

2015: A YEAR IN REVIEW

The Good: Auto Sales and Profits Are Up; The Bad: Recalls, Fines; The Ugly: VW Cheats

by Jim Stickford

When historians look back at the year 2015, they will probably say it was a mixed bag for automobile manufacturers.

On the one hand, sales of vehicles in the U.S., as well as profits, reached levels not seen in years. On the other hand, 2015 was also a big year for recalls and government fines.

Although the industry experienced record sales, a plethora of new technology and the advent of driverless cars, all of this was overshadowed by the Volkswagen scandal.

By far, the leading story for 2015 was Volkswagen getting caught for deliberately cheating on emissions testings.

News broke in late summer that the world's top-selling automaker had cheated.

VW CEO Martin Winterkorn resigned, plans were announced to recall 11 million cars globally and set aside \$7 billion to pay for them. In the United States, where more than 500,000 VW cars were recalled, several government agencies began investigating.

Then there was the Takata airbag scandal. Japan's Takata

Corp. admitted concealing evidence for years that its air bags could explode. A defect was linked to eight deaths and more than 100 injuries worldwide.

Takata agreed to pay U.S. regulators a \$70 million fine. It also agreed to phase out air bag inflators that use ammonium nitrate, which was blamed for the explosions.

In all, Takata airbags affected millions of vehicles and 11 auto manufacturers.

There were many other recalls from fuel tanks and ignition

switches to headlights and brakes. The record number and swift manner for reporting to NHTSA comes on the heel of the 2014 GM Cobalt ignition scandal that caused an overhaul in the NHTSA rules, regulations and fines.

As for 2015 auto sales, Kelley Blue Book estimated on Dec. 23 that new-vehicle sales are expected to increase 13 percent year-over-year to a total of 1.7 million units in December 2015,

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Mary Barra at the 2016 Chevy Cruze reveal in June



2015 Jeep Cherokee being made at Toledo Assembly



Ford's Joe Hinrichs, right, at F-Series Super Duty assembly line



2015 Buick Encore

Buick Sales Over the Top

Buick will set a global sales record for the third consecutive year in 2015.

In mid-December, annual sales surpassed last year's record 1,170,115 vehicles driven by record sales in China and record crossover deliveries in the United States, said Buick spokesman Stuart Fowle.

Year-end sales for Buick are expected to surpass 1.2 million vehicles.

"Buick's momentum is undeniable as new customers worldwide discover Buick's lineup of beautiful, approachable premium vehicles," said Duncan Aldred, vice president of Global Buick.

"We think 2016 will be another watershed year for the brand with the global launch of the new 2017 LaCrosse, the North American launch of the Envision, the U.S. launch of the Cascada, and the Chinese launch of a new Verano hatchback.

"Our products and our customer service have never been better."

In China, Buick sales have sur-

passed 100,000 units for two consecutive months and annual sales are expected to reach 1 million units for the first time, Fowle said.

The new Excelle GT launched this year is the country's best-selling model, he said.

The popularity of crossovers has significantly contributed to brand growth in all markets, Fowle said.

In the U.S., Encore small crossover sales have grown for 23 consecutive months and are on track to achieve the best sales in eight years for a single Buick model. Combined with China, Encore sales will top 140,000 vehicles globally.

Crossover sales industrywide have increased 3 percentage points in the U.S. this year, accounting for 40 percent of all new vehicles sold.

At Buick, Encore and Enclave crossover sales account for 60 percent of U.S. Buick sales so far this year.

The GL8 and all-new Envision

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Ford Employees Develop 6,000 Inventions

From the automaker whose founder, Henry Ford, was known for introducing innovations – the affordable car, the assembly line, the franchise dealer and more – comes a record number of new patents.

Ford Motor Company employees this year delivered 6,000 new inventions, – an increase of 36 percent from 2014.

Ford Smart Mobility and other initiatives continue to accelerate the pace of innovation, said Ford spokesman Karl Henkel.

Many of the new patents have been related to autonomous and connected vehicles, wearable devices, eBikes, navigation, ride-sharing platforms and other technologies, said Henkel.

These patents include technologies to help autonomous vehicles detect other vehicles at obstructed intersections, as well as technologies to alleviate range anxiety in electrified vehicles and to extend range in real-world driving.

Another new invention is designed for cyclists – allowing riders to report road obstacles to help other riders.

"Our engineers and scientists are inventing ways to address mobility challenges more than ever – with more patent applications filed this year on car-sharing, wearables, bikes, cloud computing and in other areas to improve consumers' lives inside and outside the car," said Raj Nair, Ford executive vice president and chief technical officer.

