



2017 Pacifica

Chrysler's New 2017 Minivan Boasts Green Improvements

Production of the new 2017 Chrysler Pacifica has begun and the vehicle will be hitting dealerships in the new few weeks.

An important thing to remember about the minivan, said Fiat Chrysler spokesman Eric Mayne, is that it is a fuel-efficient ride that uses the latest in technology to achieve green results.

The new 2017 Chrysler Pacifica minivan has earned a highway-cycle fuel-economy rating of 28 mpg from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – a benchmark unsurpassed by

any minivan on the market, Mayne said. It is also 12 percent better than the vehicle Pacifica replaces, he said.

And when the broader environmental impact of the Pacifica's fuel consumption is examined, Mayne said, the Chrysler brand's new minivan is nine percent greener than the outgoing vehicle.

"The Pacifica isn't just engineered for today," said Mark Chernoby, chief operating officer

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GM Takes Step to Speed Autonomous Tech

General Motors Co. is acquiring Cruise Automation to add Cruise's software talent and development capability to further accelerate GM's development of autonomous vehicle technology, said GM spokesman Alan Adler.

"Fully autonomous vehicles can bring our customers enor-

mous benefits in terms of greater convenience, lower cost and improved safety for their daily mobility needs," said GM President Dan Ammann.

Cruise, Ammann said, will operate as an independent unit within GM's recently formed Autonomous Vehicle Develop-

ment Team led by Doug Parks, GM vice president of Autonomous Technology and Vehicle Execution, and will continue to be based in San Francisco.

Founded in 2013, Cruise has moved quickly to develop and

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Ammann (right) with Cruise Automation co-founders Kyle Vogt (center) and Daniel Kan (left)

Ford Owners Can Escape Wiper Troubles

Rear window defrosting is a technology that's existed for decades. Now Ford is offering something that will help Escape drivers keep their windshields clear during winter storms as well.

Ford Escape models can be equipped to help drivers eliminate the winter headache of maintaining a clear windshield, said Ford spokesman Mark Schirmer.

"No more wiper blades covered in chunks of ice. No more wiper blades freezing to the glass," Schirmer said. "And the

funny-looking parking lot ritual of pulling wipers off the windshield and pointing them to the sky will be a thing of the past."

Escape is the first Ford SUV in the United States, Schirmer said, to offer a windshield wiper de-icer, part of a Cold Weather Package that is standard on Titanium models and an option on SE models. The 2017 Escape is due in showrooms this spring.

"The windshield wiper de-icer is a great solution to one of the more nagging problems of winter," said Jennifer Gauthier, Ford fixed glass engineer. "Escape drivers in the U.S. are going to wonder how they ever got along without it."

Much like traditional rear window defrost systems, the base of

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The Escape's new windshield heating system helps attain clear vision.

2,300 Students Compete in Cobo STEM Fair

by Jim Stickford

The 59th annual Science and Engineering Fair of Metro Detroit (SEFMD) took place at the Cobo Center in Detroit March 8-12.

SEFMD spokesman and retired architect Jim Meloche said the fair showcases more than 2,800 students from the 6th through 12th grades, representing Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. This year's Fair comprises over 2,300 innovative projects in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines.

"I want to say that there is significant representation from Detroit Public Schools: 37 schools participating, 854 individual entries, 194 team projects," Meloche said. "These numbers are significant because Detroit schools are having financial difficulties, but the administration realizes the value of STEM."

Meloche said his first involvement with the fair dates back to the 1960s, but he's been on its board for the past decade.

"SEFMD judges come mostly from the auto industry," Meloche said. "Ford especially, but also Chrysler and GM. We also have a few judges from academia – Wayne State, Oakland University,

U-D Mercy. This year there are 20 different scientific categories in which students can participate. They range from biochemistry to

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Student Sophie Martin shows her experiment to judge James Boileau.

Global Meritor Employees Build Mural for Teamwork

It can be difficult to perform team-building exercises when you have teams spread out around the world.

Meritor, Inc. is a global supplier of drivetrain, mobility, braking and aftermarket solutions for commercial vehicle and industrial markets, and the company found a way around that problem, said Meritor spokeswoman Cheryl Kilborn.

