

Beautiful Weather Graces Tech Center Employee Car Show

by Jim Stickford

If nothing else, the 2015 GM Tech Center UAW Local 160 Employee Car Show gave some new GM employees the chance to get a close-up view of some old and classic GM cars.

The car show was held at the Tech Center on July 22, and, said event co-chair Bill Duncan, they couldn't have asked for better weather.

The show is put on thanks to the efforts of volunteer salary employees out of the Tech Center and hourly employees belonging to UAW Local 160.

"I've got to say that the show went great," Duncan said. "I also saw an old friend, Jim Spaulding, who works at GM Powertrain here today. I haven't seen him in a few years and it's been great having the chance to catch up with him."

Mike Queen, the UAW co-chair of the show, said there was some concern that holding the event in a new location off of Mound instead of the old location off of Van Dyke might have hurt attendance. But that wasn't the case.

"We had 760 vehicles pre-registered," Queen said. "But on the morning of the show we had so many people sign up with cars



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A new location for the Tech Center employee car show didn't stop current and former employees from bringing their classics to the event.

Buick Encore to Receive New Pep with 1.4L Engine in Fall

Sometimes a driver just wants a little more oomph in the engine without sacrificing economy.

That's where the 2016 Buick Encore Sport Touring comes in. Buick says this vehicle is a more spirited take on the brand's popular crossover, said GM spokeswoman Lauren Indiveri. It is distinguished by unique exterior cues and driven by an exclusive, all-new 1.4L turbocharged engine

featuring direct injection and stop/start technology.

The exterior features include a winged rear spoiler, 18-inch aluminum premium-finish wheels and body-color door handles, while the technologically advanced 1.4L turbo is part of a new, global family of small, power-dense engines developed to balance performance and efficiency with exceptional refinement, said Lauren Indiveri.



2016 Buick Encore Sport Touring

"A lot of our customers were looking for a little more pep from

the engine without having to sac-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

MCC Innovation Fund Names Local Recipients

Five early-stage businesses from Macomb, Oakland and Washtenaw counties will receive a total of \$275,000 in funding in the inaugural round of awards from the Innovation Fund Macomb Community College, Powered by JPMorgan Chase & Co.

The Innovation Fund is a \$2.7 million effort to stimulate economic development and job growth among promising Detroit-area entrepreneurs and next-stage businesses with high-growth potential.

Funding is provided by Macomb Community College's (MCC) Strategic Fund and JPMorgan Chase, as part of their \$100 million commitment to Detroit's economic recovery.

It was first announced in September of 2014. At the time of the announcement, MCC president James Jacob said that the school's success is "integrally tied to metro Detroit's success" and that the Innovation Fund represents an important, grow-your-own element in the local economic development strategy that also cultivates the interests and skills of MCC students and community residents.

Fund operators began accepting applications for funding in February. Awards of \$25,000 will be distributed to start-up businesses to assist with market introduction and awards up to \$100,000 will be given to advance the progress of emerging companies toward larger-scale equity funding.

The larger awards, which must be matched dollar for dollar by



2015 Dodge Charger



2015 Chevrolet Sonic



2015 Ford Expedition

Safety Technology is the Key in J.D. Power APEAL Study

Detroit automakers scored well in the latest J.D. Power APEAL study.

According to the J.D. Power 2015 U.S. Automotive Performance, Execution and Layout (APEAL) Study released on July 22, the safety-related technologies that manufacturers are increasingly equipping their new vehicles with are making those vehicles more appealing to their owners.

The APEAL Study, now in its 20th year, is an industry benchmark for new-vehicle appeal, examining how gratifying a new vehicle is to own and drive, said

J.D. Power spokesman John Tews. Owners evaluate their vehicle across 77 attributes, which combine into an overall APEAL Index score that is measured on a 1,000-point scale. The overall APEAL score has increased by 4 points year over year to 798 in 2015.

The study finds that some safety features can contribute to a significant boost in APEAL scores. For example, the overall score among owners of vehicles with blind-spot monitoring and warning systems is 38 points higher than among those without them.

"Unlike other technologies, such as voice recognition, that can be challenging to operate, most safety features provide information in a more intuitive way, giving owners a greater sense of security," said Renee Stephens, vice president of U.S. automotive quality at J.D. Power. "Not only are models increasingly offering systems that improve safety and visibility, but owners are also using them on a regular basis. This can go a long way toward generating positive feelings about their vehicle overall."

