Tech Center News

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GM Working to Find Work for the Autistic

by Jim Stickford

Who says that Detroit automakers can't learn valuable lessons from each other?

Not Natasha Barber and Mike Rhadigan. They both work at General Motors and have put together a program designed to help those with autism get jobs at GM. And they got the idea? From a similar program at Ford Motor Company.

"I run an autism blog called 'Autism Moms Know Safety' because of my son Joshua outside my duties at GM," Barber said. "I am a senior buyer at Global Raw Materials, and one day a parent who reads my blog pointed me to an article about a program at Ford about how they have a program designed help people with autism get jobs at Ford. The person who read my blog asked why don't we do something like this for GM "

Barber said her youngest son is on the autism spectrum and wanders off a lot. The blog allows her and other parents of autistic children to share what they've learned parenting those with autism.

Barber contacted her boss Steve Kiefer, a senior vice president at GM Global Purchasing & Supply Chain (GPSC). Kiefer asked for a copy of the article.

"He forwarded to Kevin Smith,



Natasha Barber

who is human resources head at Global Purchasing," Barber said. "Kevin put me in touch with Mike Rhadigan. That was a good fit. He is a Human Resources Business Partner. Mike and I touched base just before the Fourth of July break in 2016. In August we sat down with the fine people at Autism Alliance of Michigan."

Among the people from the Alliance was Tammy Morris, Barber said. She came with the Alliance CEO.

"We walked through what they could do for us if we created a program to hire those with autism," Barber said. "They have a detailed program on how to place people, but it's not the GM way. By that I mean GM has its

own processes in place for hiring people and we had to bring these two methods together."

The thing to remember, Barber said, is that the Autism Alliance has a job bank of about 300 people who are looking for work. These are people with skills but who have been unemployed or underemployed for years.

"Some of these people have ad-vanced degrees," Barber said. "They have skills and have been on hundreds of job interviews, but they, because of their autism, aren't great at interviews. They might not look someone in the eye, or they may be very uncomfortable in a strange environment. The main thing about a job interview is selling yourself, and when you can't do that, you can't get a job."

So, Barber said, under the pilot program they created is find a need within GM, and then the Alliance goes to its job bank to see if anyone in the bank has the skills appropriate for the job.

Once a candidate is identified the Alliance then works with the candidate and with the people at GM for the interview. The original plan for the pilot program was to get two people hired. It turned out to be so successful that in the end GM has hired three people from the Alliance



The 2019 Corvette ZR1 is coming to the 2018 Detroit Auto Show.

NAIAS Show Gives Locals Chance to See New 'Vette

troit, people are getting ready for the 2018 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS), and that's good news for Corvette fans.

GM spokesman Tom Read said that one of the new vehicles that will be on display at the show is the the 2019 Corvette ZR1 and the the ZR1 convertible, the first ZR1 drop-top since the original 1970 model-year ZR1.

On sale in the spring alongside the Corvette ZR1 coupe, the ZR1 convertible emphasizes Corvette's

Now that January is upon De- iconic proportions and functional sculpture, highlighting the seamless transition between the exterior and interior.

> The ZR1 coupe will carry a suggested retail price of \$119,995, while the ZR1 convertible will start at \$123,995 (prices include destination charge, but exclude tax, title and other dealer fees).

> "The new Corvette ZR1 convertible is a supercar in all respects," said Mark Reuss, executive vice

> > **CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

Edmunds Names F-150 'Most Innovative Truck'

There was good news for Ford and fans of the F-150 pickup truck.

Edmunds, the car shopping and information platform, and the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), the producer of Consumer Electronics Show (CES), named six of the seven winners of the inaugural Edmunds CES Tech Driven Awards, with the F-150 taking top honors in the Most Innovative Truck category.

The awards, announced Jan. 4, recognize the automakers at CES that have developed the most forward-thinking vehicles and technology features available for car buyers to purchase in 2018, said CES spokeswoman Leah Polk.

The seventh award category honors the most transformative new concept vehicle or automotive technology announced at CES, and the winner will be named during the show. "CES has become a premier venue for automakers to debut and showcase their most progressive visions for the future of mobility," said Alistair Weaver, Edmunds v.p. of editorial and editor-in-chief. The winners of the Edmunds CES Tech Driven Awards represent some of the most innovative thinking in automotive and celebrate the technologies that are transforming personal transportation."



2018 Chrysler 300



2018 Chevrolet Suburban



2018 Ford F-150

Detroit Three Auto Sales Mixed for 2017 FCA Sees Slight Trucks Drove GM Sales Decline in Sales

3,002,241 vehicles in the United States in 2017, including more than 1.3 million trucks and 965,090 crossovers.

nual sales records for pickup and crossover deliveries, electric vehicles sales, average transaction prices and more. GM also reduced year-end inventories more than its target. Inventories were 752,554 units, down 90,000 from a year ago. Days supply was 63 days, said General Motors spokesman Jim Cain. Chevrolet has been GM's most powerful growth engine, Cain said. The brand delivered yearover-vear retail market share increases in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Since the end of 2014, Chevrolet's retail share has grown from 10.2 percent, according to Polk registration data, to an estimated 11.2 percent. GM crossover deliveries were up 17 percent year over year, driven by record sales of the Chevrolet Equinox, Traverse and Trax, as well as the Buick Envi-

General Motors delivered sion, Buick Encore and GMC Acadia.

GM grew its retail share of the crossover market more than any other automaker, according to In the process, GM set new an- the latest J.D. Power PIN esti-

December Caps Off Good Year For Ford

The numbers are in for Ford in 2017, and they are good. "December capped off a record year for Ford brand SUVs. making it eight consecutive years of Ford brand sales leadership. F-Series had an unbelievable year as we sold nearly 900,000 pickups, with strong high-end truck demand as customers continue to opt for our latest technology and equipment packages," said Mark LaNeve, Ford vice president, U.S. Marketing, Sales and Service. Demand for F-Series was strong all year, with customers requesting the newest technologies in our high-series trucks. High-series Super Duty and new 2018 F-150 trucks pushed overall F-Series ATPs to a new record level of \$47,800 per truck, \$3,400 higher than a year ago, LaNeve said.

The winners of the 2018 Edmunds CES Tech Driven Awards are

• Most Innovative Truck: Ford

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

percent decrease compared with sales in December 2016 (192,519 units).

for the Year

had sales of 171,946 units, an 11

FCA US in December of 2017

In December, retail sales of 150,772 units were down 3 percent compared with the same month in 2016 and represented 88 percent of total sales, said FCA spokesman Jeff Bennett.

