

Detroit Auto Scene

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Author Johnson Talks Mysteries

Michigan notable author D.E. Johnson will be at the Warren Civic Center Library to talk about his award-winning series of historical mysteries set in Detroit in the early 1900s.

The event will be held Wednesday, Jan. 23, at 6 p.m.

Call 586-574-4564 for information.

Cadillac ATS 'Car of Year' Award Called 'Very Meaningful'

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In an exclusive interview, Jim Vurpillat, director of global marketing for Cadillac, discussed the number one factor judges mentioned in selecting the ATS for the award.

"We talked to a number of them and one of their judging criteria is how well does the car deliver on what the people who are going to buy cars in that segment want," he said.

"In this case, for the ATS and other compact luxury sedans . . . They want styling, they want performance and they want fun-to-drive . . .

"They (judges) consistently cited the ATS for its performance and fun-to-drive nature. They said, 'It's just so much fun driving this car,' and that set it apart from the cars it competes against and all the other candidates for Car of the Year."

Chief competitors in the compact luxury sedan segment are the BMW 3 series, the Mercedes C-Class and the Audi A4.

Marketing Director Vurpillat confirmed that this latest award is a major morale booster for the Cadillac team.

"Having this kind of award and recognition is validation for all the effort and all the work that was put into developing this car. It's a pretty daunting task when you set out to take on the world's best, and take on a car like the BMW 3 Series," he said.

"There's a lot of validation so we feel a lot of pride that we're delivering that . . .

"The other aspect is that it gives momentum to the brand, and for people who maybe haven't considered Cadillac in the past, maybe this can start to be the impetus to get on more consideration lists from customers.

"So it means a lot to us."

The secret to success for the ATS is its unique architecture, which results in a vehicle that is nimble and very lightweight even when compared with other cars in its segment.

Vurpillat explained the car is built on an all-new architecture

FIRST Students Offered Grants from Chrysler Foundation

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series that will focus on the local schools that received grants for their robotics team.)

Gentlemen – and ladies: Start your robots!

The 2013 FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) robotics season officially started Jan. 5 and the Chrysler Foundation is offering grants totaling \$147,000 to 25 elementary, middle and high school teams in Michigan and three other states: Alabama, Arizona and Indiana; as well as in Ontario, Canada.

These grants will help teams offset costs of participating in the competition such as registration fees, parts and materials and team apparel.

The Chrysler Foundation will also give away \$29,000 in additional funds to boost the championship runs of those teams who qualify to compete at the FIRST Championship, slated for April 24-27, in St. Louis, Mo.

Last year, nine teams received additional funds.

This year, the Chrysler Foundation has committed \$181,000

to FIRST teams and programs.

"The FIRST program is an ideal platform for inspiring the next generation of science and technology leaders that are vital to our industry, as well as many others," said Mark Chernoby, head of Vehicle Engineering and vice president – Executive Coordinator, Chrysler Group LLC.

"We hope that by engaging students at an early age, we can provide the spark that inspires them to become tomorrow's engineers."

The Chrysler Foundation has awarded \$6,400 grants to the following schools and teams:

Michigan –
Andover & Lahser High Schools (Bloomfield Hills)
Ann Arbor Huron High School
Birmingham Seaholm & Birmingham Groves High Schools
Bishop Foley Catholic High School (Madison Heights)
Chelsea High Schools
Dundee High School
Goodrich High School (two robotics teams are based at this school)
Grand Blanc High School
Hartland High School
Lake Orion High School

Macomb Academy of Arts and Sciences (Armada)

Notre Dame Preparatory (Auburn Hills)

Oakland Tech Northeast (Pontiac)

OSM Tech Academy at Clarkston High School

Oxford Community Schools Pontiac High School

Rochester Adams and Stoney Creek High Schools (Rochester Hills)

Walled Lake Schools

Warren Consolidated Schools

Arizona –
Kingman High School

Indiana –
Western High School (Russiaville)

Ontario, Canada –
Sandwich Secondary School (LaSalle)

The Chrysler Foundation also awarded a \$5,000 grant to the "FIRST in Michigan" program to support district and statewide robotics competitions. Home Middle School (Fenton) will receive a FIRST Tech Challenge grant for \$1,500. A FIRST Lego League grant for \$2,500 will go to the Huntsville, Ala., City School System.

"The Chrysler Foundation and Chrysler Group are proud to help students discover the rewards and excitement of education and careers in science, engineering, and technology," said Jody Trappasso, senior vice president – External Affairs, Chrysler Group LLC and president – The Chrysler Foundation.

"We are equally proud of our employees who generously mentor students and serve as competition coordinators."

FIRST was founded in 1989 with a mission to inspire an appreciation of science and technology in young people.

To learn about FIRST, visit www.usfirst.org.

PPG Celebrates 50th Year of Electrostat

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This interest in helping OEMs achieve better fuel standards goes beyond composite materials. PPG has worked on creating the latest generation of HI-SIL silicas that, when taking the place of carbon black in tires, improve mileage, said Kevin Braun, GM silica products for PPG.

These tires are more expensive, but he estimated that a driver who replaced his regular tires with tires that use silica would save between \$300 and \$400 a year in fuel expenses. That saved money in just the first year of the tires' use would cover their extra cost.

The main point, Niekamp said, is that "green" goes beyond technology in the car. It also covers methods of vehicle construction. It's a total effort in building a car that helps make it green, not just the mileage or emissions.

developed from the ground up, with an all-new suspension system.

The basic car is rear-wheel-drive, and an all-wheel-drive version is also available.

A lot of focus on the architecture was making sure it was extremely lightweight because we wanted to deliver fun-to-drive dynamics, and one of the best ways to do that is to be light, not to be too heavy.

The ATS comes into the segment the lightest in its class, and then you combine that with some great powertrains and great engines, you end up with an extremely nimble, great-handling, fun-to-drive car, so the architecture for us was vital for delivering what the customer wants.

The compact sports sedan is also playing a vital role in expanding Cadillac's customer base by bringing in buyers to the showroom who haven't considered a Cadillac in the past.

"For us, the ATS is so important because the compact luxury sedan is the largest segment in the luxury class and one where we haven't had an entry, so that's

important from a size perspective and in terms of volume," Vurpillat said.

"But at the same time, it's also the segment where most people come into (the luxury segment) for the first time.

"So part of the ATS's role is to bring new buyers into the Cadillac brand, and in the first three months of sales, that's what we've seen – over 65 percent of the customers who are buying the ATS are new to the Cadillac brand, and that's something that we're really excited about.

"So it's really fulfilling that role of being the entry point into the brand."

The Cadillac ATS is assembled at the Lansing/Grand River Assembly Plant, which also builds the Cadillac CTS, a mid-size luxury car available in three basic styles: the sedan; the two-door coupe and sport wagon package, with the new ATS coming in somewhat smaller from a size perspective.

The ATS comes with three basic engine choices: a base 2.5-liter 4-cylinder engine; a 2.0-liter turbocharged version, which Vurpillat said is expected to represent the engine of choice for

about 50 percent of ATS sales; and a top-of-the-line 3.6-liter, direct-injected V6 that gives customers a lot of that "fun-to-drive" oomph that Car of the Year judges cited.

Trim packages for the ATS span a fairly wide segment, starting at \$33,990 and going into the low \$50,000 range.

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