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Ford, Steve Harvey Show Combine on New Promo

Dearborn, Mich., April 8, 2011 – Ever wondered just how “crazy” a marriage proposal could be? Ford and The Steve Harvey Morning Show want to answer that question and have set out to find the craziest marriage proposal.

The Steve Harvey Morning Show and Ford have formed a partnership to give show listeners the chance to say “I do” at the 2011 Ford Hoodie Awards in Las Vegas. The “Craziest Marriage Proposal” contest kicks off on Monday, April 11, and will run through Friday, May 20. The Steve Harvey Morning Show listeners will help to select the winner of the contest by voting for their favorite Craziest Marriage Proposal stories.

“The 2011 Ford Explorer not only engages with its class-exclusive technologies, but it also encourages consumers to tap into their adventurous sides in fresh new ways,” said Shawn Lollie, Multicultural Marketing manager, Ford Motor Company.

“This is exactly what we had in mind when we developed this contest with The Steve Harvey Morning Show. We are challenging consumers to unleash their creativity and come up with their craziest proposal while staying true to the adventurous nature of the all-new Ford Ex-

plorer.”

For three weeks beginning April 11, The Steve Harvey Morning Show will drive his audience of radio listeners to www.steveharvey.com, where they can register by first viewing the 2011 Ford Explorer “Crazy Kevin” TV spot that features comedian and actor Kevin Hart.

Following the commercial, viewers will be prompted to submit their Craziest Marriage Proposal stories online. After a three-week promotion, The Steve Harvey Morning Show will narrow the submissions down to the “craziest” three entries. Those entries will then be voted on by listeners of The Steve Harvey Morning Show.

The winner of the contest will win a wedding or vow renewal in Las Vegas during the Ford Hoodie Awards weekend taking place Aug. 11-15. The winning couple will receive round-trip air fare, a honeymoon suite, wedding ceremony at Mandalay Bay and tickets to all of the Hoodie Award festivities, plus they can bring along six of their closest friends and family members to help them celebrate. In addition, one voter will be randomly chosen to win a VIP trip to the 2011 Hoodie Awards as an exclusive guest of Ford.

College Racing Team Is Big on SAE Car Events

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (AP) – In 2009, the Rutgers Formula Racing Team was broke and running out of time.

The recession had kept many of its sponsors from supporting the team, which each year builds an open wheel, open cockpit racing car to compete with cars built by other engineering students around the world.

Some of those teams enjoy rich sponsorships from major players in the automotive industry that yield upward of \$100,000 a year in funding in the United States. A German team once netted \$250,000.

The Rutgers team receives about \$8,000 in fees from engineering students, \$4,000 from the engineering school to compete in two events and some cash and free services donated by private companies, such as Sunoco and Sport Honda Powerhouse of Metuchen. The total budget including the donated services is between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

But the donations fell so low two years ago that the students had to dig deep. Team members came up with \$10,000 from their own pockets, team members and the team’s staff adviser said.

It paid off. Rutgers came in third in design that year out of about 120 teams from around the world, a huge podium finish given the relatively low amount of financing the team sees.

Abhir Adhate, a senior this year and the team’s technical lead, used a credit card to come up with \$1,000 in 2009, he said.

But for Adhate, the money was an investment.

He received an internship with Pratt & Whitney that year, based largely on his work on the car. The Connecticut company designs, manufactures and services aircraft engines, space

propulsion systems and industrial gas turbines.

Adhate, 22, a mechanical and aerodynamics engineering student from East Brunswick, just secured full-time employment with Pratt & Whitney as an aerodynamicist, a job that will start in July.

His job interview focused on his work on the formula racing car, he said.

“That’s pretty much how I got noticed out of the talent pool,” he said.

Former team members have gone on to become racing engineers with prestigious teams such as the Corvette Le Mans racing team.

The annual competitions are sponsored by SAE International – the Society of Automotive Engineers. U.S. competitions are in Michigan on May 11 and California on June 12. Others are held around the world.

Formula refers to a set of rules that must be followed in those competitions. Judges weigh innovation, reliability and overall engineering.

“It’s not about who can build the fastest car,” said Mark Sproul, the Rutgers team adviser, although acceleration is one of several sub-events.