GM won top spots in several categories. They are:

- Colorado - mid-size pickup;
 - Corvette - mid-size premium sporty car;
 - GMC Sierra - large heavy duty pickup;
 - Sonic - small car.
- Ford won with the:
- C-Max - compact MPV;
 - Expedition - large SUV;
 - F-150 - large light duty pickup.
- Fiat Chrysler won with:
- Fiat 500 - city car;
 - Challenger - mid-size sporty car;
 - Charger - large car.

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Feds Probe GM
Certified Used
Cars for Sale

DETROIT (AP) – The Federal Trade Commission is investigating General Motors because of dealers who advertised certified used cars for sale even though they still needed repairs under existing recalls.

The agency notified GM of the probe on June 3, and it was disclosed by the company July 23 in a quarterly report to securities regulators. GM said in the filing that it's investigating and cooperating with the probe. A spokesman wouldn't give further details. Federal law bans the sale of new cars with unfixed recalls, but dealers can legally sell used cars that haven't been fixed.

It's unclear what law may have been broken, but the agency often investigates allegations of misleading advertising. An FTC spokesman wouldn't comment.

GM spokesman Alan Adler says the company has started to withhold discount money it pays to dealers if they try to sell new cars with open recalls. Adler says GM also sends updates to dealerships four times a week on cars that need recall repairs.

"We do a lot to tell them not to move vehicles that have open recalls," he said. "We're very serious about it."

Dealers are independent businesses with franchises that are granted by the company. GM and its dealers inspect, repair and certify used cars if they meet certain mileage and condition requirements. Certified vehicles usually sell for higher price.

MCC Innovation Fund Names Local Recipient Winners

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the company, may be required to be paid back.

"Entrepreneurs are helping to drive Detroit's economic revival," said Chauncy Lennon, head of Workforce Initiatives, JPMorgan Chase. "JPMorgan Chase is proud to support these innovative businesses that will support job growth, skills development and innovation in the region for years to come."

The companies funded by the Innovation Fund are required to provide internships or learning experiences for MCC students. Students will not only have the opportunity to develop valuable workplace skills, but will gain first-hand exposure to the entrepreneurial process.

"This first cycle of the Innovation Fund awards attracted a dynamic group of entrepreneurs with a wide range of promising concepts in an engaging and competitive process," said Jacobs. "The robust level of participation and quality of applicants in our inaugural round of funding underscores the importance of the Innovation Fund's unique approach – pairing early access to capital and education – to building a strong regional entrepreneurial ecosystem that accelerates economic development and job growth."

The five companies awarded funding were selected from a field of 30 qualified applicants. They went through a two-stage process, pitching first to a screening committee. The highest-rated companies moved onto a Selection Committee comprised of area professionals with experience in business management, finance, law, marketing and technology, who made final award recommendations.

Receiving awards of \$25,000, which are designed to support early-stage companies, are:

- AQUASIGHT (Rochester Hills/ Oakland County) – A real-time intelligence solution for water pumping systems that can be applied to surface and ground water systems, as well as wastewater pumping stations, to identify performance issues that, once corrected, conserve energy and water. Currently, five percent of U.S. energy is employed in pumping and moving water, and 70 percent of this energy is related to pumping systems.

- GAP Quality Systems (Southfield/ Oakland County) – An automated process for inspecting chrome-plated and high-gloss painted parts to replace the automotive industry's current "human" visual inspection process. The computer-aided visual inspection process will allow for establishment of numeric standards recognized by both supplier and customer, reducing waste of parts and environmental impact.

- KTISIS (Sterling Heights/ Macomb County) – A composite container system to enable fleet vehicles to use either compressed natural gas or liquefied gas. Leveraging NASA technology related to advanced composite materials and manufacturing

technologies, the universal storage system maximizes the existing natural gas refueling infrastructure.

Receiving awards of \$100,000, designed to advance the progress of emerging companies toward larger-scale funding, are:

- MyFab5 (Ann Arbor/ Washtenaw County) – An online marketing platform that streamlines social media marketing for restaurants. The software provides a single dashboard that automates or streamlines creation of custom marketing plans, analyzing audience, generating leads, creating and publishing social media posts, tracking and engaging fans, and creating analytics reports.

