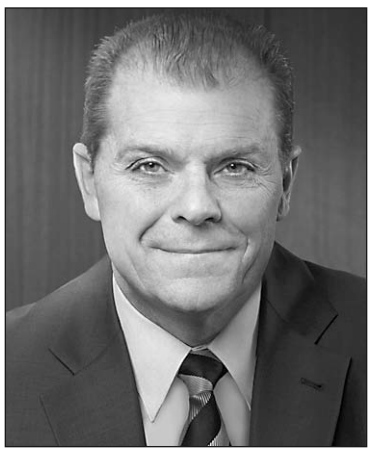
While in Asia, he also served as president of Ford Thailand.

In succeeding Felice, LaNeve will be responsible for all marketing, sales, service and dealer relations in the United States.

He will be focused on building the Ford brand with innovative new digital communications and transforming the retail experience for customers.

"We are excited to have Mark join our team as we introduce even more new products to our customers this year," said Odell.

"With nearly three decades of proven experience to draw upon, Mark brings the right skills to continue building the Ford brand while creating a stronger retail experience for our customers, making it even easier for them to interact with their dealer and with Ford – and helping us profitably grow."



Mark LaNeve

John Felice

LaNeve comes to Ford after leading Global Team Ford since August 2012.

In that role, LaNeve led not only Team Detroit, which serves the Ford brand in the U.S., but also the agency's operations in London, São Paulo and Shanghai, as well as Hudson Rouge, the Lincoln agency in New York City.

LaNeve has nearly three decades of global sales and marketing experience in the automotive and insurance industries, having served in senior roles at Team Detroit, General Motors, Volvo Cars and Allstate Insurance.

In those roles, he led the development and execution of innovative sales programs and the resurgence of the brands.

Subaru Recalls 199,000 Vehicles For Second Time

DETROIT (AP) – Subaru is recalling about 199,000 cars and SUVs for a second time to fix rusty brake lines that can leak fluid and cause longer stopping distances.

The recall covers the 2009-13 Forester, 2008-11 Impreza, and 2008-14 WRX and WRX-STI models. It affects vehicles in 20 U.S. cold-weather states where salt is used to clear roads in the winter. Subaru says in documents posted Jan. 8 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that salty water can splash on the brake lines through a gap in the fuel tank protector. That can cause rust and leaks. A recall from last year for the same problem didn't work due to incomplete repair instructions to dealers.

Dealers will fix the problem at no cost to owners.

Obama: Lions' Call Reversal Was 'A Little Suspect'

WAYNE, Mich. (AP) – Even a Chicago Bears backer can feel the pain of Detroit Lions fans whose playoff hopes collapsed with an official's questionable call, and the whole nation is behind the Motor City as it emerges from its economic woes, President Barack Obama told Michigan autoworkers on Jan. 7.

"We may not all root for the Lions, but America is rooting for Detroit," Obama told employees at Ford Motor Co.'s Michigan Assembly plant in the Detroit suburb of Wayne.

Obama's speech focused on the U.S. auto industry's recovery, which he said was a result of tough decisions his administration made in its early days.

But he started out with words of commiseration with supporters of the hometown NFL team, whose exit from the postseason followed a reversed penalty call.

The Lions led 20-17 in the fourth quarter of Sunday's game when the call was made. The reversal helped Dallas come from behind to win 24-20.

"Even a Bears fan has to admit that that was a little suspect," Obama said. He said he had never seen "anything like that before."

Obama also spoke about the call on Jan. 6 in an interview with *The Detroit News*, saying he'd be "pretty aggravated" if he were a Lions fan.

The Lions may be down but they're not out and have strong prospects for next season, he said.

Obama then spoke about Detroit's emergence from the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history and the auto recovery. Detroit filed for bankruptcy in July 2013 and exited Chapter 9 last month. The city wiped out and restructured about $7 billion in debt.

"Detroit always comes back," Obama said, and the nation wants "the Motor City strong."

The president's visit was one of three he made around the country last week ahead of his State of the Union address. He also visited Arizona and Tennessee.

Obama was accompanied by two new Michigan Democratic lawmakers on the flight from Washington – Sen. Gary Peters and Rep. Debbie Dingell.

The Michigan Assembly Plant was temporarily closed last week because of a lack of demand for the small cars and hybrids it makes. Automakers often close plants for short periods to make sure inventories match demand. Ford said the plant was closed for just that one week.

Cheryl Yancey, a supervisor in the plant's body shop area, said she doesn't believe recent falling gas prices will affect vehicle sales "too much."

"With gas prices, it's always up and down," said Yancey. "People will probably steer more toward fuel-efficient vehicles just in case gas prices skyrocket again."

Buick Engineers Push Buttons to Mimic What Drivers Do

A frozen computer is frustrating, but a frozen touchscreen in an automobile is a much bigger deal.

That's why engineers test the touchscreen buttons on the Buick IntelliLink infotainment system by "pushing" them more than 2 million times every week, ensuring it consistently responds to user commands, said Buick spokeswoman Katie Bjoerk.