“The competition is about who does the best engineering job. It’s all about proper design, who makes the most cost-effective car and who gets the biggest bang for the buck.”

Rutgers fielded its first team during the 1990-91 school year. Since then, it has secured a number of top 20 finishes.

The team currently has about 50 members.

Any Rutgers student can join, but the overwhelming number of team members are engineering students, many from the mechanical engineering department.

Consumer Spending Gives Boost to U.S. Economy

WASHINGTON (AP) – Consumers helped boost economic growth in the final months of last year, but higher oil prices are threatening to steal some of that momentum this year.

More expensive gas will dampen consumer spending, at least in the first three months of this year. Still, many economists say the bump in fuel costs and the crisis in Japan will have only a mild impact on the U.S. economy for the full year and are sticking with 2011 projections for the fastest growth since before the recession.

The economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, grew at an annual rate of 3.1 percent in the October-December quarter, the Commerce Department reported Friday. That was an upward revision from last month’s 2.8 percent estimate, boosted by more inventory building and business investment in plants and equipment.

The quarterly expansion was the best since the start of last year and was driven by 4 percent growth in consumer spending, the strongest gains in four years. Consumer

spending is closely watched because it accounts for 70 percent of economic activity.

Many economists had high expectations for growth this year after President Barack Obama signed into law a one-year tax cut that will give most Americans an extra \$1,000 to \$2,000.

But a jump in oil prices has likely cut into the gains from the tax cut, slowing growth in the first three months of this year. How much is a matter of debate, reflected in the wide range of estimates for growth in the January-March quarter. Forecasts range from as low as 2.3 percent to as high as 3.8 percent.

Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, is on the lower end. He slashed his estimate from 4 percent down to around 2.5 percent. He’s convinced higher energy and food prices will chip away at Americans’ disposable income.

“The bottom line is that the surge in food and energy prices has almost entirely offset the big boost to real spending we anticipated from the payroll tax cut,” he said.

The crisis in Japan is another

concern, although if it has any impact on U.S. growth it would more likely happen in the April-June quarter.

The biggest concern is the disruption of factory production there. That could slow movement of parts to U.S. companies, particularly those that make autos and electronics. Still, most analysts believe the impact will be minimal.

Jeff Schuster, executive director of global forecasting at J.D. Power and Associates, said Japan plant shutdowns could result in production cutbacks at U.S. auto plants over the next two to three months. But he said any lost production would be made up later this year. He said he did not expect the shutdowns in the April-June period to be significant enough to lower the overall growth rate for the quarter.

There are other uncertainties overseas that could hurt U.S. growth, including a widening war in Libya.

But many economists are sticking with their projections for strong growth this year, saying tax cuts – including one that encourages busi-

nesses to spend more on new equipment – will offset most of the hurdles.

Ashworth said the boost from the tax relief should help lift consumer spending and the overall economy starting this spring. He is forecasting growth of around 3 percent for all of 2011. That would be the strongest growth since 2005. Last year, the economy expanded 2.9 percent. That was a rebound from the 2.6 percent plunge in output in 2009, the worst performance in six decades.

Nariman Behraves, chief economist at IHS Global Insight, is projecting growth of 3.2 percent for the year.

“Better job prospects and improved household finances will have a bigger impact on spending than higher oil prices, stock market jitters and events in Japan,” he said. Economists say growth needs to average around 5 percent for a year just to lower the current 8.9 percent unemployment rate by 1 percentage point.

Consumer spending, which generally accounts for about 70 percent of the economy, appears to be on the mend.

Top Students Benefit from Buick Achievement Plan

DETROIT – The first five recipients of the Buick Achievers Scholarship Program were named April 4.

These college-bound students from around the country will each receive a scholarship of up to \$25,000 that is renewable for up to four years.

The \$4.5 million-a-year scholarship program, which Buick and the General Motors Foundation announced in February, will recognize and reward 1,100 students from across the United States who excel both in the classroom and in the community.

The program is funded by the GM Foundation.

“Through the Buick Achievers Scholarship program, we are reinvesting in America,” said John T. Montford, chairman, GM Foundation.