- TurtleCell (Ann Arbor/ Washtenaw County) – A thin-profile smartphone case with re-

tractable headphones, designed as an all-in-one solution to tangled, broken and lost headphones.

The second application cycle for the Innovation Fund will close on July 31. Entrepreneurs involved in high-growth technology-focused business, such as advanced manufacturing, information technology, alternative energy, healthcare, and logistics and supply chain are eligible to apply. The companies must locate within a nine-county region consisting of Genesee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Shiawassee, St. Clair, Washtenaw or Wayne counties.

Information about the application process and the upcoming information session at Bizdom on July 29 is available at www.macomb.edu/cie.

Tech Center Construction Update

Gate 1 at the GM Tech Center, on 12 Mile between Van Dyke and Mound, in Warren will continue to be closed until the end of August.

Right now parts of the Tech Center are undergoing construction and as a result Gate 1 had to be closed, said GM spokeswoman Jessica Watson.

"This shouldn't inconvenience visitors to the Tech Center," Watson said.

"They should still be able to enter the campus via Gate 11, which is off of Van Dyke in front of the VEC building."

Watson said there are a total of 12 gates at the Tech Center. One is strictly for service trucks and the others can be access via cars. For now, the only gate that is closed is Gate 1, but others may close as construction continues.

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Tech Center Car Show a Chance to Review Glorious Past

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that a total of about 1,100 vehicles were entered into the show.”

Duncan recently retired from GM and after this year will be handing off the reins of the show to others. Jim Suzak, superintendent of the GM Design Center, was co-chair of the show along with Duncan.

“Not only am I co-chair,” Suzak said, “but this is my first year being involved with the show at all. I’ve worked at GM for 29 years, but I was asked to get involved this year and jumped at the chance.”

Both Suzak and Queen said that this year’s show location has proven to be popular with the crowd.

“A number of people have come up to me and said they love this location,” Queen said. “We are looking at the next couple of years and we might consider keeping the show here.”

Duncan said that one of the things he loves about the show is that it gives newer GM employees the chance to view some classic GM product and get to know their company’s heritage.

And that’s certainly the case with Lance Pannebecker, a seat designer at GM. He’s worked at the company for three years. He and a fellow seat designer – Jake Doran, an employee at GM for three months – said they particularly enjoyed looking at the 1986 black Buick Grand National owned by Bill Kimberly.

“I admire this car because it was GM’s muscle car of the 1980s,” Pannebecker said. “It was sort of a comeback for muscle cars in the 1980s after GM turned away from muscle cars in the 1970s. My grandfather Earl Pannebecker has always said that if he had the cash to get a muscle car, he’d get a Grand National.”

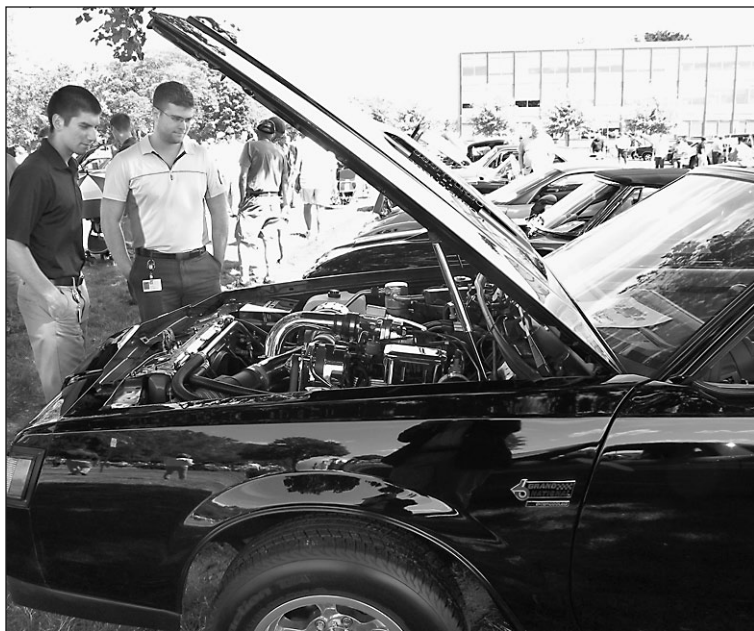
For Matt Scrase, Performance Variant manager, David Leone, executive chief engineer for Performance Vehicles and Cory Taulbert, assistant Performance Variant manager, viewing Carolyn Eicker’s 1969 Camaro gave them the opportunity to see the lineage of the modern Camaro, a vehicle all three have worked on.