The solution – have all eight of the Meritor's procurement teams work together on one project by creating a mural consisting of eight different elements completed by eight different teams.

The results of that philosophy were unveiled in Troy on March 10 in the form of a 5-by-20-foot mural, Kilborn said. An artist, Daniel Cascardo, drew an overall design on a single canvas, based on input from the different teams about their jobs and functions within the company.

"It was sort of like a coloring book page," Kilborn said. "The design was divided into eight pieces and sent to the different teams. They then filled in their

portions of the design with their own colors and even added their own personal touches."

The pieces were sent back to Troy, where Cascardo put them back together in the shape of a truck.

The colorful mural representing Meritor's business, products and work environment now hangs in the Troy lobby for visitors, customers and recruits to see, Kilborn said.

"We're serious about being a great place to work because companies perform better when they have engaged teams of people who feel valued and have fun in the workplace," said Jon Rose, vice president, Procurement.

"Although effective global team-building can be a challenge, we united procurement employees across borders and built relationships by teaming up to paint segments of the mural."

Meritor Procurement teams in the United States, United Kingdom, India, China, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland and Brazil submitted

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Meritor's Mural Comes From Around the World

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photos symbolizing their country, workplace and Meritor products to Cascardo.

Groups of employees at each location painted their portion of the mural, Kilborn said. The team in Italy, for example, painted a fighter plane because Meritor's Cameri facility once produced military hardware. Teams in Bangalore, India, painted the Taj Mahal, and Florence, Ky. employees painted one of their city's landmark images – a water tower with the saying, "Florence Y'All."

Teams were encouraged to be creative when painting in the white space, Kilborn said. Dave Rice, a forward program specialist – as well as a U.S. Army veteran – based at Troy headquarters, painted the American flag into a free-flowing ribbon that runs through part of the mural. When finished, the individual segments were returned to Cascardo for assembly into a single mural.

The artist Cascardo, based in metro Detroit, has been commissioned by several companies and other organizations to work with hundreds of employees to create what he calls Art, Action, Experience murals, Kilborn said. He likens the exercise to increasingly popular adult coloring books that become art when pieced together.

Due to the global nature of Meritor's business, Cascardo created a video explaining the project's scope and process, as well as materials each site would need. Cascardo gave little additional instruction, except to say that everyone should just team up and fill in the white spaces.

"In workplace environments – whether on plant floors or in office cubicles – employees may work together but never really engage each other," said Kate Lieffers, manager, Employee Engagement

"With this kind of project, we bring people together to do something really fun, and afterward they can look at the piece and be reminded that we're all part of something much bigger. When we pull together and work collaboratively, we celebrate our strength as one global team."

Two Jeeps Named in Top 10 'Best SUVs Under \$25,000'

Judging from recent sales figures, the popularity of SUVs isn't declining anytime soon. So the experts from *Kelley Blue Book* (www.kbb.com) have assembled their list of the 10 Best SUVs Under \$25,000 for 2016.

"The country is having a love affair with small SUVs right now, and Kelley Blue Book visitors are especially infatuated," said Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director and executive market analyst for *Kelley Blue Book's* kbb.com.

"Balancing an SUV's elevated driving position, superior cargo versatility and available all-wheel drive with the efficiency and affordability of a mainstream sedan, today's small SUVs offer multifaceted appeal. It's no wonder that it is one of the fastest-growing segments in the auto industry."

The vehicles on the list all have a Kelley Blue Book Fair Purchase Price that starts below \$25,000 as of February 2016, Nerad said. Updated weekly and based on current market conditions such as vehicle availability, local demand and seasonal buying trends, the Kelley Blue Book Fair Purchase Price shows shoppers what others have been paying for a new car recently and is

included in kbb.com's Price Advisor tool, which provides range-based market pricing.

Among the SUVs making the list are the 2016 Jeep Wrangler and the 2016 Jeep Renegade. The other eight are foreign-made.

Editors liked the new Renegade for the way it "mixes the off-road spirit of the Jeep Wrangler with the added efficiency, refinement and affordability of a smaller crossover SUV."

Editors liked the Wrangler for ruggedness. They wrote, "Take off the top, find a dirt road to nowhere and try to remember the last time you had more fun on four wheels. The rugged Wrangler isn't the right choice for most small SUV shoppers, but for countless weekend warriors there's no other option."