Multi-function touchscreen systems, which bundle controls and menus for several systems into one interface, are increasingly common in automobiles, Bjoerk said.

From playing MP3 files to placing phone calls, planning a navigation route or adjusting climate controls, touchscreens are tasked with handling more complex functions than ever and doing it seamlessly to the user.

Much like opening too many windows on your home computer, mobile multitasking can tax some infotainment systems, and force the system to reboot.

"Car shoppers expect their in-car infotainment systems to offer not only a full range of convenience features but also complete dependability and functionality," said Karl Brauer, senior editor of Kelley Blue Book.

"That means a rapid response to user inputs and hardware components that consistently withstand consumer demands."

To make IntelliLink robust, General Motors' engineers subjected the system to exhaustive testing inside and outside the car, Bjoerk said. IntelliLink's human-machine interface, or HMI, which includes the touchscreen liquid crystal display (LCD), is hooked up to a state-of-the-art automated test bench, complete with cameras that constantly monitor the touchscreen.

The test bench fully replicates the various modules and components connected to the HMI while testing IntelliLink at a speed no human engineer can match.

The stability lab can simulate 210 days of continuous in-car use within a week, Bjoerk said. Depending on the test performed, the lab can also subject IntelliLink systems to the equivalent of more than 2 million touchscreen pushes in the same period.

"We test our systems in real vehicles, but as humans, we can only log so many hours inside a car," said Robert Rimkus, engineering group manager for GM's Next Generation Infotainment systems.

"These automated test stations help us push IntelliLink to its limits, ensuring customers get a system that's consistently reliable in their own vehicles."

Those simulated fingertaps and pushes mimic what an actual user would do while on the road, based on customer feedback and design test procedures, Rimkus said.

For example, one simulation mirrors the audio, climate, and navigation control inputs a driver would make while making a road trip from Detroit to Chicago.

Other tests replicate situations owners may subconsciously encounter in the real world, Rimkus said.

"When you shut off and leave a car, it takes the infotainment system as long as three to four minutes to fully go to sleep, much like any other computer," said Rimkus.

"You're not always given that luxury in the real world. What if you stop at a gas station to grab a quick drink?

The system hasn't fully shut off, but it needs to quickly reboot when you turn the ignition key."

Buick touchscreen

The automation lab replicates other potential real-world use by staying close to GM road test engineers who drive pre-production vehicles.

Honda Fined $70 Million for Not Reporting Complaints

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) – The Federal government is fining Honda $70 million – the largest civil penalty levied against an automaker – for not reporting to regulators some 1,729 complaints that its vehicles caused deaths and injuries, and for not reporting warranty claims.

The Japanese automaker acknowledged in November that it failed to report the death and injury complaints to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration over an 11-year period beginning in 2003.

The company admitted it learned of the omissions in 2011 but had waited three years to take action.

Honda also failed to report certain warranty claims and claims under customer satisfaction campaigns throughout the same period, federal officials said.

The safety administration is imposing twin fines: $35 million for not reporting the death and injury complaints, and another $35 million for not reporting the warranty and customer satisfaction claims.

Both fines are the maximums the agency is legally allowed to impose.

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said the fines reflect the government's determination to take a tough stance against automakers who withhold safety information from regulators.

"What we cannot tolerate and will not tolerate is an automaker failing to report to us any recall issues," Foxx said.

The Honda complaints include incidents related to air bags made by Japanese auto supplier Takata Corp., as well as other defective parts.

Honda has recalled more than 5 million vehicles in the U.S. since 2008 to fix a potentially fatal defect in Takata-made air bags.

The air bag inflators can rupture after a crash and injure occupants with shards of metal.

Honda has agreed to pay the fines under a consent order it signed with the traffic safety administration on Dec. 29, federal officials said.

But officials said they have not yet received all the complaints from Honda and therefore don't have a tally of how many deaths and injuries are involved.

"We have resolved this matter and will move forward to build on the important actions Honda has already taken to address our past shortcomings in early warning reporting," Rick Schostek, executive vice president of Honda North America Inc., said in a statement.

The company blamed the omissions on "errors related to data entry, computer coding, regulatory interpretation, and other errors in warranty and property damage claims reporting."

Foxx said information about Honda's failure to disclose the complaints also has been forwarded to the Justice Department.

The Center for Auto Safety, a consumer watchdog group, called for a criminal investigation of Honda after the company's failure to disclose the complaints became public.

Clarence Ditlow, executive director of the center, said $70 million is too small a penalty considering that incidents involving Takata air bags are among the complaints not reported.

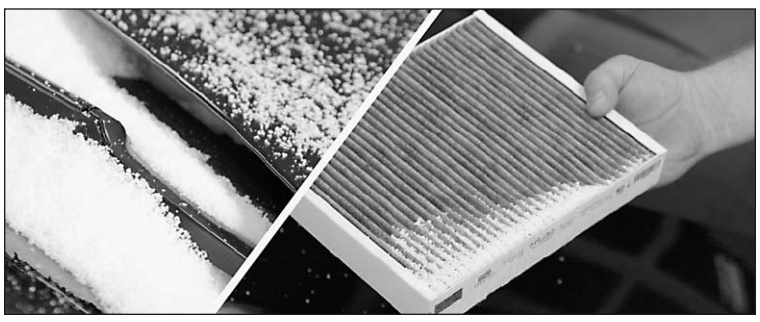
"How many other deadly defects are concealed in the 1,729 death and injury claims not reported by Honda?" he asked.