“I love the lines of this classic 1969 Camaro,” Leone said. “This car has character and we’ve tried to keep this character with the new Camaros.”

“What I love particularly about the 1969 Camaro was that it was built to be a performance vehi-



(l-r) Matt Scrase, David Leone and Cory Taulbert in front of a '69 Camaro.



Lance Pannebecker, Jake Doran inspect an '86 Buick Grand National.

cle, unlike a lot of muscle cars that I won’t name that were ‘ordinary’ cars and turned into muscle cars later in the design process,” said Taulbert.

Not all cars have to be muscle cars to attract the eye of current GM employees. Charles Fan and Mark Smith are staff researchers at the Tech Center. They were looking at a 1963 Chevrolet station wagon.

“I like this car because it reminds me of my first car, which was a 1967 Caprice station wagon,” Fan said. “Of course I had that car in 1987, but even though it was old, it was still my first car and I have a lot of fond memories.”

For Smith, the 1963 Chevy sta-

tion wagon reminds him of traveling with him family on long journeys as a child.

“When I was a boy, we had a giant station wagon,” Smith said. “We took it on family trips and seeing a vehicle like this 1963 Chevy really brings it back. But I am also looking at the proportions of these old vehicles. This station wagon has huge roof panels, large doors and a unique mirror set up. They are very interesting to look at, especially when you compare them to today’s cars.”

For Taryn Dial, a GM interior designer, it was the exterior of the 1963 convertible Corvette that caught her eye.

“This vehicle’s interior doesn’t



Taryn Dial checks out the interior of a 1963 Corvette convertible.



The crowds came for the 2015 employee Tech Center Car show.

really do much for me,” Dial said. “I like the later Corvettes’ interiors better. But as someone who loves interiors, sometimes I see an exterior that just sweeps you off your feet. And this 1963 Corvette has such an exterior.

What I like about it is that it represents such a bold departure from previous Corvette designs. It shows such a willingness to take a risk. And it’s that attitude that has kept the Corvette relevant for all these years.”

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Encore to Receive Pep with 1.4L Engine

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rifice mileage,” Indiveri said. “The EPA’s numbers haven’t officially come out yet, but they should be very close to the standard Buick Encore. People can order the vehicle by the end of summer and pick one up by the end of the fall.”

The Encore is based on GM’s Gamma II platform, which was developed about a decade ago in Pontiac and Ruesselsheim Germany, Indiveri said. Among the vehicles that use this worldwide platform are the Chevy Sonic and the Opel Mokka. The Encore is a

true world car. Both the engine and the car itself are built in GM facilities in South Korea.

Direct injection helps it generate an estimated 153 hp and 177 lb-ft of torque, for about 11 percent more horsepower and nearly 20 percent more torque than the Encore’s standard engine – and a greater feeling of power on demand, particularly at low- and mid-range engine speeds, Indiveri said.

It’s matched with a six-speed automatic transmission.

Stop/start technology contributes to reduced fuel consumption in stop-and-go driving. It automati-

cally shuts down the engine when the vehicle comes to a stop under certain driving conditions, such as a stoplight.

The engine automatically restarts when the driver takes his or her foot off the brake.

“Encore is a driving force behind Buick’s expansion and a catalyst for introducing a new generation of customers to the brand,” said Duncan Aldred, U.S. vice president of Buick. “The all-new Encore Sport Touring broadens that base, giving customers more choices – along with more performance, more technology and more efficiency.”

Ford Creates New Lighting System with Advanced Tech

As the saying goes, it’s better to light a candle than curse the darkness. To that end, Ford is building a better vehicle lighting system because driving at night, particularly on unlit roads, can be a nerve-wracking experience.

Ford’s new lighting technologies will enable drivers to more easily identify potential hazards, including pedestrians, cyclists and animals, said Ford spokeswoman Monika Wagener.

Ford’s Camera-Based Advanced Front Lighting System can widen the beam at junctions and roundabouts to better illuminate hazards that are not in the direction of travel. New Spot Lighting technology helps draw the driver’s attention to pedestrians, cyclists and even large animals in the vehicle’s path or even just off the road, Wagener said.