In line with FCA's strategy to reduce sales to the daily rental segment, fleet sales of 21,174 units were down, as expected, 42 percent year over year. The largest planned volume reduction in December fleet sales came from the Jeep brand, which reduced its fleet sales number by 75 percent year over year.

Fleet sales represented 12 percent of total FCA US December sales.

The Chrysler Pacifica minivan posted an 8 percent year-over-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

mates. Cain said. GM's retail share grew 1.6 percentage points to 13.1 percent. The only other major automaker to gain retail share was up less than one point. Chevrolet became the industry's fastest-growing crossover brand in 2017 based on retail market share, with the all-new Equinox and Traverse gaining more than one point of share in their respective segments. Equinox retail deliveries were up 21 percent and Traverse was up 31 percent. The Trax was up 5 percent.

Crossovers helped Buick deliver its best calendar vear sales since 2004. The Buick Encore delivered its best year ever. It has been Buick's volume leader for three straight years.

Crossovers now account for more than 80 percent of Buick's

And in 2017 Edge sales totaled 142,603 vehicles, representing a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

View This Week's Edition at http://TechCenterNews.com

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

State Legislature Looking at New Bicycle Bills and Laws

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Ford Ordering **Recall Over Coolant Issues**

DETROIT (AP) - Ford says it will repair any coolant leaks that might be found in more than 200,000 recalled vehicles that are at risk of catching fire.

The repairs, detailed in company documents posted by U.S. safety regulators in December, come 10 months after the company said it would only install a coolant level sensor "with supporting hardware and software.

In March, the automaker announced that it would recall the vehicles because their turbocharged engines can overheat if coolant is low, causing cylinder heads to crack and spew oil. At the time, Ford had reports of 29 engine fires with no injuries.

In a Dec. 13 letter to dealers, Ford said mechanics should check the cars for coolant leaks. Any repairs will be part of the recall, the letter stated.

The December letter to dealers said parts are available for Escapes but will not be ready for the other vehicles until January or February.

by DAVID EGGERT **Associated Press**

LANSING, Mich. (AP) - In the capital of the U.S. auto industry. drivers have been slow to accept that more Americans are choosing bicycles over cars for commuting or for fun and exercise.

While other states adopted bike-friendly safety laws to accommodate cycling's soaring popularity, Michigan steered clear of the trend and watched as more riders got killed by cars. Now lawmakers are trying to make up for lost time by seeking some of the nation's strictest bike-safety regulations and tough new penalties for distracted motorists who cause serious injury or death while using a mobile device.

It could be a culture shock for a state where Fords, Chevys and Chryslers have reigned supreme for generations.

"It's a really, really hot topic," said Republican Rep. Triston Cole, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The bills have widespread support in the Senate and are awaiting further study in the House.

If the proposals become law, Michigan cyclists would gain additional legal protections and motorists would have to wait for 5 feet of clearance before passing a bike - a wider berth than all but one other state.

Cyclists say it is time for the state with the Motor City to change.

Many drivers "are just angry that we're out there. They yell at us. They drive aggressively toward us," said Paul Gobble, a photographer, designer and member of "The Chain Gang," a club that organizes casual weekly rides on Tuesday nights. were

Thirty-eight cyclists

killed on Michigan roads last year, almost double the number two years earlier. Nearly 2,000 were injured. Nationwide, 840 cyclists were killed in 2016, the most in 25 years.

Gobble, 48, was involved in one of the nation's deadliest vehicle-bike crashes when a pickup truck driver allegedly under the influence of drugs hit a group of nine cyclists in June 2016 near Kalamazoo, killing five. Gobble, who suffered a brain injury and broken bones in his back, neck, leg and ribs, said there is a "great deal of ignorance" about cyclists' rights to use the road.

The legislative debate is unfolding as bikes are booming all around the country. Nearly 900,000 Americans commute to work by bicycle – a tiny portion of overall traffic but a 39 percent increase from a decade ago.

But except for roughly half a dozen Michigan communities that have enacted local 5-foot ordinances, the state has largely hewed to its car-centric traditions.

That may be changing. Among large U.S. cities, bike commuting grew the most on a percentage basis in Detroit from 2000 to 2016, according to the League of American Bicyclists. A bike-share program was launched in the city this year.

Twenty-four of the 38 bicyclists killed last year in Michigan were riding straight ahead just prior to the crash, police reported. Cyclists see that as evidence that motorists are passing too closely.

Thirty states have enacted distance-specific "safe passing" laws, most requiring 3 feet of clearance for passing bikes. Nine more tell drivers to pass at an unspecified safe distance, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In Michigan – where the law has been read to apply only to passing vehicles, not bikes - the proposal to allow a full 5 feet could force drivers to pull into the next lane rather than try to squeeze by. Cole suggested there are too many windy rural roads with miles of double yellow nopassing lines to require 5 feet. Citing concerns about commercial haulers, he said a universal distance requirement may not make sense for every situation.

"Give me a break," scoffed retired computer industry executive Paul Selden, who serves as a road safety director for the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club. "Motorists have been crossing those lines for years" when they go around an obstruction or pass slower traffic such as farm vehicles, mail carriers or delivery trucks, he said.

Selden, 66, said he is used to vehicles crowding him toward the curb. Several years ago, a car clipped his left pedal as it went by, which sounded like "a gun going off."

Also pressing for the 5-foot berth is Becky Callender of Lansing, whose 5-year-old son Henry was in a single file of bikes on a rural road in 2015 when he was struck by an SUV.

Henry, who was among 45,000 bicyclists injured in U.S. motor vehicle crashes that year, was hospitalized for nearly a month with brain and spinal cord injuries and is receiving physical and speech therapy. His helmet saved his life.

A 5-foot zone is "something that you can ticket. It's something that you can teach and educate about in driver's training. It's something that's concrete, his mother said.

Jeremy Gray, a 51-year-old tech executive and a former psychology professor, was lucky to escape with a broken collarbone when a motorist hit him from behind on a country road outside Lansing in 2015.

"As a responsible driver, you just want to be at least that far away from somebody," the avid

cyclist said of the 5-foot proposal

Other measures would expand an anti-texting ban and mandate that teen drivers receive at least one hour of instruction on laws pertaining to bicycles and other 'vulnerable" roadway users.

Jayne Snider's father, Eric, who rode nearly 6,000 miles a year, was struck from behind by a pickup truck and killed in 2016 while commuting to Lansing Community College, where he was an assistant dean.

The driver was acquitted of operating a motor vehicle causing death.

A legal expert blamed Michigan's inadequate laws.

"Our current laws don't protect our cyclists," Snider told legislators at a recent hearing. "Do it for my 59-year-old father and just do it for those who no longer have a voice in our community.'