"The company must waive all statutes of limitations at the state and federal level over potential recalls or lawsuits arising out of defects concealed in the unreported claims."

Federal law requires automakers to submit death and injury complaints to regulators as part of an "early warning" system for identifying potential safety defects that can lead to a recall.

The fine against Honda caps a tumultuous year for automakers and federal regulators.

Including the fine against Honda, the traffic safety administration imposed $126 million in fines against automakers in 2014, more than all the fines in the agency's previous 43 years.



To ensure proper heating, GM engineers simulate snow year-round.

Improved In-Cruze Heating Can Be Pinned on Diapers

No one would call the 2015 Chevrolet Cruze a car for babies, but that hasn't stopped GM from using an item commonly found on an infant's changing table.

"Diaper material is perfect for testing for snow intrusion and packing properties," said Nicholas Jahn, GM Vehicle Thermal Systems engineer.

The material is used to simulate snow year-round, ensuring heating systems in cars like the Cruze can quickly and efficiently warm its interior.

Packed snow on a vehicle can prevent air from entering the inlet panel at the bottom of the windshield, obstructing the flow of air into the heating system and reducing the amount of air it can push out, said GM spokeswoman Annalisa Bluhm.

This can lead to less efficient warming of the car's interior and windshield defrosting.

"The last thing anyone wants to do when it's freezing cold out is scrape their windshield," said Jahn.

"The testing we perform on the Chevrolet Cruze with the diaper material allows us to maximize the car's heating capabilities."

Ironically, Jahn said he accidentally stumbled upon his diaper-based testing method in the middle of summer.

During a swim with his daughter, he noticed her diaper multiplied in size when it came into contact with water.

After some research, he found that sodium polyacrylate – the absorbent material found in diapers – starts as a powder but turns into a snow-like substance when saturated.

In Jahn's test, he sprinkled the reusable snow onto the air inlet vents along the bottom of the Cruze's windshield, then started the car and let it idle.

After a few minutes, Jahn removed the inlet panel and inspected how much snow was sucked into the system and how much of the intake vents remained blocked.

Before discovering the material, Jahn said he had to either rely on Mother Nature to provide snow, or find a scheduled opening at one of GM's state-of-the-art climatic wind tunnels.

Sodium polyacrylate, however, can be used anywhere, he said, at any time, and in any season. Better yet, when the material dries, it can easily be reused.

A more efficient heating system especially benefits those who use the OnStar Remote Key Fob services.

Manufacturing Research Group To Open New HQ

ALMMII, the American Lightweight Materials Manufacturing Innovation Institute, will cut the ribbon to officially open its new innovation acceleration center in Detroit on Jan. 15.

The 100,000-square-foot facility is part of a national network of research institutions and industrial companies geared toward advancing America's leadership in manufacturing technology.

The center's focus is to accelerate the transfer of new manufacturing technology from the research lab to the production floor for products using lightweight metals – including aluminum, magnesium, titanium, and advanced high-strength steel alloys, said ALMMII executive director Lawrence E. Brown.

An equally important mission of the center is the training of the workers who will be using these new processes in factories and maintenance facilities around the country.

ALMMII is funded by the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, with strong support from industry partners and academic research institutions. It will be led by industry with input from the government. The lead partners in founding ALMMII are the University of Michigan, Ohio State University and EWI, an independent research organization based in Columbus, Ohio.

ALMMII established its headquarters in Detroit, Brown said, because it is the center of the largest concentration of automotive research and development centers in the world. The location places the center along I-75, an industrial corridor that connects states in which nearly half of America's manufacturing workforce is located.

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2014 New Car Sales Could Approach Record

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

switches in older small cars. GM sold just over 2.9 million vehicles, up 5 percent from 2013.

• WINNERS AND LOSERS: Among major automakers, Subaru was the biggest gainer, with sales up 21 percent.

Fiat Chrysler was the year's other big gainer, with sales up 16 percent to 2 million, thanks to strong demand for its Jeep and Ram brands.

Volkswagen had a difficult year, as sales fell 10 percent while the German automaker waited for new vehicles to hit U.S. showrooms.

Mini also struggled as gas prices fell, with sales down nearly 20 percent.

• SUV BOOM: Gas prices accelerated the switch from cars to SUVs. Light trucks, the category that includes SUVs, outsold cars in 2014 – the first time that this has happened since 2011, according to car shopping site Edmunds.com.

That's partly because automakers are offering more types of SUVs, including fuel-efficient subcompacts such as the Buick Encore, to appeal to young families and Baby Boomers. The trend is likely to continue in 2015.