"By hosting – and participating in – more internal hackathons and innovation labs, our employees are stepping up to show that inventing is a priority for leadership in the industry."

Nair said as part of Ford Smart

Mobility – the company's plan to use innovation to ascend to the next level in connectivity, mobility, autonomous vehicles, the customer experience, and data and analytics – 2015's record-breaking output of inventions features thousands of technologies that enable key advancements in connectivity, analytics, wearables, electrification and safety.

For example, a new bike system can detect bike lanes and alert cyclists of path deviations. Another one would suggest a safe vehicle speed based on nearby infrastructure, average vehicle speed and GPS data, and a new front brake light technology would improve vehicle-to-vehicle and autonomous driving-to-pedestrian communication.

"The commitment Ford has made to innovation is commendable," said James Malackowski, chairman and CEO, Ocean Tomo,

an intellectual property firm.

"The strength of Ford's patent portfolio has resulted in the company being named a constituent to the Ocean Tomo 300 Patent Index for five years."

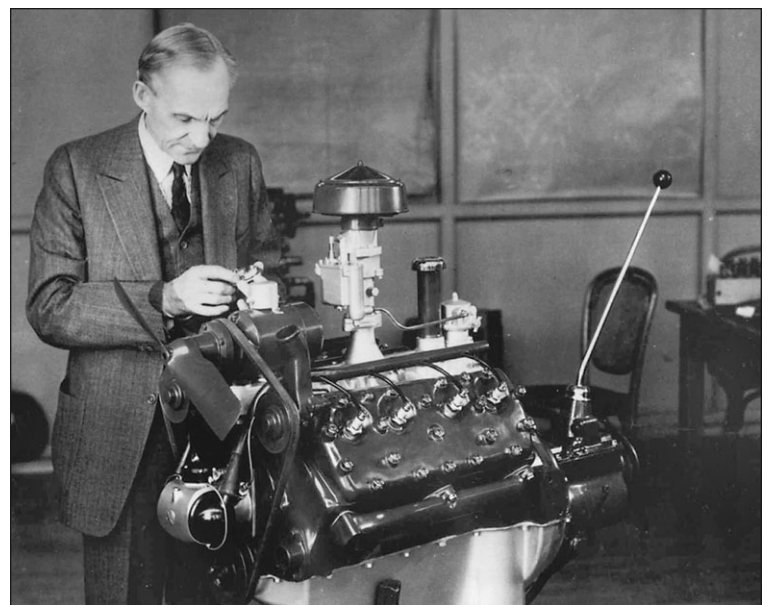
Ocean Tomo annually releases its 300 Patent Index, which is based on the value of a company's intellectual property.

Hundreds of Ford employees all over the world are responsible for this achievement, Henkel said.

In the past three years, Ford employees in Asia Pacific increased invention disclosure submissions more than 140 percent, North America is up almost 100 percent and Europe saw an increase of more than 50 percent.

Recently, Ford showcased the breadth of its patent portfolio by licensing robotic test driving technology, which saves time

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Henry Ford with a 1932 V8 engine

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Strong December Sales Continue 2015 Trends

New-vehicle sales are expected to increase 13 percent year-over-year to a total of 1.7 million units in December 2015, resulting in an estimated 18 million seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR), said *Kelley Blue Book*.

December will cap the biggest year of U.S. new-car sales that the industry has ever seen, with total light vehicle sales of roughly 17.5 million, representing a 6.1 percent jump from 2014 totals, said Kelley spokeswoman Brenna Robinson.

"December has become one of the biggest sales months of the year, helped by year-end targets and prominent holiday sales events," said Tim Fleming, analyst for *Kelley Blue Book*.

"As we move into the new year, expect this strength to continue, although at a slower rate than this year. In 2016, *Kelley Blue Book* forecasts sales in the range of 17.5 million to 18 million units, which would represent another record-breaking year."

There are several factors that could disrupt the new-car sales momentum, Robinson said, including rising interest rates, an increasing supply of off-lease units, and increasing manufacturer incentive spending that *Kelley Blue Book* has seen in recent months, which could be representative of a slowdown in natural consumer demand.

Key highlights for estimated December 2015 sales forecast:

- In December 2015, new light-vehicle sales are expected to hit 1,700,000 units, up 13.1 percent from December 2014 and up 29.3 percent from November 2015.

- The seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) for December 2015 is estimated to be 18 million, up from 16.8 million in December 2014 and down from 18.1 million in November 2015.

- Retail sales are expected to account for 84.3 percent of volume in December 2015, up from 83.4 percent in December 2014.