Jeep spokesman Berj Alexanian said it should be no surprise to anyone that the 2016 Wrangler and 2016 Renegade made the Kelley Blue Book list.

"This is the second year in a row that these two vehicles are on this list," Alexanian said. "This accomplishment is fantastic. These two vehicles are part of the heart and soul of the Jeep lineup and they are really driving the brand's sales."

And, Alexanian said, these ve-

hicles provide different driving experiences while giving great value to the people who drive these vehicles.

"The Renegade offers a more refined driving experience for people who live in the city," Alexanian said, "while the Wrangler has that off-road capability that many SUV owners want."

The Kelley award is just the latest these two vehicles have won over the past couple of years, Alexanian said.

"The Wrangler is also on *Kelley Blue Book's* five-year lowest-cost-

to-own list. That vehicle competes with luxury brands when it comes to keeping its value over time.

"The Renegade was named to Kelley's Top 10 Coolest New Cars list in 2015. It was also named 2016 Car of the Year by *Autoescape Magazine* in Brazil.

"The Wrangler has been a winner for years and the Renegade, while new, is keeping pace with the Wrangler when it comes to awards. Making Kelley's list is just the latest set of honors for both vehicles."



2016 Jeep Wrangler

Chrysler's New 2017 Minivan Boasts Green Improvements

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of Product Development and head of Product Portfolio Management for Fiat Chrysler's Group Executive Council. "This vehicle is designed and crafted to enhance the lives of our customers for years to come."

The 9 percent differential is a reflection of Global Warming Potential (GWP), Chernoby said, which considers the environmental impact of fuel production and delivery, along with the implications of its consumption. Fiat Chrysler engineers used industry-standard software to calculate and compare the new Pacifica's GWP with that of the outgoing vehicle, over 124,274 miles of operation.

"Total environmental impact is an important metric to consider as we introduce new fuel-efficient technologies," Chernoby said.

The new Pacifica's efficiency is further reflected in its city- and combined-cycle fuel-economy ratings of 18 mpg and 22 mpg, respectively, Chernoby said. The latter marks a 10 percent jump compared with the outgoing vehicle, while the former delivers a 5.9 percent gain.

Credit, in part, its engine – a direct descendant of the Pentastar V6, named three times to the prestigious list of *Ward's* 10 Best, Chernoby said. The redesigned 3.6-liter V6 in the gas-powered Pacifica features two-step variable-valve lift (VVL), cooled exhaust-gas recirculation (EGR) and innovative engine-weight reductions that boost the engine's efficiency and performance – all while preserving the smoothness that remains a hall-

mark of the Pentastar brand.

Mated to the upgraded engine is the newest member of the Fiat Chrysler TorqueFlite transmission family. The first nine-speed automatic ever featured in a minivan, it benefits from a wide, 9.81 ratio spread and a unique calibration designed to deliver outstanding vehicle launch characteristics, smooth shifts and overall enhanced fuel efficiency.

The 2017 Chrysler Pacifica, Mayne said, also features a light, yet stiff unibody structure based on a new Fiat Chrysler vehicle architecture developed specifically for the global minivan front-drive E-segment.

The Pacifica utilizes approximately 22 percent more high-strength steel than its predecessor, of which 48 percent is advanced high-strength steel for maximum stiffness and strength and optimal weight efficiency.

The Chrysler Pacifica is nearly 250 pounds lighter than its predecessor, while boasting torsional rigidity that is twice that of any current competitor on the market, Mayne said.

The new minivan design benefits from other lightweight materials, Mayne said. Its magnesium cross-vehicle instrument-panel beam affords greater stiffness without adding weight. The inner structure of the new minivan's liftgate marks the industry's first high-volume application of magnesium of this kind.

Further, the 2017 Pacifica benefits from a drag co-efficient of .300, which is best among its primary competitors, Mayne said.

Engine Stop-Start (ESS) technology arrives in market later, followed in the second half of the year by the Pacifica Hybrid – the industry's first electrified mini-

van. The latter will deliver an estimated range of 30 miles solely on zero-emissions electric power, Mayne said.