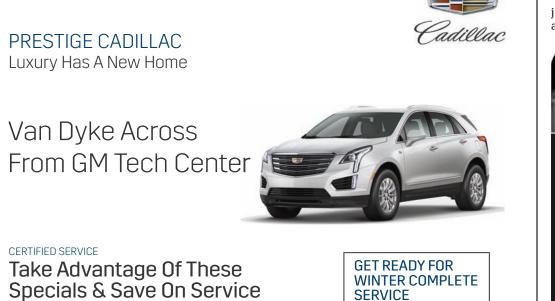
Warren Library **Celebrates** Cajun Music

The Warren Public Library's Dorothy Busch branch will be holding a special event celebrating Zydeco and Cajun music on Monday, Jan. 22, between 6 and 7:45 p.m., said Warren librarian Jennifer Lund.

The music performance will take place in the Busch branch's Hilary Kutella Community Room, Lund said.

"Zig Zeitler will bring us a live musical performance of Zydeco and Cajun music," Lund said. "If you've never heard this lively, fun music, you should hear Zig. All ages are welcome, but children must be accompanied by an adult.'

As to be expected, Lund said, space for such an event is limited, so people interested in seeing just what's happening and might wish to participate should call the library at 586-353-0580 to reserve a spot. People should check it out, they'll have a good time.





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The interior of the 2019 Corvette ZR1.

Corvette Fans Can Look Forward to NAIAS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

president, Global Product Development, Purchasing and Supply Chain. "Few others can challenge the ZR1 convertible's power and speed while offering the exhilaration of top-down motoring."

The performance and technology introduced on the Corvette ZR1 coupe carry over to the new ZR1 convertible. The strength of the Corvette's aluminum chassis means the only structural changes in the convertible are accommodations for the folding top and repositioned safety belt mounts. The power top can be operated remotely or while driving up to 30 mph.

"The ZR1 convertible is a nocompromise supercar," said Corvette Executive Chief Engineer Tadge Juechter. "Thanks to the strong structure, the suspension tuning between coupe and with up to 950 pounds of down-

convertible models is identical, meaning the ZR1 convertible offers the same benchmark performance, including a top speed of over 200 mph."

The Corvette ZR1's unique aero package is central to the coupe's 212-mph top speed. Its standard, stanchion-mounted Low Wing generates road-holding downforce with minimal drag, enabling the benchmark top speed. This was evident during topspeed testing at Germany's Papenburg proving ground.

An adjustable High Wing is part of the new \$2,995 ZTK Performance Package, which also includes a front splitter with carbon-fiber end caps, Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires and specific chassis and Magnetic Ride Control tuning. It is designed to help generate faster lap times through maximum grip in the corners, force. The top speed is lower with the High Wing but still exceeds 200 mph.

Complementing the ZR1's aero advantage on the way to 212 mph is the thrust generated by the exclusive LT5 6.2L supercharged engine, which is rated at an SAEcertified 755 horsepower and 715 lb-ft of torque. A seven-speed manual transmission and a ZR1first paddle-shift eight-speed automatic transmission are offered with it.

Preliminary testing has shown 0-60 mph in under 3.0 seconds and the quarter mile in the high 10-second range when the engine is equipped with the eight-speed automatic.

The LT5 features a new, more efficient intercooled supercharger system, along with GM's first dual fuel-injection system, which employs primary direct injection and supplemental port injection. Compared to the supercharger system on the Corvette Z06's LT4 engine, the LT5 employs a larger, 2.65-liter supercharger that generates more boost while spinning at a slightly slower speed. That reduces heat to help maintain a lower air intake temperature for optimal performance.

Four new radiators also help manage cooling in the ZR1, which features 13 radiators in all, including circuits for engine oil, transmission and differential cooling.

Read said that the new Corvette's look and power level make the car "irresistable" and that this , gives people attending NAIAS something to look forward to when they visit the show this year.

County Offering Nutrition Ed **Classes**

In partnership with The Lake House, MSU Extension is offering "Eat Healthy, Be Active" for adults.

This is a no-cost, six-week nutrition and physical activity program that helps participants increase their nutrition and exercise knowledge and promotes a healthy lifestyle, said Natalie Brumfield, director of the program.

Participants will learn how to plan, prepareand budget for healthy, affordable and delicious meals as well as learn many exercises that can be done right at home.

The program will be held from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. every Tuesday for six consecutive weeks starting Jan. 9 through Feb. 13 at The Lake House, 23500 Pare Street, St. Clair Shores.

Advance registration is required; space is limited. To register, or for more information, contact Natalie Brumfield at 586-469-6104 or brumfie8@anr.msu.edu.

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) brings educational programs to residents, em powering them to improve their lives and community

County-based MŠUE staff, in concert with on-campus faculty members, serve residents with programming focused on agriculture, natural resources, children, youth, families, community and economic development.

GM Creates Employment for the Autistic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

job bank that they maintain.

The work of the Alliance doesn't end there, Barber said. They work with the job holders and GM staff during the first days of the hires' job to make sure that everyone get acclimated to each other and the hires get used to their jobs and their environments.

"The job bank has people with a wide variety of skills," Barber said. "I am talking about skills that range from professional cabinet maker to CPAs. They have qualified engineers who have ended stacking shelves at Kohl's. Some have never worked because the don't interview well."

want to help those with autism ners at the UAW, we can hire and other handicaps become employed. That's where Rhadigan comes in. He helps the Alliance navigate the GM hiring process.

"This is an awesome partnership we have with the Alliance," Rhadigan said. "Natasha and I have worked to make the partnership function. She brings the passion and I have the institutional knowledge to guide such programs through the GM system. The big thing I've learned about is the staggering level of unemployment and underemployment within this community. It can be in excess of 90 percent. We have a lot of jobs that require the ability to concentrate on repetitive tasks and it can difficult to find people willing to do them. They jobs need real focus. And thanks to the Alliance we have been able to find people who can concentrate on these tasks. I think this program can grow, with the help of our partmore people."

The task now, Rhadigan said, is to make more managers within GM aware of the program and how they can participate.

Barber and Rhadigan's efforts were recently acknowledged by the Michigan Association of Rehabilitation Organization (MARO). She late last year went to Grand Rapids to accept an award from MARO on behalf of GM. She then sat on a panel and answered questions about how GM has worked with the Alliance to help people get jobs.

We have a vision and we want to see what we call the DEMAND (Driving Employment to Meet Automotive Needs through Diversi-



Barber credits Jeff Morrison, executive director, Strategic Planning & Development; Christopher Naegeli, executive director, Global Thermal Systems, Raw Materials & GPSC Mexico; and Shilpan Amin, executive director, GPS Vehicle Integration and Operations, for taking a chance and hiring people who others might consider unsuitable for a job at GM.

