

Detroit Auto Scene®

NEWSPAPER OF THE BIG 3 AUTO INDUSTRY

VOL. 81 NO. 19

"FIRST IN THE HEART OF DETROIT SINCE 1933" NEW CENTER NEWS

MAY 20, 2013



GM CEO Dan Akerson unveils plans for a new data center in Milford.

New IT Facilities Form Single Nerve Center, Improve Global Designs, Technologies

by Jim Stickford

May 13 was a busy day for GM. Members of the media got the first look at the new Innovation Center on the company's Tech Center campus in Warren, and company CEO Dan Akerson announced that a new data center will be built at the Milford Proving Ground.

Attendees included Gov. Rick Snyder, Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel and U.S. Representative Sander Levin.

The automaker is spending \$100 million for the companion site to its new Enterprise Data

Center at the Warren Tech Center.

The two facilities are replacing a network of 23 data centers operated by GM and three information technology suppliers around the world.

The \$130 million enterprise in Warren will serve as the computing backbone for the automaker's global operations.

The center, benchmarked against the best in the world, says GM, is the capstone of GM's efforts to transform its IT operations to help the company work smarter and faster from the design studio to the factory to the

showroom floor, Akerson said.

The facility is the first of two Information Technology Operations and Command centers that bring in-house GM's global IT infrastructure and consolidate a network of multiple sites. The two centers will integrate and streamline all aspects of product development, manufacturing, marketing, sales and OnStar applications to speed access to any GM employee anywhere in the world.

"Having a single nerve center for our global operations will get

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Jeep Brand Repeats Win for Winter Work

It was a "three-peat" for the Jeep Grand Cherokee at the New England Motor Press Association's (NEMPA) annual industry dinner, when the vehicle was named "Official Winter Vehicle of New England" for an unprecedented third consecutive year.

The Grand Cherokee snapped up two separate awards, and brand leader Mike Manley was also singled out for honors.

In addition, the Ram 1500 4x4 went home with an award of its own.

Vehicles are chosen based on how they meet the specific needs of New England drivers, who face some of the harshest winter driving conditions in the nation.

With the "Winter Vehicle" award, the Jeep brand earned a total of three significant honors at the recent event:

- Manley, president and CEO, Jeep Brand, received the 2013 NEMPA Executive of the Year Award.

- The 2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee earned the Wheels TV "Previ-

ously Owned Vehicle of the Year" award.

- And the Chrysler team had even more to smile about before the evening was over – NEMPA named the 2013 Ram 1500 4x4 the "Best All-Weather Pickup Truck."

NEMPA President Keith Griffin presented the 2013 Executive Award to Manley, citing what he called Jeep's outstanding product lineup and the brand's commitment to New England.

"During Mike Manley's tenure,



Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT8 Vapor, left, and Jeep Grand Cherokee Alpine

Jeep has enjoyed a renaissance applauded by both consumers – with ever-increasing sales – and by automotive writers, who have

heaped awards upon the Grand Cherokee," said Griffin. "Regard-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TARDEC Director, General Discuss How Auto Suppliers Can Become Significant Contributors to Defense

by Jim Stickford

Representatives from Detroit's military establishment met in Troy on May 15 to discuss how they could work with the area's automotive companies to take advantage of business opportunities available through the defense department.

David Thomas, director of the National Automotive Center (NAC) at the Army's Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC) in Warren was a speaker at the event and said that even with today's reality of sequestration of the budget, there are opportunities for automotive suppliers to become military suppliers.

"I am here because I want to work with auto people," Thomas said. "The NAC was created to leverage commercial automotive technology so that it can be applied to military vehicles."

Thomas said that recently the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Army have been collaborating on finding ways to develop lightweighting technology for motor vehicles as a way of improving fuel efficiency.

He said they're working on how to weld advanced materials such as aluminum and magnesium onto today's military vehicles – and how to do it in such a way that the materials can stand up to the rough use that comes with military vehicles being used in the field.

"We're sharing costs with the DOE," Thomas said. "Ford, Chrysler and GM, they're all working on this and we share what we learn with each other.



Gen. Mike Stone

So it's possible that rather than using so much steel, the military vehicles of the future will be made up of a mix of steel, aluminum, magnesium, carbon fiber and plastics."

Lightweighting is not only im-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

GM to Sell Rebadged Nissan as City Express

GM and Nissan announced last week that the companies have signed an agreement for Nissan to produce a small cargo vehicle that GM will sell in the United States and Canada.

GM will procure the vehicle from Nissan and distribute it through the Chevrolet dealer network. GM expects the Chevrolet City Express, based on the Nissan NV200, to be available for sale in the fall of 2014.

"Our fleet customers have asked us for an entry in the commercial small van segment, so this addition to the Chevrolet portfolio will strengthen our position with fleets and our commercial customers," said Ed Peper, U.S. vice president of GM Fleet and Commercial Sales.

Joe Castelli, Nissan vice president, Commercial Vehicles and Fleet, added, "Working with partners to expand markets for our innovative products enhances Nissan's growth and manufacturing efficiency by leveraging our capacity to meet growing demand in this space."

Nissan currently sells a version of the vehicle as the NV200

in numerous markets globally, including the United States and Canada. The Nissan NV200, a compact commercial vehicle, is a previous winner of the International Van of the Year Award.

According to a joint news release, cost of ownership for the vehicle is among the lowest in the class due to low running costs, the efficiency of the en-

gines and drivetrains, and a safety structure that helps to minimize crash damage.

It was first launched in Japan as the Nissan NV200 Vanette in May of 2009, and in Europe in autumn 2009. It is a front-engine, front-wheel-drive van built on Nissan's B platform.

The price of the Chevrolet City Express will be announced later.



The 2015 Chevrolet City Express will be built by Nissan in Mexico.

It Takes a Village for Successful Car Design These Days

by Jim Stickford

No one can go it alone.

That was the message at the Automotive Hall of Fame in Dearborn May 14.

Automobile design and manufacturing have always been a complicated job, but in today's world – when vehicle models are refreshed or redesigned in just two years instead of the former six – it has become impossible for companies to "do the designs

in their own four walls."

At least, that's what Stan Przybylinski, vice president of Research for CIMdata, said at a special media day sponsored by Dassault Systemes.

Przybylinski was one of several speakers who talked about issues of production and where the auto industry is going in terms of manufacturing processes and what types of materials will be used to make the cars of the future.

Przybylinski said that determining the Product Life Management (PLM) of a car is more difficult these days because cars are so much more complicated. OEMs rely more than ever on the work of their suppliers.

"It's become very complicated," Przybylinski said. "Automakers must design for everything and that means global designs and global competition. Automakers are seeing competition coming from places they never

would have imagined only a few years ago."

He cited Korea as a great example. A decade ago, Hyundai was a much smaller company, but it's growth on the world stage has been impressive, he said.

Przybylinski said he expects China to become a bigger player in the years to come. He went on to point out that one of the difficulties in being a global player is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Contact us at news@detroitautoscene.com