And in city driving, it is expected to achieve an efficiency rating of 80 miles per gallon equivalent (MPGe) based on U.S. EPA standards, Mayne said.

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2016 GMC Yukon Denali

Yukon Called Family Friendly

U.S. News & World Report last week announced the 2016 GMC Yukon is the Best Large SUV for Families, praising the vehicle for its capability, features and comforts.

“The Yukon has the most family-friendly features in the class,” said Jamie Page Deaton, managing editor for U.S. News Best Cars blog.

“The Apple CarPlay and in-car Wi-Fi are really cutting edge, standout features.”

The Yukon also won because it has such a high U.S. News score – it gets really positive reviews not only for its space and comfort, but also its performance.”

Evaluation and methodology for the award included: overall sentiment of professional automotive reviews, safety and reliability ratings, seating and cargo volume and the availability of family-friendly features.

“The GMC lineup is designed with the expectation of premium comforts, utility and unique features for any passenger,” said Duncan Aldred, vice president of GMC Sales and Marketing.

GM Takes Step To Speed Up Autonomous Tech

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test autonomous vehicle technology in San Francisco’s challenging environment, Adler said.

“GM’s commitment to autonomous vehicles is inspiring, deliberate, and completely in line with our vision to make transportation safer and more accessible,” said Kyle Vogt, founder of Cruise Automation.

“We are excited to be partnering with GM and believe this is a groundbreaking and necessary step toward rapidly commercializing autonomous vehicle technology.”

“Cruise provides our company with a unique technology advantage that is unmatched in our industry,” said Mark Reuss, GM executive vice president, Global Product Development, Purchasing and Supply Chain. “We intend to invest significantly to further grow the talent base and capabilities already established by the Cruise team.”

The acquisition of Cruise is GM’s latest step toward its goal of redefining the future of personal mobility, Reuss said. Since the beginning of the year, GM has allied with ride-sharing company Lyft; formed Maven, its personal mobility brand for car-sharing fleets in many U.S. cities, and established a unit for autonomous vehicle development.

“The Yukon is no exception as it is highly sought-after for its styling, spaciousness and family-oriented design.

It is an exceptional honor to be named the best large SUV for families by U.S. News & World Report in a category so important to our customers and our brand.”

Aldred also said that the Yukon is great for families looking for that cut above – offers everything – “tons of room for people and their things, premium features like 4G LTE wifi, adaptive cruise control, premium styling, just to name some.”

The Yukon also was recently ranked highest in its segment for the third straight year in the 2016 J.D. Power Vehicle Dependability Study.

Aldred said that GMC worked hard on the design and the technology that went into the Yukon and that winning this award was not a surprise, but “it was a nice validation for us.”

2,300 Students Compete in Cobo STEM Fair

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chemistry to mathematics to robotics.”

The competition is separated into two groups – junior division (6th, 7th and 8th grades) and senior division (9th-12th grades), Meloche said. Students are judged within their respective categories based on scientific discipline. Up to six students – limit of one student per school in the senior division – and one team project (two or three students) may be selected to participate in the 2016 International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) in Phoenix.

“What’s interesting is that the students come up with their issues or projects and then solve them themselves,” Meloche said. “Last year we had a winner from Detroit who developed a presentation on autistic behavior and the special needs autistic students have. He then made proposals on how their lives can be

made better. It turns out that this student was autistic himself. This year there are at least two dozen projects based around the problem of and the solution to the quality of municipal water.”

The students are helped by their teachers and they attend a couple of special classes at the Detroit Public Library headquarters on how to develop and present their projects.

Judges such as Ford Tech Specialist James Boileau reviewed the students’ experiments and came up with evaluations.

“I love being a part of this,” Meloche said. “The kids are so enthusiastic and as a board member and not a judge, I get to help them with their projects and presentations to the judges. I love how comfortable and capable these students are in their presentations to the judges.”

The Science and Engineering Fair could not function without the assistance of volunteers and sponsors, Meloche said. Mem-

bers of the Operating Council direct over 40 volunteers for set-up, support and tear-down each year. In addition, almost 200 judges from Detroit’s engineering community evaluate the submissions and select the best of the best. This year, five corporations sponsor SEFMD, including Toyota, DTE Energy, Comerica Bank, Marathon Oil and Ford.