• LUXURY GROWTH: As the stock market rose, so did sales of expensive vehicles. BMW, Audi, Porsche and Land Rover all reported record U.S. sales in 2014. Lexus luxury sales outpaced mass-market sales last year, and they're expected to do so again this year.

Luxury makers are offering more models, like the new Maserati Ghibli sedan and Lincoln MKC SUV, and they're expanding their customer base with lower-priced models like the Mercedes GLK-Class and Jaguar XE due out this year. Mercedes-Benz was expected to be the top-selling luxury brand in the U.S. for 2014.

• PICKUP WARS: Ford's F-Series, the best-selling truck in the U.S. for 38 years, saw sales drop in 2014 as the company temporarily halted production to prepare for its new aluminum-sided F-150.

The new truck arrived at dealerships in December, but inventory won't be at normal levels until the middle of 2015.

In the meantime, rivals are offering big deals to lure customers away.

Ram truck sales rose 24 percent in 2014, while Silverado sales gained 10 percent.

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NEW LACROSSE 2015 — LEASE FOR 39 MONTHS $239* $1,669 DOWN | PURCHASE A 2014 FOR $24,783*

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All applicable rebates including lease/conquest offers have been deducted from sale price/payment. Pictures may not represent actual vehicle. Prices subject to change per GM incentives. Prices and payments are inclusive of active GM Employee Discount (Unless otherwise stated). Below GM Pricing only valid on certian models. Cruze, Silverado, Malibu, Equinox, Traverse and Camaro are all 24 month leases. Volt is a 36 month lease. Impala is a 39 month lease. All leases are 10k miles per year w/ approved S Tier credit w/ $999 or $1669 due at signing. Prices & payments are plus tax, title, and plate fees with acquisition fee up front. Refundable security deposit required on certain vehicles –to be determined by lender. For Silverado, must trade in '99 or newer model vehicle. GM Employee discount to everyone valid on certain models. $3500 trade-in is valid on 2004 or newer vehicles with under 115k miles in drivable condition, no branded titles, see sales person for details. **Certain restrictions may apply, see dealer for complete details. Expiration Date – 2/2/15.

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NAIAS Black-Tie Charity Preview Set for Jan. 16

Tickets are now available for the Charity Preview of the 2015 North American International Auto Show.

The black-tie event will be held at the Cobo Center in Detroit on the evening of Friday, Jan. 16, from 6 to 9 p.m.

"Proceeds directly benefit a wide range of children's charities," said NAIAS spokesman Joe Rohatynski.

"Funds raised will support services for children of all ages from birth to 18. Since the year 1976, the Charity Preview has raised more than $91 million for southeastern Michigan children's charities – over $47 million of which was raised in the last 10 years alone."

Tickets to the event are $400 per person, of which $390 is tax deductible, Rohatynski said. To order tickets, call 888-838-7500, or go to the Web site naias.com.

Money raised at the event will be donated to several local charities, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan, Boys Hope Girls Hope Detroit, the Children's Center, the Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation, the Detroit Auto Dealers Association Charitable Foundation Fund, the Detroit Institute for Children, the Detroit Police Athletic League, the Judson Center and the March of Dimes Metro Detroit.

Event sponsors include First Merit Bank, Cars.com, Comcast Spotlight, Delta Airlines, the MGM Grand Detroit Hotel and Casino, MLive Media Group, WXYZ-TV, Abbott Nicholson Attorneys at Law, the American Chemistry Council – Plastics Division, Centerplate, Dealer Resources Inc. and Government Consultant Services Inc.

Club GM is Selling Auto Show Tickets

GM employees looking to get tickets for the 2015 North American International Auto Show should contact members of Club GM.

This year's show tickets are available through the club for $10 for adults. Purchased at the door, tickets are $13 for adults.

Club GM stores will sell the tickets on Thursday, Jan. 15, and Friday, Jan. 16, and on Tuesday through Friday, Jan. 20, through Jan. 23.

The tickets will be good on any show day between Saturday, Jan. 17, and Sunday, Jan. 25.

Those wishing to order by mail may send a self-addressed stamped envelope and check to Len Wernette, 26367 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills, MI 48334. Checks should be made payable to Club General Motors.

Buick Achievers Program Ready for New Scholars

The Buick Achievers Scholarship Program is now accepting applications for 2015 scholarships.

The deadline is 5 p.m. EST Friday, Feb. 27.

This is the fifth year Buick Achievers scholarships will be awarded to students who excel in the classroom and give back to their communities, said GM Foundation spokeswoman Genna Young.

Special consideration is given to students who are female, minorities, first-generation college students, military veterans and military dependents.

To be eligible for the program, high school seniors or current undergraduate students must be seeking a college degree in science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), or other eligible fields related to the automotive industry.

"Our country is in need of STEM grads, as the focus on innovation and technology continues to sharpen," said Vivian Pickard, president of the GM Foundation, which funds the program.

"Through the Buick Achievers Scholarship program, we are helping shape the next generation of leaders and innovators for the automotive industry and other sectors that are so important to the future of our country."

For Buick Achiever, Kettering University alumnus and GM employee Frisco Pullom, this scholarship provided the freedom to focus on his education.