Of particular interest, Robinson said, is Fiat Chrysler, which is projected to do well in December, and the Jeep brand in particular, with expected growth of more than 15 percent.

"Fiat Chrysler has become increasingly dependent on Jeep to drive sales growth, and December should be the best month on record for the Jeep brand," said Fleming.

"However, combined sales year-to-date of other Fiat Chrysler brands are slightly down in volume."

For 2015 – The Good: Sales, Profits Were Up; The Bad: Recalls, Fines; The Ugly: VW Cheats

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resulting in an estimated 18 million seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR).

Kelley Blue Book also said December will cap the biggest year of U.S. new-car sales that the industry has ever seen, with total light vehicle sales of roughly 17.5 million, representing a 6.1 percent jump from 2014 totals. The previous high was 17.35 million units in 2000.

"December has become one of the biggest sales months of the year, helped by year-end targets and prominent holiday sales events," said Tim Fleming, analyst for Kelley Blue Book. "As we move into the new year, expect this strength to continue, although at a slower rate than this year."

"In 2016, Kelley Blue Book forecasts sales in the range of 17.5 million to 18 million units, which would represent another record-breaking year."

As for profits, full-year results aren't in yet. But GM's third quarter was strong.

Profits fell slightly, but the company rode strong North American sales to overcome \$1.5 billion in costs from its deadly ignition switch recall.

Meanwhile, Ford's gamble on trucks has paid off. Pickup trucks drove the Dearborn automaker to record North American numbers in the third quarter, and the company expects the trend to continue for a while, said Ford sales analyst Erich Merkle.

Ford earned \$2.7 billion in North America, up 89 percent



Volkswagen's defeat devices were developed at this facility.

from a year ago, largely due to higher sales of its new F-150 pickup truck. Ford debuted the aluminum-sided truck in the fall of 2014, but didn't hit full production at its two U.S. facilities until June.

"What really stood out were the F-Series," said Merkle. "Trucks really stole the show."

Sales of F-Series pickups hit a nine-year high for the third quarter.

On the other hand, Fiat Chrysler was unable to escape recall costs. Net income for Fiat Chrysler's U.S. operations dropped 89 percent in the third quarter as the automaker set aside millions of dollars to pay for future safety recalls.

The Auburn Hills company reported its net profit was \$70 million in the third quarter compared with \$611 million last year.

Fiat Chrysler US posted a little

more than \$1 billion in one-time pretax charges.

That included an \$848 million adjustment for recalls, along with \$159 million for vehicles damaged in a Chinese port explosion last August.

Without those charges, the Auburn Hills automaker would have had an operating profit of nearly \$1.3 billion, which would have been 34 percent higher than last year.

Warren Library Offers New Seminars

The Warren Public Library's Civic Center branch is holding a special seminar on back pain and what can be done to alleviate it on Thursday, Jan. 28, at 6 p.m.

"Is your back bothering you?" said Warren librarian Jennifer Lund. "Do you spend most of your day sitting?"

"Physical therapist Nora Cascardo of Premier Therapy in West Bloomfield will teach us how to relieve and prevent back pain. She will show us practical everyday techniques for reducing back pain and keeping our backs strong."

Space for the event is limited, Lund said.

The library is also holding a seminar on body language matters on Thursday, Jan. 14, at 6 p.m. at the Civic Center branch.

"Our brain relies on snap judgments to categorize another person and predict whether they are trustworthy, threatening, competent, likable, etc.," Lund said.

"Being able to accurately read body language can help you ace

the job interview, make a date go smoother, excel at reaching your goals, and also serve as a tool to parent better."

To reserve a spot for both events, Lund said, people should call the library at 586-574-4564.

Buick Continues Building Global Brand Visibility

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compact crossover ranked first and second, respectively, in the 2015 J.D. Power China Initial Quality Study (IQS) in the large SUV segment, Fowle said.

The Envision, which was also named *Motor Trend* SUV of the Year in China, will end its first full year in production with more than 130,000 sales.

It goes on sale in all North American markets in 2016.

Buick has topped J.D. Power U.S. Customer Service Index rankings among mass-market brands for two straight years.

On the new model release front:

- The new Cascada, Buick's first convertible in 25 years, goes on sale in early 2016 in the U.S., Fowle said.

- The new 2017 LaCrosse – Buick's most advanced sedan ever, said Fowle – launches globally next summer, and the award-winning Envision crossover arrives at North American dealers next summer.

- The new Verano hatchback and Verano GS are available for pre-order in China now.

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Santa? No, Lawrence Pellerito is giving blood at Art Van's training school.



The turnout was appreciated at the Art Van-sponsored Red Cross blood drive Dec. 28.