"This is important," Barber said. "There are so many people out there who need and want to work. And GM has a lot of jobs where it can be difficult to find the right people. When most people hear the word 'autism' they think of the Rain Man."

There are a lot of people on the autism spectrum, Barber said, and they aren't all like the Rain Man. And the Alliance wants to expand who they work with to get jobs beyond those who have autism, Barber said. Educating the public in general and the managers at GM is vital if people

tv) expand." Barber said. "Mike and I are working to expand its reach to other disabilities.'

"As we see new people enter the workforce, we are seeing that they want to work and want to do a good job," Rhadigan said.



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The 2019 ZR1's exterior has taken the Corvette to the next level.

It was a Golden Day for Dog Lovers at FCA HQ

Fiat Chrysler recently went to the dogs – and that was a very good thing.

When Canine Companions for Independence recently visited FCA US's headquarters last month, the most popular representative of the organization was Calvin, a canine companion in training, said Edward Cardenas, Multimedia editor for Fiat Chrysler.

Why did he attract so much attention?" Cardenas said. "It is not often a puppy visits the office during a workday.'

The mission of the organization, which provides service dogs to children, adults and veterans with disabilities, or the ongoing partnership between Canine Companions for Independence and Chrysler, everyone in attendance gravitated to him.

Calvin, and his volunteer trainer Fran Hocking, are local representatives for Canine Companions for Independence and shared anecdotes about being part of the organization.

"I picked Canine Companions because of their history of breeding quality dogs and their training program," said Hocking, of Wixom, who is now training her fifth puppy for the organization. "If I was going to donate my resources and my time to raise a puppy, I wanted to make sure it was really free to the recipient."

Calvin is one of more than 200 Canine Companions for Independence puppies who are in the midst of 14 to 18 months of training with volunteer puppy raisers such as Hocking. These puppy raisers provide basic obedience training, socialization and care.

The 42-year-old organization has a presence in all 50 states, with more than 3,000 volunteers nationwide and more than 5.200 placements of a person and a



Hocking, Calvin speak with FCA employees about canine companions and how they help people.

dog during that time, Cardenas said.

One of Calvin's peers, a golden/Labrador retriever cross named Foley, is being featured in an online social initiative by Chrysler and Canine Companions for Independence to chronicle his growth and raise awareness for the organization's "Give a Dog a Job" campaign.

"(These dogs) enhance the lives of children, adults and veterans with disabilities by providing them highly trained assistance dogs by helping them with practical everyday tasks as well as providing unconditional love,' said Danielle Scerbovsky, development director, Donor & Corporate Engagement for Canine Companions for Independence.

Scerbovsky, who shared the information about the organization's history, mission and reach with FCA employees, also took time to recognize the contributions of Hocking and other volunteers.

"We couldn't do it without these volunteers," she said.

Feds Investigating Goodyear Tires

ulators are investigating whether some older Goodyear motor home tires can fail and cause crashes and possibly deaths.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says it began the probe after a court ordered the release of Goodvear data from lawsuits, which were "They cover food. They cover vet checks, obedience classes and more. That is a substantial savings for our organization.'

To learn more about the partnership between Chrysler and Canine Companions for Independence, and to donate, visit www.driveindependence.org.

DETROIT (AP) - U.S. safety reg- sealed under court orders and confidential agreements.

According to the data, the G159 tires failed while in use, resulting in deaths and injuries. The agency says in documents posted Jan. 1 that the number of claims suggests the failures could be caused by a safety defect. Goodyear wasn't required to report many of the claims to NHTSA under federal law. The investigation covers about 40,000 tires from 1996 to 2003.

The agency also received 10 complaints of tire failure, including two that caused crashes. The documents say Goodyear reported nine claims to the agency involving one death and 13 injuries. Some of those filing claims allege the G159 tires were not designed for extended highway use on motor homes.

Hyundai, VW Partnering Up **On New Tech**

DETROIT (AP) - Hyundai and Volkswagen each say they're partnering with a U.S. autonomous vehicle tech firm led by former executives from Google, Tesla and Uber.

The companies on Jan. 4 announced partnerships with Aurora Innovation, started last year by ex-Google autonomous car chief Chris Urmson and others.

VW says its collaboration will help bring self-driving cars quickly to roads worldwide, while autonomous Hyundais are expected to be in the market by 2021. The partnerships are the latest in a string of tie-ups between auto companies and tech firms as they race to be first with self-driving vehicles.

Aurora is based in Pittsburgh and Palo Alto, Calif. It was started last year by Urmson, former Tesla executive Sterling Anderson, and ex-Uber autonomous vehicle leader Drew Bagnell.

Terms of each partnership were not released.

Urmson left Alphabet Inc.'s Google in 2016 after more than seven years of work on its autonomous vehicles. At Tesla Inc., Anderson led development of the company's semi-autonomous Autopilot system after its initial release, and he led development of the Model X SUV, according to Aurora's website. Bagnell was a founding member of Uber Technologies Inc.'s Advanced Technology Center that's working on autonomous cars in Pittsburgh.

Germany-based Volkswagen AG, which produces about 10 million vehicles annually, hopes the tie-up will bring autonomous vehicle technology to all of its brands. The company says it has been working with Aurora for the past six months, integrating its sensors, hardware and software into VW vehicles.

Hyundai Motor Co. said the partnership with Aurora will bring autonomous vehicles to market that can operate without human input in most conditions.

The partnership has yet to say how its first batch of self-driving vehicles will be used, but analysts expect they will likely be for commercial use, such as selfdriving taxis or ride-hailing services.

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Future Automotive Sales Growth Slowing Down

by DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – The U.S. auto industry's historic growth streak may be ending, but demand for new cars and trucks remains healthy as the new year begins.

U.S. sales of new vehicles are expected to fall 2 percent to 17.1 million in 2017, according to Kel*ley Blue Book*. That would be the first year-over-year decline since 2009, ending an unprecedented seven-year expansion.

General Motors, Toyota and Ford all reported a 1 percent declines in sales last year compared to 2016. Fiat Chrysler's sales fell 8 percent. Honda's sales were flat, while Nissan's rose 2 percent. Volkswagen brand sales rose 5 percent.

While sales are likely to fall short of 2016's record of 17.55 million, 2017 is still expected to be the fourth-best sales year in U.S. history.

Analysts think sales will fall a bit further this year. While low unemployment and rising consumer confidence are expected to boost demand, rising interest rates could make it more expensive for people to finance new vehicles.

