

## Chrysler Employees Make Children's Christmas Happy

by Jim Stickford

The people of UAW locals 140 and 869 out of Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly Plant and Warren Stamping Plant, showed true Christmas spirit with the donation of \$7,000 worth of gifts to the charity, "Toys for Tots."

The gifts were presented to the organization Dec. 12 at the Warren Stamping plant. Workers from both the stamping plant and Warren Truck Assembly participated.

Representing Toys for Tots were Marine Capt. Charles Nassar of the Engineering Battalion at Selfridge Air National Guard Base; and Gunnery Sgt. David Flores and Staff Sgt. Anthony Akers, both of the First Battalion, 24th Regiment, also out of Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

"It's great to receive gifts at Christmas," said David Edgar, president of UAW Local 869, "but it's better to give, especially in this economy when so many are in need."

Ken Karns, chairman of UAW Local 140 Veterans Committee, said that, between the two locals, they were able to raise \$7,000 in gifts for children.

But, said Bill Butler, chairman of UAW Local 869's Veteran's Committee, that's not all they do.

"I'm proud that we were able to collect so many toys for the children at Christmas," Butler

said. "But this is just a small part of what the veteran's committee does."

Butler said they help with a program called "Mikie's Minutes" which was started by fellow veterans committee member Julie Ingram. Her son, Sgt. Michael Ingram Jr., was killed in Afghanistan on April 17, 2010.

"We received that last letter that no parent wants to get," Ingram said. "In it, he wrote that if he died, 'please don't forget about me.' He said, 'please tell people about me.'"

So Mikie's Minutes was born, Ingram said. The group sends phone cards to soldiers in Afghanistan. Each card has 35 minutes on it. The goal, right now, is to get 300,000 minutes worth of cards.

"We buy the phone time for about \$1.69 a minute," Ingram said. "A soldier in Afghanistan buying the time there might pay as much as \$50 a minute. Mike was six weeks from going home when he died. This is what drives me now."

Butler said his veteran's committee is also working with a group called "Suit for Soldiers," which provides suits for returning servicepeople and helps teach the skills they need to acclimate to civilian life.

Nassar said that as a Marine he was proud to be involved with Toys for Tots, and that the peo-



From left, David Edgar, Staff Sgt. Anthony Akers, Gunnery Sgt. David Flores, Capt. Charles Nassar and Local 140 President Mark Dickow.

ple at the two UAW locals who donated items deserve some praise as well.

"It's you and your dedication to the children in southeastern Michigan, you and everyone who step up and work to make sure the kids can enjoy a better Christmas," Nassar said. "That's what this holiday is all about."

"I can't wait until next year," said Edgar, "when we can continue that great tradition of giving. This is the 21st year we've been involved with Toys for Tots. This

has been a great year for us here at the plants.

"It wasn't that long ago when we had an empty stamping plant with only 600 people. I'll take that image to my grave. Now we are hiring again and the Chrysler star is providing good jobs for people. It's great that we can share some of that with those in need. God bless everyone."

## New OCC Program Addresses Gap Facing Employers

Oakland Community College is partnering with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and a network of Michigan community colleges to educate high school students about training opportunities in high demand careers.

The Career Jump Start Program is intended to address the critical talent gap facing Michigan employers promoting high-demand career paths to students, said OCC chancellor Dr. Timothy Meyer. It was created as a response to feedback from the Governor's Economic and Education Summits, which took place earlier this year.

The initiative will inform students about associate degree programs, apprenticeships and other training opportunities in these occupations through a network of Michigan community colleges, Michigan Works! agencies, employers, trade unions and chambers of commerce.

"OCC's strengths lie in evaluating and meeting the training needs of employers in our community," Meyer said.

To learn more, Meyer said, visit [www.oaklandcc.edu](http://www.oaklandcc.edu).

## GM to Pull Manufacturing Out of Australia

(AP) - General Motors Co. will stop making cars and engines in Australia by the end of 2017, with nearly 2,900 jobs to be lost, because of high production costs and competition.

The decision could spell the end of car manufacturing in Australia as the industry will be too small for supporting businesses such as parts makers to remain economic. Toyota announced it is reassessing its future in Australia. A union said 50,000 jobs in the auto industry are in jeopardy.

GM's Australian subsidiary Holden once dominated Australian auto sales, but lost market share to imported cars. Ford, once Holden's major rival in Australia, announced in May that it was ending production in the country in 2016. Toyota is the only other auto manufacturer in Australia.

Australia had four car manufacturers before Mitsubishi Motors Corp. shut its doors in 2008.

GM's announcement has been anticipated for months. The Australian government has been under mounting pressure to offer increased subsidies to the Detroit-based company to keep it manufacturing in Australia for the sake of the auto parts industry.

The decision reflected the "perfect storm of negative influences" that Australia's auto industry faces, GM's CEO Dan Akerson said in a statement. Describing Australia as "arguably the most competitive and fragmented auto market in the world," he also blamed the sustained strength of the Australian dollar, high costs of production, and a small population.

Holden, which has manufactured cars in Australia for 65 years, would become a sales company, he said.

The announcement was made the same day GM revealed that Akerson will be replaced by Mary Barra on Jan. 15.

GM's Australia chairman Mike Devereux said GM cars rebadged as Holdens would continue to be sold and serviced in Australia after 2017. GM is currently selling the Australia-built Chevrolet SS in the United States. The car is called the Holden VF Commodore in Australia.

"Building cars in this country is just not sustainable," Devereux told reporters.

Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane said he was "floored" when Devereux phoned and broke the news and was disappointed that GM had made its decision before an inquiry had completed an analysis of government support of the auto industry.

Holden has received 1.8 billion

Australian dollars (\$1.6 billion) in federal government assistance in the past 11 years.

"The task for the industry has got measurably more difficult as a result of Holden's decision, but it is not impossible to maintain a component and car industry in Australia," Macfarlane said.

Toyota said GM's decision put its own ability to make Australian cars under "unprecedented pressure."

"We will now work with our suppliers, key stakeholders and the government to determine our next steps and whether we can continue operating as the sole vehicle manufacturer in Australia," Toyota said in a statement.

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