"My first semester after receiving scholarship funds," said Pullom, "I was able to remove work and fundraising from my schedule, and I made the dean's list for the first time in my academic career.

"After graduation, I was able to secure a position with General Motors as a value chain engineer.

"It feels good to be able to contribute to a company that is committed to helping students prepare for their careers."

Since its inception in 2011, the Buick Achievers Scholarship Program has awarded more than $27 million in scholarships to 3,400 students, Young said.

This year, the program will award 50 scholarships of up to $25,000 per year, renewable for up to four years – or five years for qualified engineering programs.

A123 Systems Earns Award For Extending Battery Life

Based on its recent analysis of lithium-ion batteries for the transportation market, Frost & Sullivan presented A123 Systems with its annual award for Competitive Strategy Innovation & Leadership.

The 2014 Global Frost & Sullivan award went to A123 because the company "extended the life cycle of its lithium product while simultaneously adding reliability and safety," said Frost & Sullivan research analyst Imran Khan.

While A123 Systems has historically offered solutions across transportation, energy storage, and industrial segments, said Frost & Sullivan spokeswoman Mireya Espinoza, it recently sold off its lithium-ion battery integration operations for the energy storage sector to NEC.

Although it will remain a supplier of lithium cells to NEC, this change in focus to end-user application will enhance its position in the engineering and manufacturing of lithium-ion batteries.

At the same time, Espinoza said, this move will help the company target the high-growth automotive market, specifically the micro-hybrid segment where it already has three customers in series production.

A123 Systems is also expanding its presence in the mass transit market, another fertile segment in transportation.

Demonstrating its dedication to entrenching itself in the market, A123, Espinoza said, acquired rights to Leyden Energy's high-power technology and related technical staff.

As Leyden Energy specialized in developing lithium titanate batteries that utilize non-flammable electrolyte material, A123 Systems is able to address a key product safety challenge associated with lithium-ion batteries, she said.

Given the demanding nature of the transportation segment, Espinoza said, "Frost & Sullivan appreciates A123 Systems' continuous investment in R&D to improve lithium-ion battery capability."

A123 recently launched its Nanophosphate EXT lithium product that offers substantial power capability at low temperatures, while delivering longer life at higher temperatures, said Espinoza.

"A123 Systems has effectively established itself as a lithium-ion technology innovator," said Khan.

"Specifically, within the automotive segment, A123 Systems' lithium batteries offer more power density, thereby helping micro-hybrid vehicle manufacturers comply with regulations aimed at boosting vehicle fuel efficiency."

A123 Systems has out-strategized its rivals, Khan said, by maintaining focus on the automotive and mass-transit segments, which are less subject to pricing pressures than the consumer market segments.

Similarly, A123 Systems' affiliation as a member of the Wanxiang Group provides it with a solid manufacturing base in China, which is a promising market for lithium-ion batteries across a range of applications, including transportation.

"A123 Systems works closely with its automotive OEM customers across the globe to develop solutions that address their concerns regarding battery capability and safety," said Kahn.

"Its decision to align resources with its core strengths, and across high-growth markets, showcases its holistic marketing strategy to meet internal and external stakeholders' objectives."

With its strong overall product, R&D, and marketing focus on the transportation segment, Khan said A123 Systems has rightly earned the 2014 Global Frost & Sullivan Award for Competitive Strategy Innovation & Leadership.

Each year, Espinoza said, Frost & Sullivan presents this award to the company that has leveraged competitive intelligence to successfully execute a competitive strategy that results in stronger market share, competitive brand positioning and customer satisfaction.

Frost & Sullivan's Best Practices Awards recognize companies in a variety of regional and global markets for outstanding achievement in areas such as leadership, technological innovation, customer service, and product development.

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GREAT VALUE FOR ONE LOWPAYMENT!
Leather Heated Seats, Forward Collision alert & Lane Departure Warning, Rear Park Assist, Power Rear Lift Gate, Universal Home Remore & More!

2014 GMC SIERRA 1500 2WD DOUBLE CAB SLE
YEAR END BLOW OUT!
NOW $24,995*
WAS $37,565
STK #7508-14
SAVE OVER $12,500 OFF LIST
Trailer Brake Controller, 5.3L V8 ECO Tech Engine, Trailering Equipment Pkg & More!
0% UP TO 60 MO. AVAILABLE
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24 MONTH BUICK EXPERIENCE LEASE
FREE Maintenance • FREE XM Radio! • FREE OnStar
*GM pricing plus tax, title, lic. Lease fi gured with lease loyalty rebate.