'That's real money to consumers." said Charlie Chesbrough, a senior economist with Cox Automotive, which owns AutoTrader.com and other car-buying sites.

Vehicles are also becoming more durable so many consumers aren't buying new ones, which further puts a drag on sales. The average age of vehicles on the road has climbed to 11.6 years, up from 8.8 years in 1998.

The growing popularity of leasing will have a big impact on 2018 sales. Almost one-third of new vehicle sales were leases in 2015, and many of those 4 million lessees will be trading in their vehicles for new ones, according to car buying site the Edmunds.com. (Edmunds regularly provides content, including automotive tips and reviews, for distribution by The Associated Press.)

But leasing also has a downside for automakers, since the influx of late-model used cars returning to the market will cut into sales of new vehicles.

Tax cuts also could be a mixed blessing. They will likely stimulate demand, particularly for commercial trucks and vans, Ford says. But the more the economy grows, the more likely it is that the government will raise interest rates, Chesbrough said.

2017 Good Year For Detroit's Zoo Goers

Here are more details of December and 2017 sales:

• WINNERS AND LOSERS: Ford's F-Series pickup truck remained the best-selling vehicle in the U.S. in 2017, a title it has now held for 36 years. Ford sold 896,764 F-Series trucks in the U.S. last year, or nearly two trucks every minute. F-Series sales rose 9 percent for the year, in part because of post-hurricane demand in Texas and Florida. Car-heavy brands had the toughest time winning customers, who were flocking to SUVs. Chrysler, Dodge and Fiat all saw their sales drop by double-digit percentages. Toyota Prius hybrid sales plummeted 20.5 percent.

• LUXURY CROWN: Mercedes-Benz dethroned BMW as the best-selling luxury brand in the U.S. in 2016, and it's likely to hold on to that title in 2017. Through November. Mercedes had sold 332,990 vehicles; BMW was far behind, battling it out with Lexus for second place. But overall, some luxury brands were struggling. Cadillac and Lexus both saw their sales drop 8 percent last year; Lincoln sales plummeted 17 percent in December. Mark LaNeve, Ford's U.S. sales chief, said mainstream brands are getting so luxurious that many buyers don't feel the need to step up to a luxury label.

• PILING ON THE DEALS: New vehicle prices hit a record last year, averaging \$36,113 as buyers bought bigger SUVs and added more safety and infotainment features, Kelley Blue Book said. At the same time, automakers piled on deals in order to juice sales and hang on to their market share. Last month, Chevrolet was offering up to \$11,000 off on a 2017 Silverado pickup.

MCC Helps Truck Have a Muscle Car Feel

When Tim Dilla's ice cream truck, American Dream 2, hits the streets, it will be adorned with a graphic design created by Rebekah Witt, 21, of Roseville, a student in Macomb Community College's media & communication arts program.

Witt's design was chosen as the winning entry in a competition held as the final 3D design project for the advanced design class, with Dilla and college faculty serving as judges, said Sean Patrick manager of Media Relations at MCC. The design won Witt a \$1,000 prize, with \$500 awarded by Dilla and a matching amount provided by a private college donor.

After building American Dream 2 from the ground up, Dilla, a Macomb alumnus, wanted a design for his new truck that would draw attention to the truck, promote his business and be consistent with the existing branding on his first truck, American Dream 1. He turned to his alma mater for help.

"I wanted to give back to the school and at the same time knew I could find the talent there that I needed," said Dilla, a sheet metal worker with Local 80. "The interaction with the students was amazing. They took a lot of time to review what I wanted and really put their hearts into it."

Creating a design for an actual client gave the students realworld experience and a taste of what they could expect when they enter the workforce.

"The students were excited, but a little nervous at the same time," said Macomb instructor Mary Bush.

"Our assignments are usually more flexible, but this project had real life client restrictions. Tim had some guidelines and wanted to stay consistent with existing branding, but opened the window for individual creativity.'

"Usually in our school projects we just do whatever we want," said Witt. "It was really different to do what he wanted. It was a real experience for me. He was kind of open-ended, but I still tried to get him what he was looking for and I guess that ended up working out."

Patrick said that for her design, Witt, who is pursuing associate degrees in design and layout, and photographic technology, expanded on a beach scene from American Dream 1, incorporated product signage, the company logo and a blue flame to give the vehicle a real muscle car feel.

"It was hard to pick the top design," said Dilla. "What won me over was the attention to detail. She clearly listened to everything I said and completely understood the requirements.

Trophies and cash awards provided by Dilla and matched by a private college donor were given to the top three entries.

In addition to Witt's first prize, Jade Stirling, of Fraser, took second prize and a \$400 award, and Rachel Clerebout, of Roseville, took third prize and a \$200 award.

Macomb Community College's media & communication arts program helps students develop creative, traditional, digital and multimedia skills required for a variety of media-related industries. The program core consists of both traditional and digital courses. Students then select from one of the eight specialty areas to earn either a certificate or an associate of applied science degree.

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ROYAL OAK, Mich. (AP) -More than 1.5 million people visited the Detroit Zoo last year.

The Detroit Zoological Society said Jan. 3 that the 2017 attendance was the second highest at the zoo. The total was boosted by an annual holiday light display that drew more than 151,000 visitors.

Nearly 1.7 million people visited the zoo in 2016. The popular Polk Penguin Conservation Center opened that April.

The zoo operated by the zoological society. This summer, the Dinosauria exhibit of more than 40 animatronic dinosaurs returns to the zoo. Three major renovation and expansion projects are expected to be completed, and a new habitat for Japanese giant salamanders will be unveiled at the National Amphibian Conservation Center.

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The FT 400 was developed in collaboration with Ignites Research, a subsidiary of the FT that provides specialized content on asset management. To qualify for the list, advisers had to have 10 years of experience and at least \$300 million in assets under management (AUM) and no more than 60% of the AUM with institutional clients. The FT reaches out to some of the largest brokerages in the U.S. and asks them to provide a list of advisors who meet the minimum criteria outlined above. These advisors are then invited to apply for the ranking. Only advisors who submit an online application can be considered for the ranking. In 2016, roughly 980 applications were received and 400 were selected to the final list. The 400 qualified advisers were then scored on six attributes: AUM, AUM growth rate, compliance record, years of experience, industry certifications, and online accessibility. AUM is the top factor, accounting for roughly 60-70 percent of the applicant's score. Additionally, to provide a diversity of advisors, the FT placed a cap on the number of advisors from any one state that's roughly correlated to the distribution of millionaires across the U.S. The ranking may not be representative of any one client's experience, is not an endorsement, and is not indicative of advisor's future performance. Neither Raymond James nor any of its Financial Advisors pay a fee in exchange for this award/rating. The FT is not affiliated with Raymond James. space Neither Raymond James Financial Services nor any Raymond James Financial Advisor renders advice on tax issues, these matters should be discussed with the appropriate professional.

