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

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## Family Turns Hobby into Mopar Business

by Irena Granaas

For the exceptional owners out there who love nothing better than to be seen in their customized Chrysler hot rods, it's nice to know there's a whole community of like-minded folks with whom they can share their interests and get tips and ideas.

Dave Farrell and his sister Susie Farrell-Kelly are owners of St. Clair Shores-based Promotion Services, Inc. (PSI). They're both car nuts and Farrell is the creative force behind LxForums, which they tout as the largest resource dedicated to modern Mopar muscle on the Internet.

Their father Lee Farrell, a Chrysler retiree, founded PSI as a marketing company and Dave and his sister have been gradually taking over the business for the last five years. They became majority owners two years ago.

"We are a supplier to the automotive industry and our primary client is Chrysler," Dave Farrell said.

The lxf Forums.com website has been around for about eight years, serving about 60,000 members and boasting more than 4.25 million web postings.

"I started the lxf Forums.com eight years ago as a hobby and it turned into a much larger entity than I had ever imagined," Dave Farrell said.

The LxForums site is the go-to site for Chrysler muscle cars based on the popular LX platform and manufactured at the automaker's Brampton, Ontario, Assembly plant.

LX platform vehicles include the Chrysler 300, Challenger, Magnum and SRT8.

Members spend \$2,000 to \$10,000 on average in aftermarket parts and accessories to en-

hance and customize their cars, Farrell said.

"We focus on grassroots dealer marketing, and basically we help dealers partner with organizations in their local area to help build a relationship between potential customers and the dealership," Farrell explained.

"For instance, we have a pro-

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Brother/sister owners Dave Farrell and Susie Farrell-Kelly



A not-yet-assembled Chevrolet Volt makes its way through a bank of female ostrich feathers at Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly.

## GM is No Featherweight At Manufacturing Process

It's not exactly for the birds. In fact, it's for the cars – and their quality.

At GM, ostrich feathers are among the "tools" used by some quality operators.

Amid the high-tech robots, miles of conveyers and multiple assembly lines, a number of inconspicuous hand-held "tools" – including one that uses ostrich feathers – are being used in an effort by GM to get top levels of vehicle quality before the vehicles leave the assembly plants across the country.

This attention to detail is important because Chevrolet, Cadillac, GMC and Buick are in the midst of launching 27 new or significantly updated cars, trucks and crossovers this year and in 2014.

According to a GM news release, Chevrolet alone will launch 13 "all-new" or significantly revised cars, trucks and crossovers in 2013. Among the new models are the Chevrolet Silverado, Impala, Corvette

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## Market Demand Averts Summer Shutdowns at Big Three

Memorial Day is often considered the start of summer and, in the past, Detroit OEMs closed down production plants for a couple of weeks in July and August.

But, times have changed and the summer production schedules of GM, Ford and Chrysler reflect that fact.

"Historically, most plants across North America would schedule summer shutdown periods in early July as standard process to accommodate plant work needed for model year changeover, providing opportunity for facility maintenance and employee vacations," said Bill

Grotz, GM communications manager for Manufacturing and Labor.

"Today, plant downtime scheduling is driven by specific vehicle life cycles and market demand. This approach gives us more flexibility and enables quicker response to market conditions.

"Shutdown periods will vary by plant based on launch timing of new or refreshed models across the portfolio and our ongoing efforts to align production with market demand."

Ford will produce an extra 40,000 units by idling select plants for only one week during what has been the traditional

two-week summer shutdown.

"To meet surging customer demand for our top-selling cars, utilities and trucks, we are continuing to run our North American facilities at full manned capacity, and we will add 200,000 units of annual straight-time capacity this year," said Jim Tetreault, vice president of North America Manufacturing.

"Approximately 75 percent of our plants are running at a three-crew, three-shift or four-crew pattern in order to ensure we're getting more of our products into dealerships."

To meet demand for Ford vehicles, the company will add nearly

3,500 hourly jobs in 2013. With its latest announcement of more than 2,000 new jobs at Kansas City Assembly, as well as more than 1,400 new jobs at Flat Rock Assembly, Ford is three-quarters of the way to its plan to create 12,000 hourly jobs in the United States by 2015.

Chrysler spokesperson Jodi Tinson said that in order to meet demand for some of the company's most popular models, several Chrysler assembly plants will not observe a summer shutdown. Two of the three plants – Jefferson North and Conner Avenue – are in Detroit. The third is the Toledo North plant in Ohio.

Tinson said that, additionally, all engine, transmission and stamping plants, with the exception of Indiana Transmission Plant II, will work through the summer.

"It's not that unusual for Chrysler to not have a summer shutdown at a particular plant anymore," Tinson said.

One reason is that in previous eras new models were launched in September. So it made sense to close the plants down so that they could be retooled for the new model production.

Now, routine maintenance is done as needed, even when a plant is in production.

## EyesOn Design to Honor Ex-GM Design VP Cherry

An EyesOn Design weekend will be held at, among other places, the Eleanor & Edsel Ford Estate on the weekend of June 14-16.

The weekend begins with a special "Vision Honored Awards Dinner" to be held at the GM Heritage Center, 6400 Center Drive in Sterling Heights. Tickets to the event are \$175 per person and the recipient of the 2013 Lifetime Design Achievement Award will be GM designer Wayne Cherry. Bob Lutz will present the trophy to Cherry.

The award, given annually by the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology (DIO), is unique in that only vehicle designers who have previously won the award are allowed to vote. Previous winners include such designers as Chris Bangle, Walter deSilva, Tom

Gale, Giorgetto Giugiaro, Chuck Jordan, Robert Lutz, Shiro Nakamura, Chuck Pelly, Sergio Pininfarina and Jack Telnack.

Cherry, who was only the fifth vice president of Design in General Motors' history, joined GM in 1962 after graduating from the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles.

He soon was a member of the teams that developed the landmark 1966 Oldsmobile Toronado and the 1967 Chevrolet Camaro designs.

In 1965, he was transferred to GM's British operations, Vauxhall Motors, where he led the design work on the gull-winged XVR Concept and designed the low-slung, mid-engined SRV, and the 1978 Equus.

Named director of Design in 1975, Cherry's team was respon-



Wayne Cherry

sible for a number of successful cars, trucks and coaches that significantly improved Vauxhall's market share.

In 1983, he became director of Design at GM's Opel Design Centre in Germany where his team was responsible for the design of all GM vehicles in Europe. There,

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## GM Attracting Professionals To Michigan, Detroit Area

by Jim Stickford

After some very rough financial times, GM has made a comeback in the last two years, and part of that success has been built around getting the best people to join the company and come to Detroit.

Sean Vander Elzen, director of Talent Acquisition and Early Career Development for GM, said the automaker is in the midst of reinventing itself, reinventing the way cars are designed and built.

"That means the need for people with computer skills is stronger than ever," Vander Elzen said. "That's not only in designing new apps. Computers are now used in every phase of a car's design and construction lifecycle."

In the past, models were built

using clay, Vander Elzen said. While clay modeling is still used in the design process, so much of design is done using computers. In many respects, being a designer means being a computer programmer.

That's just the way cars are designed in the 21st century, Vander Elzen said. So that means that GM is hiring a lot of technical people. This has led to the creation of four new technical centers in Austin, Texas; Phoenix; Atlanta, and Warren.

"This is a huge shift from even 10 years ago," Vander Elzen said. "The lines are really blurring between mechanical, chemical and electrical engineering."

"Take the Volt. It has two powertrains, one mechanical and one

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