Meloche said the winners will be named after the end of the show.

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Not only does the 2017 Chrysler Pacifica offer more major standard content at a lower price point than its key competitors, Kuniskis said, it also offers features not available at any price from the competition.

Some exclusive features: Stow 'n Go seating, Stow 'n Go Assist, heated second-row seats, 20-inch wheels, tri-pane panoramic sunroof, 10-inch seatback touchscreens and ParkSense Parallel/Perpendicular Park Assist.

Drugged Driving Suit Aimed at Teenagers

It's been said that teenagers think they're immortal and are apt to do stupid things like drink and drive. Ford would like to stop all teens from thinking that way.

That's where Ford Driving Skills for Life comes in, said Ford spokesman John Cangany. The company launches its 13th global tour with the addition of a new Drugged Driving Suit for its U.S. curriculum that's designed to stress the dangers of driving while impaired.

The program expands this year as Driving Skills for Life takes its training across the United States and travels to six additional countries worldwide.

The 2016 program also provides experiences with a Drunk Driving Suit, which debuted in 2013, Cangany said.

Students attending ride-and-drive events will wear both suits to gain perspective on how being impaired can slow movement, reduce coordination, blur vision and make tasks difficult.

They'll also learn the importance of safety belt use and pedestrian safety, and about the risks of drowsy driving.

"Our 2016 program features some of the newest and most innovative tools available to teach new drivers to be safe and make sound decisions behind the wheel," said Jim Graham, manager of Ford Driving Skills for Life.

"Our new Drugged Driving Suit is intended to complement our Drunk Driving Suit, giving students a critical eye into the consequences of impaired driving."

Driving Skills for Life takes its training to 15 stops in the United States this year, Cangany said, including Alabama, Arizona, California, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Texas.

The safe driving message also expands globally as the tour travels to Argentina, Bahrain, Finland, Oman, Poland and South Korea.

Ford Customers Can Escape Wiper Troubles

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the windshield where the wiper blades rest is equipped with a local heating element, said Ford spokesman William Mattiace. So the heating element is embedded within the glass itself. The elements get a little warmer than rear defroster elements and carries a heavier current as well.

"Now you don't have to get clothes dirty bending over the windshield to pull the wipers off the glass," Mattiace said.

"I'm from New Mexico and when I first came to Michigan and saw people pulling their wipers off the windshields when they were parking their cars, I wondered what they were doing. I learned they were preventing the rubber of the wiper from freezing to the windshield glass. With the new Escape system, that's no longer going to be an issue."

The system is designed to clear light snow and ice from the wiper blades in under 10 minutes at minus 18 degrees Fahrenheit.

Drivers of the new Escape equipped with SYNC Connect can activate the windshield wiper de-icer system from their smartphone as part of the Ford-Pass experience. SYNC Connect allows owners to start, lock, unlock and locate their vehicle from virtually anywhere using a smartphone.

Drivers can even schedule a specific time to start remotely so the vehicle is ready to hit the road, de-iced and warmed up.



Drugged Driving Suit is designed to stress dangers of impaired driving.

To date, Driving Skills for Life has reached 800,000 new drivers of all ages with free ride-and-drive courses, school and community events, and its interactive website.

By the end of 2016, Cangany said the program will have reached 1 million people in 35 countries.

"Despite progress in recent years, teens continue to be over-represented in motor vehicle crashes and fatalities across the country," said Jonathan Adkins, executive director, Governors Highway Safety Association.

"For this reason, the association and the State Highway Safety Offices are looking forward to bringing this powerful program to even more teens and their parents – coast to coast and around the globe."

Ford Driving Skills for Life was established in 2003 by Ford Motor Company Fund, Governors Highway Safety Association and a panel of safety experts with the mission of teaching newly licensed drivers the necessary skills for safer driving and the

importance of making good decisions behind the wheel.

Through free, hands-on ride-and-drive courses, classroom material and an interactive website, the core curriculum focuses on vehicle handling, hazard recognition, speed management and space management, which account for 60 percent of all crashes.

In its first 12 years, Ford Driving Skills for Life provided hands-on training to more than 41,000 teens in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

Thousands of teens and parents have used the Web-based curriculum at www.drivingskillsforlife.com.