JANUARY 8, 2018

GM Bests Industry Sales Trends in 2017

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

PAGE 6

retail deliveries, compared with about two-thirds last year. Retail crossover sales for the brand were up 26 percent year over year, with the Enclave up 14 percent, the Encore up 8 percent and Envision up 167 percent.

Cadillac's retail crossover deliveries were up 9 percent, driven by the new XT5.

GM sold more pickup trucks in the United States than any other automaker for the fourth year in a row – a record 948,909 units – thanks to its unique three-truck strategy. Since 2014, Chevrolet and GMC have been the only brands to offer mid-size, lightand heavy-duty pickups.

GM sold 239,719 full-size SUVs and has led the segment since the launch of the Chevrolet Suburban in 1935. Combined, the Chevrolet Tahoe and Suburban, and the GMC Yukon and Yukon XL, have earned more than 75 percent retail market share for the fourth consecutive year.

At GMC, more than half of Sierra HD customers and more than 70 percent of Yukon customers purchase premium Denali models, Cain said.

The Cadillac Escalade has earned at least 30 percent of the retail market for large luxury SU-Vs for four consecutive years, with ATPs that are more than \$20,000 above its closest domestic competitor.

Chevrolet delivered more than 43,669 electric vehicles in 2017, including 23,297 Bolt EV crossovers and 20,349 Volt sedans. In December, Cain said, the Bolt EV had its best month since launch with sales of 3,227.

GM's average transaction prices (ATPs), which are net of incentive spending estimates, were more than \$35,400 for the year and they surpassed \$38,000 in December. Both are records, and significantly above the industry average of \$31,600 for the calendar year.

GM's total sales in 2017 were down 1 percent year over year, bestng the industry, which is expected to be down 2 percent. GM's retail deliveries, which are more than 80 percent of total sales, were down 1 percent year over year, in line with the industry's expected performance.

Chevrolet's retail market share increased 0.2 percentage points to an estimated 11.5 percent and ATPs for the month were the best-ever at more than \$34,000. Buick total sales were up 5 percent and retail deliveries were up 15 percent. GMC total sales were up 1 percent for its best sales month in more than 12 years.

Mustafa Mohatarem, GM's chief economist, forecasts 2018 total vehicle sales (including medium and heavy trucks) to exceed 17 million units for the fourth year in a row. Light vehicle sales are forecasted to be in the high 16 million-unit range.

"In 2017, we had solid GDP growth and good news on employment, wages and consumer sentiment, which helped deliver very strong retail sales for the auto industry," Mohatarem said. "This year, many consumers will see their take-home pay rise because of tax reform. That will keep the broad economy growing, and help keep sales at very healthy levels even as the Fed increases interest rates."

GM is well positioned heading into the new year because of its low inventories and multi-year strategy to redesign and expand its truck and crossover portfolio, Mohatarem said. On a retail basis, 78 percent of GM sales are now trucks and crossovers, compared with an industry average of 65 percent.

"We are winning customers in the fastest-growing parts of the market, and our momentum continues to grow because we have strengthened our brands, grown our Commercial and Government business, sharply reduced rental sales and successfully transitioned to a crossover- and truckfocused business," said Kurt Mc-Neil, U.S. vice president of Sales Operations. "We are starting 2018 with very lean inventories for such a strong industry, and we see more room to grow because Chevrolet, Buick and GMC will have a full year of sales of their all-new crossovers, and we are going to launch the industry's best full-size pickups.'

German Court Rules Against VW Request

BERLIN (AP) – Germany's highest court has rejected a bid by Volkswagen on Dec. 29 for an injunction blocking the deployment of a special auditor sought by a shareholders' rights group in its diesel emissions scandal.

In November a court in Celle backed an independent check on events surrounding the scandal that pushed down VW shares when it erupted in 2015. The DSW shareholders' group had previously failed to get VW's regular general meeting to agree to such a review on top of an investigation already commissioned by the automaker.

VW sought from the Federal Constitutional Court an injunction blocking the new probe while the court considers its complaint against the ruling deploying the special auditor. But the court said in a ruling released Dec. 29 that VW hadn't sufficiently proven the need.

FCA Sales for December, 2017 Show Slight Drop

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

year increase for its best December sales ever.

The Fiat 124 Spider recorded its best December sales as well, Bennett said, selling 2,606 compared to 1,738 during the same time in 2016.

Other FCA US vehicles posting year-over-year sales increases in the month of December were the Chrysler 300 (5,726 versus 3,586), Jeep Cherokee 919,358 versus 16,380), Jeep Grand Cherokee 23,622 versus 23,250), Jeep Compass (8,743 versus 7,954) and Ram ProMaster City (1,617 versus 1,347).

Chrysler brand sales were up 3 percent in December, compared with the same month a year ago (17,208 versus 16,776), Bennett said. Both the Chrysler Pacifica minivan and the Chrysler 300 full-size sedan posted sales increases in December.

Sales of the 300 were up 60 percent for its best December sales since 2012 Jeep Compass, Jeep Cherokee and Jeep Grand Cherokee delivered year over year increases for December. Sales of the Cherokee were up 18 percent in December, compared with the same month a year ago. The 2018 Jeep Wrangler has earned a Residual Value Award from ALG, the industry benchmark for residual values and depreciation data, in the Off-road Utility segment.

For the full year, Jeep Grand Cherokee sales increased 13 percent, compared with sales in 2016.

The Dodge Durango full-size SUV posted its best full year of sales since 2006. The Durango – for the sixth-consecutive year – earned the Best Buy award in the Large SUV category from *Consumer Guide Automotive*.

In addition, Strategic Vision named the Dodge Charger to its "Most Loved Vehicles in America" list for the fourth-consecutive year, Bennett said.

Ram Truck brand sales were up year over year in 2017 versus 2016. In addition, sales of the Ram pickup truck edged up year over year in 2017 versus the previous year.

For the 10th-consecutive year, the Ram pickup captured the Best Buy award for Large Pickup Truck from *Consumer Guide Automotive*.

Alfa Romeo brand sales of 2,034 units were up significantly compared with the same month a year ago and recorded its strongest monthly sales of 2017.

Furthermore, *Motor Trend* named the Alfa Romeo Giulia as its 2018 Car of the Year, best representing exceptional value, superiority in its class and impact on the automotive scene.

