

Expanded Sterling Heights Dodge Reopens

Story and photos by Jim Stickford

After spending \$1.8 million on a year-long renovation, Sterling Heights Dodge, Jeep, Chrysler, Ram on Van Dyke between 17 and 18 Mile, finally reopened its showroom last week.

The big new car dealership, which expanded after gaining several other Chrysler brands during the company's recent reorganization, never closed its doors, said Lease coordinator administrator Jennifer Manczyk.

"This is our grand reopening, even though we never shut our doors during the entire construction process," Manczyk said.

"We expanded our showroom, and expanded our waiting room so that it's state-of-the-art. Now people waiting for their cars have access to wi-fi. We also have a child's playroom and a coffee bar."

Dealership general manager Russ Maisano said that after the consolidation, going from just a Dodge stand-alone dealership to one that handled several more brands required more space. So the dealership took a leap of faith and invested \$1.8 million for construction, which took a year to complete.

Undergoing such a construction project seemed risky when they started, Maisano said. But Chrysler has really managed to im-

prove its brands' images. Sales this year alone are up 32.8 percent.

"The biggest thing I noticed when we got the new brands," Maisano said, "is the quality. The engineers have worked hard to get the specs of the cars that Chrysler is building absolutely right. I just was asked to join a craftsmanship review committee. Chrysler is really taking quality seriously and that's really helped us sell cars. I will say the boys up top are on it. They're on a roll and they're working hard to keep it rolling."

"When we started, we were nervous. But after we saw how (Chrysler CEO) Sergio (Marchionne) conducted business, we realized we had

no choice but to expand. This is an act of faith in the new Chrysler and their new business practices."

Owner Tony Viviano spoke to the crowd of friends, family and business associates. He said that his business got its start back when it was Utica Dodge and they had 15 cars.

"When we rebuilt this place, we decided to go green," Viviano said. "We changed every lightbulb and completely redid the electrical system. This means reduced power needs and we're helping save the planet. This is for my kids, my grandkids, and as of a couple of hours ago, my great-grandchild."

On hand to help celebrate the reopening was Reid



Dodge CEO Reid Bigland, left, and dealership owner Tony Viviano at the grand reopening on Monday.

Bigland, CEO of Dodge and head of U.S. Sales. He said that Viviano's dealership is just one of 30, out of thousands, that meet the green criteria.

Viviano unveiled a brand

new Dodge Dart as part of the opening ceremony. Bigland said the Dart is important to Chrysler because sales are up 37 percent this year, and that's without a vehicle in a major market segment.

15 Years, \$3.5M in Charity, Arts, Beats & Eats Thrives

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"While there's no question that we're here to promote our outstanding lineup of vehicles, we're also here because of your leadership here in this festival and the many community benefits and part-

Marelli to Add 800 New Jobs in Tennessee

Magneti Marelli will expand its Tennessee operations by adding a new automotive lighting operation, which will be housed inside the company's existing Pulaski plant, largely to supply Fiat and Mopar.

800 jobs will be created, as part of a \$53.7 million investment, state officials said.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam said the state favors several industry clusters, such as the automotive industry, in its economic development strategy.

Magneti Marelli has 34,000 employees in 18 countries, and is a global supplier of automotive systems and components.

ners it features.

"Last year, this event raised \$300,000 for local charities from admissions fees, beverage sales and special events and, with hopefully weather like this, we hope to exceed that amount this year."

This year, it seems, will offer a lot more of the same, along with some new angles as well, for Arts, Beats & Eats goers.

"We would like to provide additional community outreach: Ford and our group, the Southeast Michigan Ford Dealers, are happy to announce that we will be donating more than \$15,000 of exhibit space to showcase regional art organizations, organized by the Cultural Alliance of Southeast Michigan, as well as the first annual Deaf Fine Arts Festival, featuring as many as eight outstanding fine artists that are hearing-impaired," MacKenzie continued.

"No matter what the challenge, or the economic climate, our local Ford dealers in this region have always had a tradition of giving back and the fact that Arts, Beats & Eats has operated its event



Although it took the personal permission of the Royal Oak police chief, Ford parked its 2013 Escape on the sidewalk in front of the Pronto restaurant as part of an Arts, Beats & Eats promotion.

with so many positive initiatives.

"It's the driving force behind us taking the position as title sponsor - and now we're renewing our partnership for the next two years."

Meanwhile, Mike O'Brien, from Ford Lincoln Sales Operations in Allen Park, is equally enthusiastic about Ford's connections to Arts, Beats & Eats.

"This is our third consecutive year of sponsorship and we're going to be there just like we were last year - you can't miss us at Ford Arts, Beats & Eats," O'Brien said.

"We're going to bring in our

prime display materials, which is the Ford Experience Tour."

And if you were there last year, you know that's a way that people can participate. They can win prizes, play games and do all kinds of great stuff, including the Focus/40 mpg Challenge, where people can win prizes.

One person in the U.S. will be the winner of \$30,000 toward the purchase of a new Ford vehicle.

Added O'Brien, "We could show off our new products anywhere - the reason we've come back here three years in



Mike O'Brien, Ford's Detroit Regional Sales manager, at podium, and Bob MacKenzie of the Southeast Michigan Ford dealers talk about their support of the 2012 Ford Arts, Beats & Eats festival.

a row is what Arts, Beats & Eats does for the local community.

"On Saturday (June 16), Ford will celebrate its 109th anniversary (1903-2012). Yes, we want to build the best cars in the industry and we believe we're doing a fine job of that, but we also want to go further

on environmental leadership, community involvement and many other areas.

"And we believe that Ford Arts, Beats & Eats is the perfect way for us to not only showcase our new products, but to go further for our hometown communities and for our customers."

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