Tech Center News...

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Mary Barra

Barra Looks to 'Strong Year' for **Auto Industry**

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Chevrolet's Display at NAIAS Goes Full Throttle

"Chevrolet is putting the show tion, the 2016 Chevrolet Volt. back in the North American International Auto Show."

That's how GM spokeswoman Cristi Vazquez described Chevy's new display that features six 20foot-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.

Main Street leads the visitor to the Chevrolet Theater that contains a massive, high-resolution, 73-foot-long, 20-foot-tall display, and the latest introduc-

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

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

gional organizations will present ways they are using 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-sec-

During select public days, re- ond video with their ideas for a better tomorrow and share the video via Facebook, Twitter, e-mail or text.

> The display will also make visitors a part of the experience through social media, Mahoney

Visitors who take photos with My Chevy View in the display can share them through their own social media accounts.



Workers lay the groundwork for the Detroit Auto Show's Chevrolet display at Cobo Center.

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.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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 row, said Ford CEO Mark Fields.

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





2015 Buick Encore



2015 Chrysler 200



2015 Ford Escape

2014 New Car Sales Likely To Approach 2000 Record

DETROIT (AP) - Confident in droves, with sales up 11 percent the economy and cheered by cheap gas, Americans are likely to push new car sales to their highest level in a decade this

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

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

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 doubledigit 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

over the previous year. Automakers reported December and fullyear 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 bestselling vehicle and the midsize Toyota Camry was the best-sell-

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 carlike handling and low gas prices made such vehicles more appeal-

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

Ford's sales were flat, but the Ford brand remained the topselling 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

• 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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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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."

ernments 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.

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

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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 will not tolerate an automaker failing to report any recall issues."

Anthony Foxx

"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 mil-

lion 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.

In May, the traffic safety administration levied the first maximum \$35 million fine in its history against General Motors for taking more than a decade to disclose an ignition-switch defect in millions of cars that has been linked to at least 42 deaths and 58 injuries.

Under an agreement with the Transportation Department, GM admitted it was slow to inform regulators, promised to report problems faster and submitted to more in-depth government oversight of its safety operations.

But lawmakers and safety advocates have also accused the traffic safety administration of not identifying dangerous safety defects based on reports made.

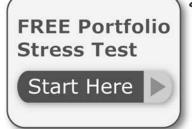




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Art Van Kicks Off a Winter Shoe Collection Campaign

Michigan's brutal winters hit develop empathy and compasthe homeless the hardest, so Art Van Furniture is teaming up with Cass Community Social Services throughout January to collect shoes and boots for individuals in need.

As part of the retailer's "Shoe In" campaign, the public is encouraged to clean out their closets and drop off pairs of new and gently used shoes at all of Art Van Furniture's Michigan locations, said Art Van spokeswoman Diane Charles. Men, women and children with no place to live will be able to literally step into someone else's shoes and protect their feet during the cold winter months.

When temperatures drop, the need increases for warm, waterproof shoes and boots for individuals who live outdoors since feet that are cold and wet are at great risk for frostbite or worse," said Gary Van Elslander, president of Art Van Furniture. "We cannot stand by and wait for the other shoe to drop; the time is now to help those in our community struggling to survive.'

When I was a child, my mother would use the old adage that we should 'walk a mile in the other person's shoes," said Rev. Faith Fowler, executive director of Cass Community Social Services. "It meant, of course, that we should try and understand their circumstances. She wanted us to sion. What better way to respond to the immediate needs of homeless people than to provide shoes that will keep their feet warm and dry."

Collection bins will be located in Art Van Furniture's 39 Michigan locations through Jan. 30, Charles said. Cass Community Social Services, one of the Art Van Charity Challenge partners, will distribute the shoes and boots to the homeless. For more information, visit artvan.com.

Cass Community Social Services (CCSS) is a Detroit-based agency that works across the city in areas of concentrated poverty providing programs for food, health, housing and jobs, Charles said. CCSS prepares and serves one million meals annually and 325 homeless men, women and children currently stay in one of the agency's shelters, transitional house or permanent supportive housing pro-

The collection is just part of a larger effort by Art Van to help the community. In November, company, working with Gleaner's Community Food Bank, collected a record-breaking 20,701 pounds of packaged and canned food to help feed families in need the holiday season. Approximately 17,000 meals were served thanks to the dona-

Barra Looks to 'Strong Year' for Industry

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

States to reach a range of 16.5 million to 17.0 million units in

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

ates 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

percent more new college gradu- well as the Trax, which began arriving in showrooms in Decem-

> The Trax. Barra said, is GM's small SUV that offers seating for five with available all-wheel drive and EPA-estimated fuel economy of up to 32 mpg on the highway.

It 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 it has generated approximately 188,000 sales since its 2012 introduction.

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Subaru Recalls Same Vehicles

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 through 2013 Forester, 2008 through 2011 Impreza, and the 2008 through 2014 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. The recall affects cars now registered or originally sold in Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Washington, D.C.



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Ford, F-Series Keep No.1 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 sales," said Ford rental 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.

GM is Recalling 92,000 SUVs and **Full-Size Trucks**

DETROIT (AP) - General Motors is recalling 92,221 full-size trucks and SUVs for a defect in ignition lock systems that can cause safety problems in hot conditions.

The first recall of the new year covers certain 2011-12 models and 2007-14 models that were repaired with defective parts.

The affected models are Chevrolet Silverado light-duty and heavy-duty pickups; Avalanche, Tahoe and Suburban; GMC Sierra light-duty and heavyduty pickups; and Yukon and Yukon XL; Cadillac Escalade, Escalade ESV and Escalade EXT.

GM says the ignition lock actuators may be too wide, making turning the key difficult when it's hot inside the cab.



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spokesman Ralph Kisiel.

The Chrysler brand's 53 percent increase was the largest sales gain of any its brand 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 bestever December sales.

The Chrysler 200, Dodge Dart, Dodge Challenger and Dodge Journey each posted their bestever 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 72day 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 per-

cent. 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

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 bestever 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.





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 the middle of summer. 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

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 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 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.

• WÎNNÊRS 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

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

• 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 Lin-

that includes SUVs, outsold cars coln 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 topselling 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 aluminumsided 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.

NAIAS Black-Tie

Charity Preview Set for Jan. 16

Tickets are now available for the Charity Preview of the 2015

The black-tie event will be held at the Cobo Center in De-

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

"Funds raised will support services for children of all ages

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

Event sponsors include First Merit Bank, Cars.com, Comcast Spotlight, Delta Airlines, the MGM Grand Detroit Hotel and Casino, MLive Media Group,

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Club GM stores will sell the tickets on Thursday, Jan. 15, and

door, tickets are \$13 for adults.

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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

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troit on the evening of Friday,

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Friday, Jan. 16, and on Tuesday through Friday, Jan. 20, through Jan. 23.

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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

ship Program is now accepting applications for 2015 scholar-

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 pro-

"Through the Buick Achievers Scholarship program, we are

The Buick Achievers Scholar- 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 pro-

A123 Systems Earns Award For Extending Battery Life

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 batter-

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.

ing 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,

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 capa-

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

Based on its recent analysis of at higher temperatures, said Espinoza

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

"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 A123 Systems is also expand- 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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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 threepickup 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 yearover-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

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

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

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 manufacturers. 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

"This has given me direction in

JACKSON, Mich. (AP) - Like a 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

"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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