Sales of the Fiat 124 Spider were up 15 percent year over year for its best December sales ever.

Overall, the Jeep brand sold a total of 828,522 vehicles in 2017, Bennett said. That's compared to 926,376 in 2016.

The Chrysler brand sold 188,545 vehicles in 2017, compared to 21,972 in 2016.

Dodge sales were 446,996 in 2017, versus 505,858 in 2016.

Ram brand sales were 556,790 in 2017, compared to sales of 545,851 in 2016.

Fiat brand sales were 26,492 in 2017, compared to sales of 32,742 in 2016.

2017, Bennett said, was the first year that Alfa Romeo vehicles were sold throughout the year. Sales were 12,031. In 2016, the brand only sold 516 vehicles.



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PAGE 8

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Local Automotive Heritage Group Gets National Honor

The MotorCities National Heritage Area, a non-profit organization dedicated to the historic preservation of the automotive industry, along with partners the Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau and Tourism Windsor, has won a prestigious Partnership Award from the Director of the National Park Service (NPS) for the "Find Your Road Trip" tourism guide.

"Find Your Road Trip" celebrated the 2016 NPS Centennial and was designed to bring greater awareness to more people about the unique story of how the area "Put the World on Wheels" said Bob Sadler, communications manager for MotorCities National Heritage Area.

MotorCities collaborated with their tourism partners and six National Park sites in Michigan during the Centennial celebration.

The tourism guide created a contest too, Sadler said. By visiting a combination of six heritage sites and one NPS site, passport stamp collectors received a certificate from Governor Snyder stating "I Found My Michigan National Parks.'

"As an affiliate of the National Park Service, we wanted to increase awareness about the unique and multi-faceted story of this region's automotive heritage," said Shawn Pomaville-Size, executive director of MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership.

"We could not have distributed 40,000 copies nor had so many winners of the passport contest without the help of our two partners, the Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau and Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island.

There were only six NPS Director's Partnership awards distributed nationwide, so this is quite an honor for the region, Sadler said.

"Each year, these awards celebrate great partnerships and great accomplishments," said Acting Director of the National Park Service Michael T. Reynolds.

"This year's recipients demonstrate the breadth and depth of what can be achieved through partnerships with the National Park Service. They exemplify the important work partners carry out every day in national parks and communities across the country.'

Headquartered in Detroit, Sadler said the MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership is a nonprofit corporation affiliated with the National Park Service that serves 16 counties representing a population of over 6.5 million.

Its mission is to preserve, interpret and promote the region's rich automotive and labor heritage for future generations, Salder said.

Regional programs such as those created and shown by MotorCities National Heritage Partnership work to inspire residents of Michigan as well visitors to the state with an appreciation for how the automobile changed Michigan, the nation, and the world, Sadler said.

For those wishing to learn more about MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership, they can find information on the web at www.motorcities.org; also visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/motorcities and follow them on Twitter/Instagram: @MotorCities, Sadler said.

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Payments on these 2018 Cadillac's are for a standard model XT5 MSRP of \$41,190, ATS Sedan AWD with an MSRP of \$38,715 and a Luxury AWD CT6 AWD Courtesy Transportation Vehicle (CTA) with MSRP of \$69.585. stk# 101952. Lease is through GM Financial with top tier credit approval, 10,000 mile per year total. \$0 cap cost reduction down, only typical startup costs of taxes, license, registration, first months payment, acquisition and dealer fees due at signing. Must take delivery out of dealer stock by 1/31/18. Lessee pays for excess wear, over mileage and disposition fee of \$595 at end of lease. Residency restrictions apply. May not be available with other offers. Must have Cadillac Lease Loyalty rebate (must currently lease a Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet or GMC through Ally, GM Financial or US Bank). Not required to terminate current lease or trade vehicle. Loyalty offer is transferable to individuals residing in the same household. Price based on GM Employee Pricing. Others slightly higher. ©2017 General Motors. Cadillac® XT5® ATS® CT6®

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Uber's Investors See Stock Prices Decline in Year 2017

DETROIT (AP) – Investors in the Uber ride-hailing service didn't get all they wanted in selling at least part of their holdings to a group led by Japanese technology conglomerate SoftBank.

But don't show them too much sympathy. Even though they sold at roughly a 30 percent discount from what the shares were worth in 2016, those who invested early made nearly 100 times their initial stake, going from around 35 cents per share to just under \$33, according to one investor who requested anonymity because the sales are private.

Uber was valued around \$68.5 billion during a 2016 capital investment, but it dropped to somewhere above \$48 billion in the SoftBank deal announced last week. The reasons for the discount are many, among them the seemingly endless string of scandals, lawsuits and fights that plagued Uber through almost all of 2017. Also, competition has gotten tougher from Lyft and Grab in the U.S. as well as Ola in India and several emerging services elsewhere.

During the past year, Uber has been rocked by revelations of rampant sexual harassment in the company, technological trickery designed to hinder regulators, and a yearlong cover-up of a hacking attack that stole personal information of 57 million passengers and 600,000 drivers.

Rohit Kulkarni, managing director of SharesPost, a company that analyzes private company investments, says three big events that happened around the time that SoftBank began courting investors combined to discount the shares. Just before SoftBank's intent to shop for shares was announced, regula-

tors in London refused to renew the cab-hailing app's license to operate.

Then the data hack and coverup were revealed, and the company told investors its thirdquarter net loss had widened to \$1.46 billion on huge legal costs.

The events helped SoftBank's group get a better deal, Kulkarni says. Many big Uber investors include venture capital firms that got in early. They hedged their bets, selling part of their stake to bring big profits to their shareholders while holding the rest for big gains if the company gets past the scandals, the investor said.

"This is still a good deal," said Gartner analyst Michael Ramsey. The earlier the investment, the bigger the payout."

All-in, the SoftBank group will pump about \$9 billion into Uber, including \$1.25 billion in new shares that were purchased at the 2016 valuation. SoftBank acquired about 15 percent of Uber, while other investors in its group got around 3 percent.

The deal, due to close this month, also brings management stability to Uber, reducing the influence of ousted CEO Travis Kalanick. SoftBank, which has global investments in other ridehailing companies, gets two seats on the board and will help Uber navigate the tough global competition, says Kulkarni.

Uber's new CEO Dara Khosrowshahi and COO Barney Harford are experienced executives who successfully increased share value at travel booking companies, says Kulkarni, who expects Uber to be worth a total of \$100 billion by the time it offers shares to the public sometime in 2019.







Ford Enjoys Good 2017 Thanks to F-150

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record year with expanding retail sales. In December, Edge posted the largest gain in the coastal western region of the country last month, with sales up 8 percent. Explorer sales gained 33.3 percent overall in December, LaNeve said.