2015 GMC SIERRA DOUBLE CAB 4X4
LOADED FOR LESS
LEASE THIS WELL EQUIPPED 4X4 FOR ONLY $259*/MO
NO SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIRED
24 MO. LEASE
10K MILES PER YEAR
STK #7827-15 • DEAL #52863
8" Diagonal Color touch with Navigation & Intellilink, 5.3L V8 ECOTEC3, Trailering Equip. Pkg, Driver Power Seat, Remote Start, Universal home remote, Dual Climate Control A/C, Z71 Off Road Pkg Front fog lamps, Rear Defrost, 110Volt pwer outlet,
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MORE SPACE FOR LESS PER MONTH
LEASE FOR ONLY $399*/MO
27 MO. LEASE
10K MILES PER YEAR
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ALL NEW YUKON IS HERE
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36 MO. LEASE
10K MILES PER YEAR
STK #6960-15
DEAL #52861
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DEMO SPECIAL
LEASE FOR ONLY $259*/MO
36 MO. LEASE
10K MILES PER YEAR
STK #6869-15
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WAS $34,480
STK #6418-14
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0% FINANCING AVAILABLE
*Must have loyalty rebate.

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LEASE FOR ONLY $249*/MO
36 MO. LEASE
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STK #7946-15
DEAL #51286
NO SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIRED
*GM Pricing Plus Tax, Title, Lic. Must Have Lease Loyalty Rebate.

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SERVICE: Sun CLOSED; M, TH 7am-8pm; T, W, F 7am-6pm; Sat 8am-1pm
*GM Employee Pricing Plus Tax, Title, Lic. and Doc. No Security Deposit Required. Total due at lease signing 2015 Regal FWD $1672, 2015 Yukon SLE $3060, 2015 Enclave-FWD $1646, 2015 Lacrosse Base -1SB $1670, 2015 Acadia FWD SLE-1 $1568, 2015 Sierra 1500 Double Cab 4WD $1905, 2014 Encore $1667, 2015 Terrain $1665. *Lease Conquest Rebate Must Have Non GM Lease In Household To Expire Within 90 Days Of Delivery Of New Purchase Or Lease. *Loyalty Rebate Must Have 1999 or Newer GM Vehicle In Household. Programs subject to change. Photos may not represent actual vehicle. Price is subject to change without notice. See dealer for details. Expires 1/31/15.

For Chevrolet Racing Team, 2014 Was Tops

At the 2014 finish line, it was Chevrolet that captured the year's title as No. 1 on the track.

Chevrolet completed one of its most successful years in its motorsports history this past year, earning five manufacturer and six driver championships in NASCAR, IndyCar, NHRA, United SportsCar Championship and Pirelli World Challenge series.

In addition, said GM spokesman Randy Fox, Chevrolet drivers won several noteworthy races in 2014, including the Daytona 500, Brickyard 400, IndyCar Dual in Detroit, NHRA U.S. Nationals and the 24 Hours of Daytona.

"Eleven championships mark one of our most successful racing seasons," said Jim Campbell, GM U.S. vice president of Performance Vehicles and Motorsports.

"Winning races and championships on the track helps us develop better cars and powertrains for the showroom."

Chevrolet's wins in 2014 came on road courses, ovals and drag strips.

Season highlights:

• NASCAR Sprint Cup – Kevin Harvick, driver of the #4 Chevrolet SS, won the final race of the season to capture the NASCAR Sprint Cup championship – and helped highlight Chevrolet's record-extending 12th consecutive Manufacturers Cup.

The Bowtie brand has earned that award an unprecedented 38 times. Team Chevy drivers scored 20 race wins, including the Daytona 500 (Dale Earnhardt Jr.), Brickyard 400 (Jeff Gordon), and both races at the Michigan International Speedway (Jimmie Johnson and Gordon).

• NASCAR Nationwide – Chase Elliott – the 18-year-old son of NASCAR legend Bill Elliott – captured the series championship behind the wheel of the #9 Chevrolet Camaro. The title makes Elliott the youngest champion of a NASCAR national series and helped Chevrolet earn the series' manufacturers award (the first such title for Camaro in the series).

• IndyCar – Driving the #12 Chevrolet, Will Power claimed 15 top 10 finishes – including three wins – on his way to his first drivers' championship. Power's three wins combined with nine other Chevy victories to help Chevrolet clinch its third straight manufacturers title. Power and Helio Castroneves also drove Chevrolet to a sweep of the two IndyCar races at the Chevrolet Detroit Belle Isle Grand Prix.

• NHRA Pro Stock – Erica Enders-Stevens became the first woman to win the Pro Stock championship and only the third woman in NHRA history to win a series championship. Camaro drivers secured the top four positions in the highly competitive class, helping Chevrolet earn its 20th NHRA manufacturers title – the most of any manufacturer in NHRA history.

• NHRA Stock Eliminator – Bruno Massel won the Stock Eliminator class at the NHRA U.S. Nationals in a fifth-generation COPO Camaro. This was one of seven class wins by drivers in a COPO Camaro or COPO-powered race car.

• IMSA/TUDOR United SportsCar Championship, Prototype Class – Co-drivers Joao Barbosa and Christian Fittipaldi won the Rolex 24 Hours at Daytona and two other races to clinch the Prototype drivers' championship in the #5 Corvette DP. Those wins, combined with three victories from two other Corvette teams, helped Chevrolet secure the Prototype manufacturers title.

• Pirelli World Challenge – Lawson Aschenbach drove a Camaro SS to four wins and the Pirelli GTS class drivers' championship.