“Many people who drive at night have had to quickly react to someone or something suddenly appearing in the road – as if from nowhere. Ford’s Camera-Based Advanced Front Lighting System and Spot Lighting help ensure the driver is quickly alerted to people or animals that could present a danger,” said Ken Washington, vice president, Ford Research and Advanced Engineering.

Camera-Based Advanced Front Lighting System builds upon Ford’s Adaptive Front Lighting System and Traffic Sign Recognition, which are already available in Ford vehicles, to provide drivers with improved visibility at roundabouts, stop, and give way or yield signs.

The system also uses GPS information to better illuminate bends and dips on a chosen route. Where GPS information is not available the technology uses a forward-facing video camera mounted in the rear-view mirror base to detect lane markings and predict the road’s curvature, using the information to illuminate the area more effectively.

In a further evolutionary step, in those instances, the camera stores the information in the navigation system. When next the driver uses the same road again, the headlights adapt to the course of the road automatically to better light the way, Washington said.

Camera-Based Advanced Front Lighting System was developed at Ford’s European Research and Innovation Centre in Aachen, Germany, and Ford officials expect the technology to be available for customers in the near fu-

ture, Washington said.

Spot Lighting – currently in the pre-development phase with Ford engineers in Aachen – uses an infra-red camera in the front grille to simultaneously locate and track up to eight people and bigger animals, including larger dogs, at a range of up to 120 metres.

The system can spotlight two hazards for the driver with a spot and a stripe on the road surface, illuminated by two special LED lamps next to the fog lights. The highlighted objects are displayed on the screen inside the car, marked in a red or yellow frame, according to the proximity of the object and the level of danger presented.

“Camera-Based Advanced Front Lighting can help make it easier for the driver to travel at night in unfamiliar surroundings, and to more easily see unexpected hazards. At roundabouts, for example, our system helps the driver to clearly see the exits – and check if cyclists and pedestrians are crossing the road,” said Michael Koherr, research engineer, Lighting Systems, Ford of Europe. “Spot Lighting makes potential hazards in the road ahead more easily visible to the driver – whether that is a pedestrian, a cyclist, or even a large animal.”

Systems currently available on Ford vehicles include:

- Dynamic LED Headlights which combines full-LED headlamps offering daylight-mimicking light clarity with Ford’s Adaptive Front Lighting System.
- Glare-Free Highbeam technology for the adaptive LED headlamps. The system detects vehicles ahead and fades out light that could dazzle oncoming drivers, while retaining maximum illumination for other areas.
- Auto High Beam Control detects oncoming vehicles and automatically switches to dipped beam, before switching back to high beam once it detects the vehicle has passed.

Ford’s European Sales Witnessing Strong Recovery

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) – Ford’s European business is seeing stronger demand for its cars and SUVs as the continent’s auto market continues to recover.

Ford of Europe said July 14 sales rose 16 percent in June compared to a year ago, to 126,800.

Sales rose 55 percent for the new version of the Mondeo, sold as the Fusion in the U.S. The company also saw stronger demand for its Kuga and EcoSport SUVs, a segment that has seen good growth.

Sales for the first six months of the year rose 10.5 percent to 668,800 vehicles in Ford’s 20 traditional European markets.

Europe marketing chief Roelant de Waard credited the strength of the company’s model line as well as a rebound in economies that suffered most during Europe’s financial crisis, such as Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland.

“They’re now coming back,” he said, “not exactly to previous level, but very healthy increases in the range of 20 percent, and our share went up, which is very much a product story.”

De Waard told *The Associated Press* that Ford was seeing more customers choosing higher-priced versions of a given model, ranging from 50 percent taking the most expensive trim package on the compact Focus to 80 percent for the Kuga: “You can see customers spending more money, and, in this case in particular, buying richer vehicles.”

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Safety Technology is the Key In J.D. Power's APEAL Study

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Among the the things learned in the study, Stephens said, was that 36 percent of owners have blind-spot monitoring and warning systems in their vehicle (up 7 percentage points from 2014). And 21 percent have lane-departure warning systems (up 5 percentage points); 46 percent have park assist/backup warning (up 4 percentage points); and 25 percent have collision avoidance/alert systems (up 4 percentage points).