"Ford Driving Skills for Life has grown in both content and reach since it launched 13 years ago," said Graham.

"We focus on parental behavior, because research shows it has an impact on teen driving behavior."

"And we continue to modify the program to keep up with an ever-evolving world that newly licensed drivers must face."

VW Looking for a Break In U.S. Decision on Fines

BERLIN (AP) – The head of Volkswagen's employee council said March 8 he hopes that American authorities will consider the potential fallout on jobs in the U.S. and beyond as they mull what fines to impose on the company over its emissions-rigging scandal.

The cost to Volkswagen of the scandal that erupted in September remains unclear. In January, the U.S. Justice Department sued it over the emissions-cheating software found in hundreds of thousands of vehicles sold in the country, potentially exposing VW to more than \$20 billion in penalties for clean air violations.

The company and its executives could also still face separate criminal charges, while a raft of private class-action lawsuits filed by angry VW owners are pending.

"If Volkswagen's sustainability is endangered by a penalty of a so-far unique size, this will also have dramatic social consequences – not just at our U.S. locations, but also in Europe and elsewhere," the company's influential employee council chief, Bernd Osterloh, told a workers' assembly at VW's Wolfsburg headquarters.

"We very much hope that U.S. authorities also ultimately have this social and employment dimension in view," he added, news agency dpa reported.

News of the scandal broke on Sept. 18 when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Volkswagen had installed software on 482,000 cars that enabled them to cheat on emissions tests. Four days later, Volkswagen said about 11 million

diesel vehicles worldwide were fitted with the software.

The governor of Volkswagen's home state of Lower Saxony, who sits on Volkswagen's supervisory board as a minority shareholder, cautioned that more bad news can be expected.

"We will repeatedly be confronted this year with unpleasant news in connection with 'Dieselgate,'" Stephan Weil told workers. He didn't elaborate.

Prosecutors in Germany have been investigating suspected fraud connected to the emissions-rigging scandal since September.

On March 9, Braunschweig prosecutors' spokesman Klaus Ziehe confirmed a report by the Funke newspaper group March 8 that the number of people under investigation has increased to 17 from six.

He didn't identify them or give further details, though the newspaper report said without citing sources that the suspects didn't include any current or former management board members.

Ford Vehicles Go LEGO Toy Route

Call it child's play. Ford Mustang and F-150 Raptor LEGO Speed Champions sets are now available online.

Kids ages seven and up can purchase either set directly from the LEGO store at en.lego.com.

The 185-piece Mustang kit includes a time board and race driver.

It retails for \$14.99.

The 664-piece F-150 Raptor set sells for \$49.99.

Macomb Community College is offering the following courses free of charge:

Aluminum and its Alloys – March 28 – 30, 2016
Upon completion of this course, you should be able to: Identify aluminum alloys suited to specific applications; describe key processing parameters that influence structure - property relationships; identify composition and processing interactions that result in final material properties; solve routine processing and heat-treating issues; and identify cost-reduction opportunities that do not negatively impact material and product performance.

Introduction of Additive Manufacturing – March 23, 24, & 26, 2016
Upon completion of this course, you should be able to describe: the background and mechanism of 3D printing; the current types of 3D printers and the corresponding printing materials; CAD software and graphical design; and 3D printing software and file formats.

– Class size is limited and will be filled on a first come, first served basis. –

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Turns Out Millennials Do Like Automobiles

by DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – Millennials were once a source of panic in the auto industry. Dubbed the “go nowhere” generation, they weren’t getting driver’s licenses, never mind buying cars. Headlines declared it was “The End of Car Culture.”

New data suggests at least some of that worry was misplaced. Millennials – especially the oldest ones – are these days buying cars in big numbers. They just had a late start.

Now the largest generation in the U.S., millennials bought 4 million cars and trucks in the U.S. last year, second only to the baby boomers, according to J.D. Power’s Power Information Network, which defines millennials as those between 21 and 38 in 2015. Millennials’ share of the new car market jumped to 28 percent. In the country’s biggest car market, California, millennials outpaced boomers for the first time.