• Corvette road racers also added SCCA Majors championships, topping the national rankings in a number of hotly contested classes, including Simon Gregg in GT1, Randall Kinsland in GT2 and Joseph Aquilante in T1. Additionally, Corvette racers Kyle Kelley and Andrew Aquilante took the checkered flag in the GT1 and GT2 classes, respectively, at the prestigious National Championship Runoffs.

"When you win key races and championships," said Campbell, "good things happen. It helps lift the image and opinion of Chevrolet and customers are more likely to place our cars and trucks on their shopping list."

Chevy stock car driver Erica Enders-Stevens with her Camaro

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Maguire and Yassini-Fard Named to Visteon Board

Visteon Corporation has appointed Joanne M. Maguire and Rouzbeh Yassini-Fard to the company's board of directors.

Maguire, 60, served as executive vice president of Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company from July 2006 until she retired in May 2013, said Visteon spokesman Jim Fisher.

Lockheed Martin is a provider of advanced technology systems for national security, civil and commercial customers.

Yassini-Fard, 56, an experienced entrepreneur in broadband technology, is the founder and CEO of YAS Capital Partners, a firm specializing in broadband consulting, investment and research founded in 1997, Fisher said. He is known for his pioneering work in cable broadband technology and has been called the "father of the cable modem."

"I am delighted to welcome Joanne and Rouzbeh to our board of directors," said Timothy D. Leuliette, Visteon's president and CEO. "Their exceptional experience and passion for innovation and technology aligns well with our focus as a global, technology-driven provider of automotive cockpit electronics and connected car services."

Francis M. Scricco, non-executive chairman of Visteon's board of directors, said, "Our company is looking for more aggressive ways the 'Internet of Things' can fuel our drive to become a leader in the connected car space. These appointments are directly related to our strategy of continuing to explore additional ways to deliver value for our customers and shareholders."

(Editor's Note: Wikipedia defines the Internet of Things as "the interconnection of uniquely identifiable embedded computing devices within the existing Internet infrastructure.")

Maguire's experience in the aerospace and defense industry spans three decades, Fisher said. Before joining Lockheed Martin in 2003, she held a succession of increasingly responsible technical and management roles at TRW – culminating as vice president of business development and deputy to the Sector CEO for TRW Space & Electronics, now part of Northrop Grumman.

Maguire also serves on the board of Freescale Semiconductor, Inc., and Charles Stark Draper Laboratory, an independent not-for-profit research and development company.

She has a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering from Michigan State University and a master's in engineering from UCLA. She is a graduate of the executive program in management at UCLA's Anderson School of Management and completed the Harvard Program for Senior Executives in National and International Security.

Yassini-Fard's YAS Capital's investment arm has successfully nurtured and assisted more than a dozen start-up companies to further fuel the connected world's blending of data, voice and video services and applications.

In addition to his role at YAS Capital Partners, Yassini-Fard is executive director of the University of New Hampshire Broadband Center of Excellence, an interdisciplinary initiative devoted to the advancement of broadband Internet technology and services.

He is known, Fisher said, for his pioneering work in cable broadband technology as the founder and CEO of LANcity and as a prominent contributor to the CableLabs Data over Cable Services Interface Specifications (DOCSIS), a pillar of today's broadband industry.

Yassini-Fard has served as a member of the board of directors of LANcity, Broadband Access Systems and TrueChat (all of which have since been acquired by other companies), and Entropic Communications.

He has an honorary doctorate in science and a bachelor of science in electrical engineering from West Virginia University, an honorary doctorate from Merrimack College, and an equivalent MBA from General Electric's financial management program. He is the author of Planet Broadband (2004), a humanized look at broadband technology and its contributions to society.

With the appointments, Visteon's board now consists of 10 directors, nine of whom are external and independent. Leuliette is the board's only internal director.

Museum Opens Under the Hood

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) – Henry Ford Museum is offering visitors a close-up look under the hoods of cars in its automotive collection.

"Engines Exposed" starts Saturday and runs through March 15 at the museum in Dearborn.

For the first time in five years, more than 40 vehicles in the "Driving America"' exhibit will have their hoods open, including vehicles like the 1956 Chevrolet Bel Air, the 1948 Tucker 48 Sedan, the 1936 Lincoln Zephyr and the 1916 Woods Dual Hybrid Coupe.

GM Retail Sales Increase 23 Percent in December

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Chevrolet was strong in every segment of the market, from pickups and SUVs to cars and crossovers. Buick and GMC also had strong sales across the board, and our growth far outpaced the industry average," said Kurt McNeil, U.S. vice president of Sales Operations.

"Everything you need to have a great month was in place: Consumers felt good about the direction of the economy, interest rates and fuel prices were low, and our dealers did a great job introducing customers to our incredible range of new and redesigned vehicles."

Cain said GM's unique three-pickup strategy – with new models spanning the light-duty, heavy-duty and mid-size segments – drove combined deliveries to almost 87,000 units in December, a 43 percent increase compared with a year ago.