“The availability of Buick Achievers Scholarship funds is expected to make a significant difference in these students’ lives.

“The high-dollar value and renewability of the awards will provide recipients with a tremendous benefit throughout their college careers and help ensure that they reach their potential.”

According to The College Board, the average annual tuition increase in 2010-2011 was 7.9 percent at public universities and 4.5 percent at private colleges.

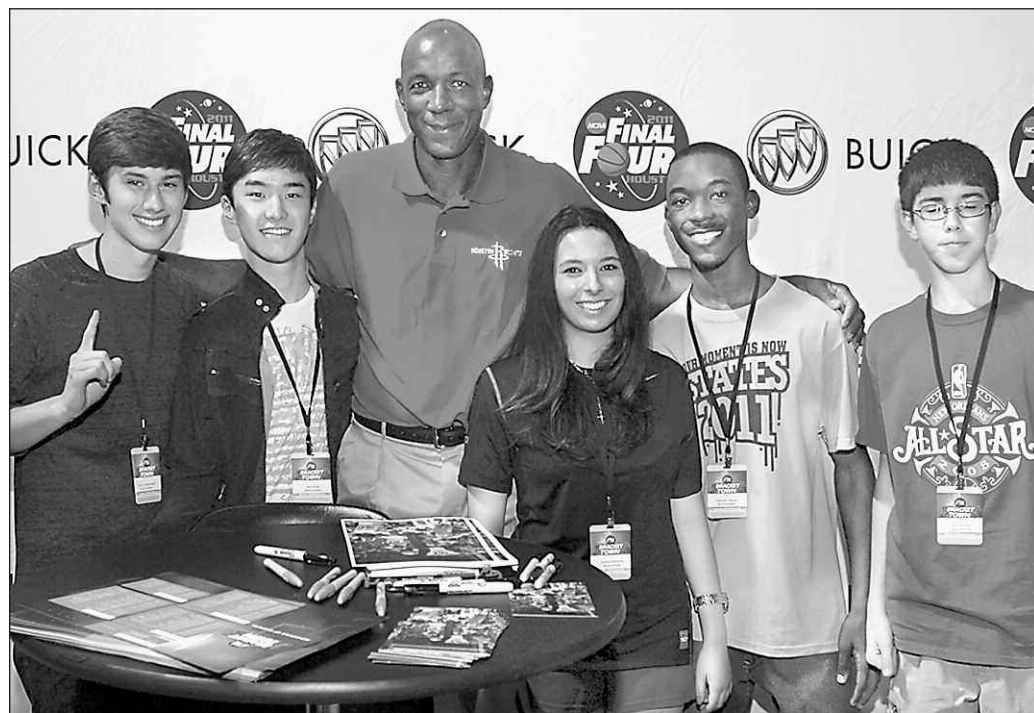
These figures are substantially higher than both the general inflation rate and personal income growth.

“This scholarship program aligns with Buick’s efforts to inspire, celebrate, and enable human achievement,” said Tony DiSalle, U.S. vice president, Buick Marketing.

The first five recipients of the 2011 Buick Achievers Scholarship Program are:

- Stavros Stratis of Metairie, La., who hopes to major in mechanical engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology. Stavros has held several leadership positions with the Greek Orthodox Youth of America, a teen ministry group.

- He also has been active in Boy Scouts of America, Mu Alpha Theta (Math Club), Quiz Bowl, National Honor Society,



Buick’s first five recipients of its Buick Achievers Scholarship Program with NBA Hall of Famer Clyde Drexler at the NCAA Final Four Tournament April 3. From left, Daniel Graupensperger, Won Ryan Lee, Drexler, Jennifer Gammond, Donovan Colquitt, and Stavros Stratis.

Chess Club and Hellenic Folk Dance.

- Jennifer Gammond of Aventura, Fla., who hopes to major in business administration, accounting or economics, possibly at Cornell University.

Jennifer founded Assisting Kids In Need (AKIN) to help families with basic needs such as food, schooling, health care, and teaches affluent children to be compassionate to those in need. She also is a member of the Community Service Board, president of the Spanish Club, treasurer of the Teenage Republican Club, and a volunteer at her church.