Following its initial sales in November, 2018 Expedition is off to a strong start, with new models to retail customers turning in just seven days, with our customers demanding a Platinum series mix of almost 50 percent. Overall Expedition sales totaled 5,458 for the month, as 2018 stock levels are built.

"Lincoln Navigator sales were up 30.1 percent last month,"LaNeve said. "The start is very strong with new models to retail customers turning in just six 87,512 trucks sold at the same

our two highest trim levels, with over 75 percent or our sales mix comprised of Reserve and Black Label."

Lincoln outpaced the luxury retail segment last year, finishing 2017 up 0.2 percent; Lincoln SU-Vs posted their best year since 2003, with retail sales up 1.1 percent. LaNeve said.

Full-year Ford sales totaled 2,586,715 vehicles; at retail, trucks were up 4.3 percent, SUVs gained 4.3 percent and cars were down 15.2 percent, LaNeve said. brand sales totaled Ford 2,475,556 vehicles for full-year 2017, marking the eighth consecutive year for Ford as America's best-selling vehicle brand. In December, Ford sold a total of 89.385 F-Series trucks in December of 2017. That's compared to

days. Customers are seeking out time in 2016. Mustang sales were up 9.2 percent last month, with 7,714 cars sold, LaNeve said. For the year Ford sold 81,866 Mustangs in 2017. That's 22.7 percent drop compared to the 105,932 sold in 2016.

The Fiesta sold 3,657 in December of 2017 compared to 3,772, LaNeve said. That's a drop of 3 percent December to December. Overall, Ford sold 46,249 for the year, a drop of 5.2 percent.

The Ford Focus sold 11,237 in December of 2017 and a total of 158,385 for the year. That's a drop of 6.2 percent, LaNeve said. The Fusion sold 17,444 in De-

cember of 2017, a drop of 8.8 percent compared to the same time in 2016.

Overall, Ford sold 209,623 in 2017. That is a 21.1 percent drop compared to the 265,840 sold in 2016.

Edmunds Honoring Ford Innovation at CES Show

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

F-150. In a category not typically known for tech features, the sophisticated 2018 Ford F-150 flips the script with advanced driver assistance features, adaptive powertrain calibration and the Sync 3 infotainment system.

 Most Innovative Car: Honda Clarity. With options including pure electric, plug-in hybrid and hydrogen fuel cell models, the 2018 Honda Clarity provides unmatched flexibility when it comes to alternative fuel choices, and proves that innovative design can push the industry further toward a future using renewable energy.

• Most Innovative SUV: Honda CR-V. The 2018 Honda CR-V offers advanced driver assistance technologies and active safety features at an affordable price point, a rarity among SUVs. Coupled with other outstanding features such as a deftly balanced ride and handling, class-leading fuel economy, and a large and clever storage space, the CR-V is a winner.

• Most Innovative Driver Assist Feature: Porsche InnoDrive. Porsche's InnoDrive maximizes performance and efficiency with a predictive powertrain control that uses GPS, radar sensors, and a camera to see the road ahead and configure the powertrain to optimal settings.

• Most Innovative Infotainment System: Audi MMI. The fullfeatured but easy-to-use Audi MMI system stands out thanks to a clean, contemporary high-tech experience that keeps distraction to a minimum and seamlessly pairs with Audi's Virtual Cockpit for a cabin with unrivaled integration.

• Most Innovative Automaker: Audi. As we progress toward fully autonomous vehicles, Audi has pulled ahead of the pack with its strong history of innovation. And with the 2018 A8's Level 3 automated system about to hit the road, it's clear that Audi looks to maintain this lead for a while.

The Tech Driven Awards honor new vehicles and systems that are available this year and that were developed and brought to market by automakers represented at CES 2018, Polk said. A panel of Edmunds editors selected the winners based on a combination of factors including actual testing experience; first-to-market or first-to-announce technologies; feasibility and potential impact on the industry; usability and practicality of the technology; and overall ingenuity.

New Auto Training **Center Opens**

GREER, S.C. (AP) BMW of North America plans to open its second training center in the South by the end of this year.

The Spartanburg Herald-Journal reports that the company's head of U.S. corporate communications, Kenn Sparks, said Wednesday that the \$12 million BMW Southern Regional Training Center will be located in Spartanburg County. According to plans filed with the county's planning department, it will be built near the company's manufacturing plant.

Sparks says the new center is part of BMW Group University, and will train technicians, service personnel and client advisers.

Ford Sales Showing Strength in Europe It looks like good old-fashioned North America, Ranger is the

Yankee ingenuity is popular in Europe. At least according to October sales figures released by Ford in mid-December.

"Our total vehicles sales in Europe grew by 5.4 percent in October, with Fiesta sales contributing to the sales growth with 20,500 cars sold. Ford SUV sales continue to go from strength to strength, with sales up nearly 29 percent for the Edge, Kuga and EcoSport. We're anticipating a positive momentum in sales across our entire vehicle range as we enter the last two months of the year." said Roelant de Waard, v.p., Marketing, Sales and Service, Ford of Europe.

The Ford Ranger pickup had its best October and year to date sales since launch. Close to 36.000 Rangers have been sold in Europe so far this year. Outside

world's No.2 top selling pickup, and Europe's best selling pickup year to date September (latest figures0, de Waard said.

Ford sold 4800 new Fiestas in Germany during October, making it the country's best selling small car for the month. The existing Fiesta range will be strengthened further in 2018 with the arrival of the Fiesta Active crossover.

With sales of 126,900 – up 22 percent - in the first ten months of 2017, Kuga is enjoying its best ever sales year. In October, 12,400 Kugas were sold in the traditional Euro 20 markets

- up 44 percent compared with the same month last year, de Waard said. And total Transit family sales, from the 2-ton Transit, to the small Transit Courier, were 240,316, up 6.7 percent, for the first ten months of the year. In October, Transit family sales were up 9.5 percent to 21,682. DeWaard said October sales highlights include:

• Ford sold 104,800 vehicles in October in its traditional Euro 20 markets, up 5.4 percent compared with October 2016. Year to date sales of 1,153,000 were 0.8 percent up on last year.

• New Fiesta production ramp -up continues to grow with 18,800 new Fiestas sold in Ford's traditional Euro 20 markets in October.

• Market share growth in Germany, Ford sold 25,100 cars in Germany in October, up 2,600 compared with the same month in 2016, and resulting in a market share of 8.3 percent.

• Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) sales up 28.5 percent to 18,600 in October driven by strong demand for EcoSport and Kuga.

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