

# Northern Michigan Museum Seeking More 'Snowmobilia'

Among the Upper Peninsula's many attractions is a small museum dedicated to, appropriately, the snowmobile.

It's called the Top of the Lake Snowmobile Museum, and it's a haven for anyone interested in snowmobiles, history, or mechanics – or any combination of the three.

Located in Naubinway, less than an hour west of the Mackinac Bridge, the Snowmobile Museum is home to 3,500 square feet of "snowmobilia" and the unexpectedly rich history of the industry.

It all began, says Charlie Vallier, chairman of the museum's board of directors, with a Canadian inventor named Joseph-Armand Bombardier.

Bombardier tinkered with mechanical devices in his teens, earning him a modest living and respect from local farmers. But when, as a young father, he lost his two-year-old son because there was no way to get across the snow-covered miles to a hospital for care, he focused his attention on over-the-snow transportation, and the modern snowmobile was born.

Quite a collector himself, Vallier has an assortment of 150 snowmobiles of his own.

Over the years, he has formed friendships with several other snowmobile collectors and aficionados.

For years, Vallier and his snowmobile friends talked about opening a museum, and one day five years ago, they did, forming a 501(c)(3) organization, enabling



Some of the exhibits at the Snowmobile Museum.

them to accept monetary and snowmobile-related donations in exchange for tax write-offs.

Vallier says that the generous donations of other snowmobile lovers and history buffs will enable the museum to break ground on a new building, twice the size of their current space, in the spring of 2013.

More room, of course, means the need for more "snowmobilia" to fill it with, so Vallier is appealing to the public to donate items, large and small.

"We were just in Dearborn recently, picking up two snowmobiles," says Vallier.

Vallier also issued an open invitation to nature lovers, winter sports fanatics, and snowmobile enthusiasts to join the 21st Annual Top of the Lake Snowmobile Show and Ride on Feb. 15-16.

Proceeds from the event will

benefit the new building fund, explains Vallier, and the ride also presents an opportunity for people who haven't been to the museum yet to marvel at the exhibits and displays. This year's event drew more than 140 riders, most of whom visited the museum.

"We're open all year round," says Vallier, "except on Tuesdays."

For more information about the museum, or to make a donation, visit [www.snowmobilemuseum.com](http://www.snowmobilemuseum.com) or call 904-477-6298.



Marilyn Vallier, volunteer

## LTU Online Program Ranks 6th in National Survey

Local school Lawrence Technological University's online bachelor's degree program was recently honored by *U.S. News and World Report's* national survey of higher institutions of learning.

LTU's program was ranked sixth in the national survey, which rated online programs on factors such as best practices, graduation rates, student indebtedness, and academic and career support services offered to students. LTU's online bachelor's degree program scored highest in the entire country for student engagement.

Associate Provost Alan McCord, who was responsible for creating the Southfield school's online program in 2006, said the online faculty members all teach their courses on campus. "We believe that one of the reasons that our online faculty engage with our students so well is that they also engage with them in the classroom," McCord said.

Lawrence Tech's online programs are designed with a focus on high quality, small class sizes, online faculty presence, student engagement, and a "theory and practice" approach consistent with the university's motto, McCord said.

LTU faculty members receive specialized training and professional development to build their online teaching skills. They are supported by an experienced group of instructional developers – two with Ph.D.s – videographers, and assessment specialists. During the 2012 fall semester, 285 of the 696 Lawrence Tech students enrolled in online classes were undergraduates.

Lawrence Tech also was ranked in three other online categories in the national survey.

Online graduate engineering programs were rated as number 32. Online graduate business programs finished 119. And Online graduate education programs placed at 138.

The results of the *U.S. News &*

*World Report* survey are at this link – <http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/bachelors/rankings>.

Lawrence Technological University, [www.ltu.edu](http://www.ltu.edu), is a private university founded in 1932 that offers more than 100 programs through the doctoral level in its Colleges of Architecture and Design, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Management.

*Bloomberg Businessweek* lists Lawrence Tech among the nation's top 20 percent of universities for return on undergraduate tuition investment, and highest in the Detroit metropolitan area. Lawrence Tech is also listed in the top tier of Midwestern universities by *U.S. News and World Report* and the Princeton Review.

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) – General Motors has appointed the former head of Volkswagen's China business to try to turn around its loss-making European division, Opel.

The Adam Opel AG board of directors last week named Karl-Thomas Neumann as CEO. Neumann, 51, also got the title of head of GM Europe and GM vice president. Neumann formerly headed parts maker Continental AG and ran Volkswagen's booming China business for two years until August 2012.

He inherits a tough job from his predecessor, Karl-Friedrich Stracke, a veteran GM exec who resigned abruptly last year amid poor sales and earnings. GM has struggled for years to make money with its European business. Ruesselsheim-based Opel faces weak demand from a slow European economy and tough competition with other automakers for sales of smaller, mass-market cars that bring less profit than luxury models.

GM needs to reduce its European manufacturing capacity to cut costs. Union agreements make it hard to close factories.

GM lost \$478 million pretax in

## Opel Names Neumann to CEO Post

Europe in the third quarter, compared with a \$292 million loss a year earlier. GM has predicted further European losses this year but expects to cut them by a third to a half this year, breaking even by mid-decade.

Opel, which makes both Opel and Vauxhall cars, had been headed on an interim basis by strategy chief Thomas Sedran since the abrupt resignation of

Stracke last year.

Steve Girsky, chairman of the Opel board, said that Neumann "has a proven track record in growing business in a profitable way as well as in turnarounds."

GM CEO Dan Akerson said the move "will ensure we have the best possible leadership in place as we continue driving toward profitability and growth in Europe."

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