Furthermore, Stephens said, 69 percent of owners who have blind-spot warning systems and 62 percent with park assist systems indicate they use them every time they drive. Only 15 percent of owners say they have had previous experience with blind-spot warning systems, and only 39 percent say their dealer explained the feature to them upon vehicle delivery.

Stephens said according to the J.D. Power 2015 U.S. Tech Choice Study, consumers are willing to spend substantially more on vehicles that include certain safety features. For example, respondents in that study indicate a willingness to pay a market price of \$750, on average, for blind-spot detection and prevention systems.

While premium brands historically perform significantly higher than non-premium brands in the APEAL Index, Stephens said study findings show that the gap between the two in 2015 is the smallest it's been in the past 10 years, narrowing by 16 percent since 2006. The average APEAL Index score in the non-premium segment (790) has improved by 5 points from 2014, while the average score in the premium seg-

ment (841) has improved by only 1 point.

"We're proud to receive three APEAL awards in back-to-back years as customers continue to recognize that we're delivering exciting and appealing vehicles which meet their needs," said Matt Liddane, vice president - Quality, FCA - North America. "An owner's positive experience with our vehicles, whether that's with a Dodge Challenger or a Fiat 500, is a true testament to our steadfast commitment to the highest level of quality across our vehicle lineup."

GM spokesman Monte Doran said that after reviewing the J.D. Power list, two things struck him.

"First, the goal of any car maker is to develop products that people fall in love with," Doran said. "We're seeing that with GM's portfolio. In the case of the Corvette, it's a car that people buy out of passion and not for rational reasons. To see it displace Porsche in its segment is a sign that the Corvette is doing its job - bring people to GM and to the Chevy brand and have them fall in love with the car and the car-maker."

In a statement to the media, Ford officials noted that the all-new 2015 Ford F-150 won the large light duty pickup award for the second consecutive year. In addition, Ford Expedition ranked highest in the large SUV segment and the C-MAX received the Compact Multi-Purpose Vehicle Award.

With three segment awards and an overall brand score of 798, Ford improved by 9 points over last year in the annual study and now equals the industry average.

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GM's \$2.8B Pretax Profit Sets 2Q Record

DETROIT (AP)– Big profits from trucks and SUVs helped General Motors overcome a sales slowdown in China, economic problems in Venezuela and payments to ignition switch crash victims as the automaker's second-quarter net income rose six-fold to nearly \$1.12 billion.

The Detroit company made 67 cents per share from April through June compared with 11 cents a year ago. The year-earlier quarter included \$1.5 billion in expenses for a string of safety recalls. GM's \$2.8 billion pretax profit in North America was a second-quarter record.

The strong profits helped GM distance itself from the recalls. Still, the company raised its estimate for what it will spend to compensate victims of crashes caused by defective ignition switches from \$600 million to \$625 million. Chief Financial Officer Chuck Stevens called it a final estimate, although GM still faces multiple lawsuits and a potentially large penalty from a Justice Department criminal investigation.

GM also said July 23 that it expects pretax profits to be better in the second half than the first, when it made \$5 billion. Shares jumped more than 7 percent as the market opened.

Excluding \$1.1 billion in special items, GM made \$1.29 per share, handily beating the \$1.08 average of seven analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research. Among the special items were \$720 million for currency devaluation and asset write-downs in Venezuela and \$75 million to compensate ignition

switch crash victims.

Faulty ignition switches that can unexpectedly shut off engines in older GM small cars are responsible for at least 124 deaths and 269 injuries, according to a fund set up by the company to compensate victims.

GM's sales in China fell 1 percent during the quarter as the market slowed, and its sales increase of 1.9 percent in the U.S. trailed the industry's overall gain. But the company said its sales were highly profitable, with SUVs and pickup trucks bringing in more dollars per vehicle. Kelley Blue Book estimated GM's average U.S. selling price at \$37,025 for the quarter, up 3.3 percent from a year ago.

In China, GM introduced two new SUVs during the quarter, helping to boost sales, Stevens said. "Our SUV sales across the

business are up more than 80 percent," he said. The company also cut costs and became more efficient in China, where it will continue to invest in new products despite slowing growth, he said.