Five GM vehicles – the Chevrolet Corvette and Spark, the Buick Enclave and Encore and the GMC Sierra – had their highest December sales ever.

Additionally, Seven GM vehicles – the Chevrolet Cruze, Equinox, Sonic and Spark, the GMC Terrain, and the Buick Enclave and Encore – had their best-ever annual sales in 2014, Cain said.

Sales to individual consumers drove GM's results, and were the highest in 75 months, McNeil said. Chevrolet, Buick and GMC retail deliveries were up 25 percent, 28 percent and 29 percent, respectively, compared with a 10 percent increase for the industry as a whole. Chevrolet had its best December retail sales since 2005 and Buick and GMC had their best December retail sales since 2004.

GM commercial sales, which are about 24 percent of fleet sales, were also strong.

Deliveries were up 38 percent compared with a year ago, driven by a 65 percent increase in pickup sales. December marked the company's 14th consecutive month of higher year-over-year sales in the commercial segment.

Additional December highlights (vs. 2013, except as noted) include strong Chevrolet sales.

In the pickup market, dealers delivered nearly 58,000 Silverados, for the truck's best December since 2005.

In addition, the Colorado saw sales of more than 4,000 units, as availability improved throughout the month.

All of Chevrolet's redesigned SUVs posted double-digit gains, with Tahoe up 30 percent and Suburban up 16 percent, McNeil said.

In the crossover market, the Traverse was up 11 percent and the Equinox was up 24 percent. In addition, dealers delivered 739 new Trax small crossovers, which started shipping during the month.

In the passenger car market, Spark deliveries were up 76 percent, Sonic was up 23 percent, Malibu was up 9 percent and Impala was up 23 percent.

In the sports car segment, Camaro was up 32 percent and Corvette was up 18 percent.

GMC saw Sierra deliveries up 31 percent to more than 23,000 units. Yukon deliveries were up 31 percent.

The GMC Canyon, named *Autoweek* magazine's "Best of the Best" Truck for 2015, had sales of more than 1,500 units.

Every Buick car and crossover posted a sales increase, with the largest gains posted by the Enclave, up 53 percent, for its best month ever, and the LaCrosse, up 61 percent.

In Cadillac, the brand saw Escalade deliveries increase 62 percent.

Sales of the CTS sedan increased 4 percent in December.

GM has now posted 27 consecutive months of year-over-year average transaction price (ATP) increases, said Cain.

ATPs were a record $36,300, according to J.D. Power PIN estimates through Dec. 21, up more than $1,000 per unit compared with November and up about $3,000 versus a year ago.

Incentive spending as a percentage of ATPs was 10.4 percent in December, down 0.8 points month over month, Cain said, while industry average spending was 9.8 percent of ATP, down 0.4 points.

Sales to government customers were up 11 percent and sales to rental customers were down 13 percent.

On a volume-and-mix basis, GM had its most successful year in the fleet business since 2008, and was No. 1 in deliveries, surpassing Ford Motor Company, McNeil said.

GM estimates that the seasonally adjusted annual selling rate (SAAR) for light vehicles in December was 16.9 million.

Light vehicle sales for the year were an estimated 16.6 million, above the upper end of the 16.0 million-16.5 million range the company forecasted at the beginning of the year, Cain said.

"The momentum the economy carried through 2014 accelerated in the fourth quarter," said Mustafa Mohatarem, GM's chief economist.

"Car-buying fundamentals remain strong and we expect higher industry sales in 2015."

Jackson Offers Early College

JACKSON, Mich. (AP) – Like a lot of high school students, Donavin Anderson wasn't sure what he wanted to do after graduation – and he knew the time to decide was closing in.

A 16-year-old junior at Springport High School, Donavin has found direction, guidance – and a career – in a unique program that's uniting Jackson County's education and manufacturing communities in an effort to help the area prosper.

The Jackson Area College and Career Connection Early/Middle College – called JAC3 for short – is being piloted in precision machining and welding this year by Donavin and 19 other juniors and seniors from Michigan Center, Hanover-Horton, Napoleon, Western, Jackson, Grass Lake, Columbia and Northwest high schools.

"This has given me direction in my life," Donavin told the *Jackson Citizen Patriot*.

JAC3 is a joint effort of the Jackson Area Career Center, Jackson County Intermediate School District, Jackson College, Jackson Area Manufacturers Association, Enterprise Group and more than a dozen Jackson-area manufacturers.

"There are a lot of early/middle colleges across the state, but what makes ours unique is having industry backing it and investing in it," said Dan Draper, JACC assistant principal of career and technical education and academic programs.

JAC3 participants stay with, and graduate from, their local school district, as well as earn college credit through dual enrollment at JC that leads to a recognized certificate program or up to the equivalent of an associate's degree.

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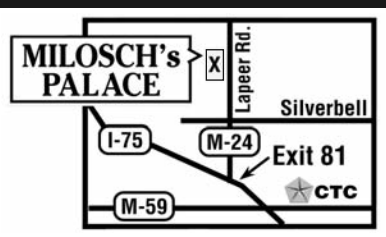

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