- Daniel Graupensperger of Auburn, Calif., who hopes to major in chemical engineering at the University of California, Los Angeles. Daniel has served in leadership positions with the Placer County Youth Commission, which strives to create awareness about the dangers of underage substance abuse. He also serves as editor-in-chief of the school newspaper and thematic editor of the yearbook.

- He is active in his church’s Young Men’s Bible Study and is captain of the Nazarene Bible Quiz Team.

- Donovan Colquitt of Southfield, Mich., who will be majoring in mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Donovan is the co-founder of Youth Empowerment, a mentoring program for high school students.

He also has served as team captain of the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life, is a board member on the Orchards Children’s Services Youth organization, chair of the Student Congress student/teacher appreciation committee, and member of the Class Board.

- Won Ryan Lee of Montvale, N.J., who will be majoring in chemical engineering at Harvard University. Won is founder and president of Strings for Little Stars, an organization that provides free music instruction to underprivileged children. He also pursues independent research in nanotechnology and stem cell science, and participates in Model UN, UNICEF-USA Volunteer Club, Student Council, Chemistry Team, Global Ambassadors and Mock Trial Team.

In addition to providing 100 students with up to \$25,000 per year, Buick Achievers will

provide 1,000 students with \$2,000 scholarships renewable for up to four years.

Eligible fields of study include science, technology, engineering, mathematics, design, marketing and business administration.

All told, the foundation’s annual funding could reach \$18 million annually after four years.

The Buick Achievers Scholarship Program is the latest example of GM Foundation education initiatives to invest in the youth of America. The GM Foundation has provided more than \$26 million in education-related initiatives since 2005.

Eligibility for the 2011-12 Buick Achievers Scholarship requires applicants to be high school seniors or high school graduates entering college for the first time in the fall of 2011; planning to enroll in full-time undergraduate study at an accredited four-year college or university for the entire 2011-12 academic year; and demonstrating an interest in the automotive industry. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and have permanent residence in the United States.

Applications are closed for the 2011-12 academic year.

Gains on Wall Street Bolster European Economies

By CARLO PIOVANO
AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) – Gains on Wall Street helped most European markets close higher Tuesday despite new ratings downgrades of Portugal and Greece and more bad news from Japan, where authorities struggled to contain radiation from a nuclear power plant.

Sentiment in Europe had been fragile earlier after losses across Asia, as leaks of highly toxic plutonium from Japan’s Fukushima Dai-ichi power plant suggested the fallout may be worse than previously expected.

The plant was crippled when a towering tsunami – spawned by the biggest earth-

quake ever to strike Japan – barreled into it on March 11. The Japanese government conceded it has struggled to stabilize the reactor.

News was not better in Europe, which has been struggling with a debt crisis for over a year. A week ago, Standard & Poor’s downgraded Portugal’s sovereign debt rating to just one notch above junk, making it even less likely that the country will manage to avoid a bailout in coming months.

Meanwhile, the agency also cut Greece’s rating further into junk status and said it was likely the country would need more bailout loans once its current rescue package expires in 2013.

Despite the news and losses across most of Asia, European indexes mostly managed to eke out gains by the close.

Britain’s FTSE ended 0.5 percent higher at 5,932.17, Germany’s DAX was down less than 0.1 percent to 6,934.44 and France’s CAC-40 rose 0.3 percent to 3,987.80.

Wall Street was the catalyst, despite downbeat economics news in the U.S. The Dow was up 0.5 percent at 12,255.36 and the S&P 500 was 0.4 percent higher at 1,314.73.

A report showed that home prices fell in 19 of the 20 large U.S. cities tracked by the S&P/Case-Shiller index. Separately, the Conference Board said its confidence index dropped more than expected

to 63.4 from 72 in February and reported that inflation expectations had risen.

Investors refused to be scared off, however, perhaps because of a pickup in corporate deal-making in recent months.

German industrial conglomerate Siemens AG last week said it would list its Osram lighting unit. Home Depot Inc. announced it would buy \$1 billion of its own stock with cash from selling bonds, and Volvo Cars said it would hire up to 1,200 additional workers over the next 12 months.

Market sentiment is expected to fluctuate, however, ahead of crucial U.S. jobs figures reported late last week from Washington, D.C.