Industry watchers say it’s been hard to get a read on millennials because the generation is big and diverse, ranging from recent college graduates to settled-down suburbanites. Automakers were also unsure about the impact of new transportation choices, like ZipCar and Uber, which helped millennials delay car buying. But as they got jobs and started families, millennials headed into car dealerships just like previous generations.

“This whole idea that they’re not going to need cars is absolutely ridiculous,” said Steven Szakaly, the chief economist for the National Automobile Dealers Association. “The new car buyer age is just happening much later.”

It’s a very different story from

2010, when millennials – who make up around 30 percent of the population – bought just 17 percent of new cars. Auto executives wondered aloud if the trend would be permanent.

In 2011, a University of Michigan study showed a steady decline in the number of young people getting their driver’s licenses. In 1983, the survey found, 87 percent of 19-year-olds had a license. By 2010, that had fallen to 69 percent. Millennials told the study’s authors that they were too busy to get licenses and were happy to hitch rides from others.

But there was more to the story. The advent of graduated licensing laws – which make teens practice driving in stages before granting a full license – was one reason millennials were getting their licenses later. An even bigger reason? The economy.

For many millennials, the Great Recession hit just as they were getting their first job or graduating from college. By 2010, millennials’ unemployment rate reached 13 percent – four percentage points higher than the national average – according to a report by the White House Council of Economic Advisers. For teens, things were even worse. The teen unemployment rate rose from 15 percent to 26 percent between 2006 and 2012.

Millennials’ unemployment rate has improved to around 8 percent. Add low interest rates and low gas prices to the mix and the car market suddenly looks more enticing to young buyers.

Lucy Mueller, 26, lived in Los Angeles for eight years without a car. She took buses and trains, hitched rides with friends and used ride-sharing services like Lyft. Her commutes lasted more than an hour each way. Finally, last July, she bought a slightly used 2015 Fiat 500.

“Now that I have a car, it’s almost bewildering to me. I feel like a grown-up,” said Mueller, a project manager and video producer for financial software maker Intuit.

Several things kept Mueller out of the car market. She didn’t have a credit card until a year ago; without any credit history, financing a car would have been difficult. Also, like many recession-weary millennials, Mueller wanted to avoid accruing debt, so she saved enough for a substantial down payment.

Szakaly says it will take millennials another four to five years to match the spending power of boomers. According to government data, the median household income for people ages 25-34 is \$54,243. For those ages 55-64, it’s more than \$60,000. In addition, the average 25-year-old has more than \$20,000 in student debt, according to Goldman Sachs. That’s enough to buy a new Kia Optima sedan.

Bret Hyde, a cameraman with Access Hollywood in New York, waited until he was 37 to buy his first car. He and his wife used to rent ZipCars or take buses to visit friends and family. It was tiresome and expensive, he said, but there wasn’t much parking in their old neighborhood. After moving to a new neighborhood and renting a garage last spring, the couple bought a 2015 Nissan Rogue SUV.

Sheryl Connelly, a futurist with Ford Motor Co. who studies buying trends, said even as millennials start buying cars in bigger numbers, their attitudes are different than previous generations. Owning a car and getting a driver’s license aren’t the milestones they once were, and that may be a permanent change.

“The sense of freedom and independence that used to come with getting a vehicle has been arguably displaced by the cell phone,” she said.

Automakers have taken note. They’re improving in-car technology to make it easier for young drivers to stay connected to their friends and music while they’re driving. They’re forming partnerships with ride-hailing and car-sharing services and conducting mobility experiments of their own.

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GM Facilities Earn Award for Smaller Carbon Footprint

Eleven General Motors facilities have earned ENERGY STAR certification for superior energy efficiency from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

These buildings, which include seven parts distribution centers, a global headquarters office and three IT innovation office centers, have optimized their buildings to leave a smaller carbon footprint, said GM spokeswoman Colleen Oberc.

To earn ENERGY STAR certification, buildings must perform better in energy efficiency than 75 percent of similar buildings nationwide and meet strict energy efficiency performance levels set by the EPA.

"It makes good business sense to pursue a greener product in every segment of the value chain," said Al Hildreth, GM's global energy manager. "This includes the areas that support our business and keep our company running optimally, like our efficient warehouses, IT centers and office buildings."