So far this year, GM has spent \$2.1 billion buying back shares and has spent \$1.1 billion on dividends. Under pressure from activist investors, GM agreed to repurchase \$5 billion of shares by the end of 2016.

Overall, the company reported a 7.5 percent profit margin, the percentage of revenue it gets to keep. It expects to reach a 9- to 10-percent profit margin by early next decade.

The automaker posted revenue of \$38.18 billion in the quarter, missing Street forecasts. Four analysts surveyed by Zacks expected \$40.11 billion.

Local Group Aids Fight Against Cancer in August

A metropolitan Detroit-based open track high performance driving group sponsored by the business Lakes Area Auto Experts in Walled Lake, will hold its fourth annual charity fundraiser to benefit The Karmanos Cancer Institute Sat., Aug. 8 and Sun., Aug. 9 at Waterford Hills Road Racing, 4770 Waterford Road in Clarkston.

The fundraising event, which features a high performance driving event, a silent auction, lunch and exotic car rides, was created by the group in support of its founder, Ken Grulich, who developed skin cancer and was treated at Karmanos.

"He was treated well there and we decided to do a charity event for the hospital," says Kenny Walters, event committee member and owner and technician of Kenny's Lakes Area Auto Experts.

Karmanos Cancer Institute is one of 41 National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers in the United States and the only Michigan hospital dedicated exclusively to fighting cancer. The Detroit-based nonprofit provides research, patient care and education.

"This will be our fourth year putting on this event," says Walters. "Every year our target goal is to beat last year's total by at least one dollar. Last year we raised \$28,500."

Gates open both days at 7 a.m., rain or shine, followed by a mandatory drivers' meeting at 9 a.m. Groups will have the opportunity to race on the track in groups from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a break for lunch.

The cost to participate as a driver is \$200 for a single day or \$375 for the entire weekend. The proceeds from the event will be donated to Karmanos. Registration is limited and closes Thursday, Aug. 6. To register, visit www.3ballsacing.com/events.

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U-M Unveils \$10M Testing Ground for Self-driving Cars

by DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Auto Writer

ANN ARBOR, Michigan (AP) – Automakers and researchers say a new simulated city at the University of Michigan could help speed the development of driverless and connected cars.

The 32-acre site on the university's campus officially opened July 20. The \$10 million testing ground will be run by the Mobility Transformation Center, a partnership between the university, state and federal governments and auto and technology companies.

The site has many familiar features of urban driving, including intersections, a railroad crossing, two roundabouts, brick and gravel roads and parking spaces. Moveable building facades and fake pedestrians can be altered for different kinds of tests.

There's a simulated highway entrance ramp. Two features – a metal bridge and a tunnel – will be a special challenge for wireless signals and radar sensors to work.

Peter Sweatman, the director of the Mobility Transformation Center, says other test sites in Sweden and Japan have some of the same features, but the Michigan site is one of the most advanced autonomous vehicle testing grounds in the world.

Automakers, high-tech companies and university researchers will test car-to-car communication systems, which could one day predict accidents and stop cars before a mishap.

They'll also be testing semi-autonomous and driverless vehicles at the site.

Ryan Eustice, an associated professor of engineering at the

University of Michigan, has been testing driverless cars at the site with Ford Motor Co. since November of 2014, when the roads were paved but other features weren't yet installed at the testing site.

Eustice says the site allows researchers to be "maximally evil" toward the car, putting it into all sorts of situations that can be quickly and easily repeated, like a model of a pedestrian obscured by a bus that walks out into traffic.

Every kilometer of testing at the site is worth hundreds of kilometers of real-world driving, he said, since it can take hours of real driving to come upon a scenario that's difficult for the car to handle.

"In terms of the weird stuff, we can pack it all in a very dense way," he said.

Hideki Hada, the general manager of integrated systems at Toyota Motor Corp.'s engineering campus in Ann Arbor, says Toyota also has a test city in Japan, but this is a neutral site that will allow it to make sure its cars can communicate with cars from other automakers.

Hada said that Toyota and other automobile and technology companies had input into what would be included at the Michigan site.

One of his requests: the inclusion of dirty, mud-splashed road signs, so that automakers can make sure their cameras can still read them.

Sweatman said the site will also leave a lot of snow on the ground in the winter, so that automakers can make sure that the cameras and radar used in driverless systems will still work in the snow.

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