GM leads the automotive industry in certified distribution centers, Hildreth said. The following Customer Care and After-sales facilities, which supply automotive parts to dealerships and customers for vehicle repair, achieved certification:

- Customer Care and After-sales World Headquarters, Grand Blanc;
- Denver Parts Distribution Center, Colo.;
- Fontana Parts Distribution Center, Calif.;
- Lansing National Parts Distribution Center;
- Martinsburg Parts Distribution Center, W. Va.;
- Memphis ACDelco Parts Distribution Center, Tenn.;

- Rancho Cucamonga Parts Distribution Center, Calif.;
- Willow Run Parts Distribution Center.

These facilities implemented a number of energy conservation projects. The Grand Blanc facility installed energy-efficient LED lighting, upgraded heating and cooling systems, and engaged employees in a "Bring Your Green to Work" event with local energy utilities to discuss energy-saving ideas for both the home and office, Hildreth said.

"This recognition demonstrates the collaborative work by our employees who are focused on saving energy and improving our efficiency," said Tim Turvey, GM Customer Care and After-sales global vice president.

Additionally, three new GM IT innovation office centers earned certification:

- The Arizona IT Innovation Center in Chandler uses solar to power 9 percent of its monthly energy use.
- The Georgia IT Innovation Center in Roswell installed an advanced intelligent boiler control to optimize energy efficiency.
- The Austin IT Innovation Center in Texas sets workplace and conference room lighting to operate at 50 percent of maximum output.

These three sites house software developers, project managers, database experts and other IT professionals supporting GM's business worldwide, Oberc said.

All buildings were designed and built following Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design strategies and practices, and rank an average of 43 percent below the median national average for energy use.

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Volkswagen's U.S. CEO Steps Down Over Emissions

WASHINGTON (AP) – Volkswagen's top U.S. executive is stepping down amid the company's ongoing emissions cheating scandal, the company announced March 9.

U.S. President and Chief Executive Michael Horn is leaving "to pursue other opportunities effective immediately," the automaker said in a statement. He had been with the German automaker for 25 years, assuming his most recent post in 2014.

Horn's sudden departure comes as the company continues to grapple with the fallout from its admission last year that nearly 600,000 cars were sold in the U.S. with software that regulators say was designed to cheat on required emissions tests.

VW potentially faces more than \$20 billion in fines from state and federal regulators, as well as hundreds of class-action lawsuits filed on behalf of angry vehicle owners. The Justice Department is also conducting a criminal investigation.

It was Horn who was sent to apologize to consumers at a congressional hearing in October. But at the same time, he told lawmakers that top corporate officials had no knowledge of the cheating software installed in 11 million diesel cars worldwide.

"To my understanding, this was not a corporate decision, this was something individuals did," Horn said, adding that he felt personally deceived.

A federal judge has given the company until March 24 to reach an agreement with the government on recalling the affected vehicles. U.S. District Court Judge Charles R. Breyer wants to know about available technical solutions to fix the cars and the status of negotiations on a potential settlement with affected owners. VW has not indicated if it can meet the deadline.

Volkswagen in September admitted to U.S. regulators that it had used illegal software installed in its so-called "Clean Diesel" engines. The cheating allowed cars to pass lab emissions tests while spewing high levels of harmful nitrogen oxide.

Delphi Earns Ethical Award Fourth Time

Delphi Automotive PLC has been named one of the "World's Most Ethical Companies" by the Ethisphere Institute, a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices, said Delphi spokeswoman Andrea Knapp.

Delphi was recognized for its commitment to leading ethical business standards and practices and has been named to the list the last four years. The company is one of only three automotive companies to be included on the annual list, Knapp said. The other two companies were Ford and Cummins, Inc., of Indiana.

"At Delphi, we foster a culture of responsibility and ethics throughout our organization. These are values that are integral to how we do business each day and we are proud to be recognized for this work," said David M. Sherbin, senior vice president, general counsel, secretary and chief compliance officer, Delphi Automotive.

Ethisphere's World's Most Ethical Companies are selected using scores generated in five key categories: ethics and compliance program, corporate citizenship and responsibility, culture of ethics, governance and leadership, innovation and reputation, Knapp said.