Art Van Blood Drive 'Success', Despite the Freezing Rain

by Jim Stickford

It's been said that Christmas is the time of giving, and that's exactly what some people did at the Art Van blood drive.

"We've been doing this for the past 15 years," said Diane Charles, spokeswoman for Art Van. "It's become something of an annual event and attracts people, not just Art Van associates, but people from across Warren and even beyond."

Charles said that Art Van Elslander has had a business in Warren for 56 years and has maintained a proud tradition of supporting local community efforts and charities.

"We're happy to open our doors for a worthy cause like a Red Cross blood drive," Charles said. "And what can be more worthy than this? Donating blood is literally giving the gift of life. We get people from all walks of life giving of their time and their life blood. How cool is that?"

Jamila Wilson, regional representative for the Southeast Michigan Region of the Red Cross, said that the Art Van blood drive is always scheduled at a very opportune time for the Red Cross.

"We always need blood," Wilson said. "But Christmastime is a particularly important time to have donations because demand rises while supply declines."

She said that at Christmas people are often on vacation out of state, so they are not physically available to make blood donations.

And given the cold weather, people are less willing to leave their warm homes and brave the elements.

Case in point, Wilson said, was the weather during the Art Van blood drive. The drive started at 10 a.m. and went until 2 p.m. When the doors opened the weather was cold.

By the time the doors closed at 2 p.m., sleet and freezing rain had knocked out the power in some

parts of metro Detroit and the roads had become slick.

"That kind of thing keeps people home. But we consider this particular blood drive to be a success," Wilson said.

"And the winter road can also lead to an increase in accidents. That contributes to the increased demand for blood.

"So having an annual blood drive right after Christmas is very important, and we really have to thank the good people at Art Van for their donation of space and for their efforts

in attracting donors."

One volunteer who made it to the blood drive was Lawrence Pellerito, a chef who lives in Clinton Township and bears a striking resemblance to a certain Santa Claus.

"I like to give blood every 150 days, which adds up to about three times a year," Pellerito said. "I have O-positive blood, which is in high demand because it can be given to 83 percent of the population. I like to do my part."

Another donor who braved the

weather was Steve Kneip of Rochester Hills.

"I do some business in this part of town and the Art Van blood drive makes it convenient for me to donate," Kneip said. "I've been coming here to donate after Christmas for the past five or six years and I must say that they are very efficient in how they handle the people and take the blood. I always know they're going to have a donation right after Christmas, so it makes it very easy for me to plan on making a donation."

Economic Forecast Set

The Macomb County Chamber of Commerce will present its 2016 economic forecast on Thursday, Jan. 15, at Andiamo Ristorante and Banquet Facility, 7096 East 14 Mile Road in Warren, beginning at 11:30 a.m. The event is expected to last about two hours.

Chamber spokeswoman Danielle Bare said Dr. Jim Jacobs, president of Macomb Community College, will deliver the annual Macomb Economic Forecast. David Sowerby, CFA of Loomis Sayles and Company, will join Dr. Jacobs to discuss Michigan eco-

nomics and how that relates to the Macomb County region.

"We'd like people to join us to hear what to expect for 2016's local economic trends," Bare said.

Tickets for the event are \$35 for members and \$45 for non-members. The price includes the plated lunch.

The door opens at 11:15 a.m. for registration. Lunch will be served promptly at noon as the program begins.

To learn more about the event, call Bare at 586-493-7600 or go to the Chamber's Web site at macombcountychamber.com.




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Chevy Says New Mobile App Will Make Things Easier

Talk about convenience being at your fingertips.

Chevrolet will debut an enhanced version of the myChevrolet mobile app at the consumer electronics show – CES 2016.

The new app allows convenient control and management of the vehicle, said Chevrolet spokesman Stefan Cross.

The services currently available through the myChevrolet and OnStar RemoteLink apps will be combined in 2016 to offer customers easier mobile access to roadside assistance, parking reminders, owner's manual content, vehicle diagnostics, Wi-Fi hotspot management and key fob commands such as remote start and door unlock, Cross said.

The myChevrolet app, which will debut a new, customizable user experience, will be a platform for the growth of future mobile services.

"The myChevrolet app will be the most comprehensive vehicle app available – and will support the ownership experience over the life of the vehicle," said Paul Edwards, vice president of Chevrolet Marketing.

"By integrating OnStar RemoteLink features into the myChevrolet app, we're creating a

one-stop-app for owners to manage their vehicle with one user profile and unified log-in."

OnStar RemoteLink allows owners with an OnStar account to use their smartphone to unlock/lock doors, activate the horn and lights, and start the engine from any distance.

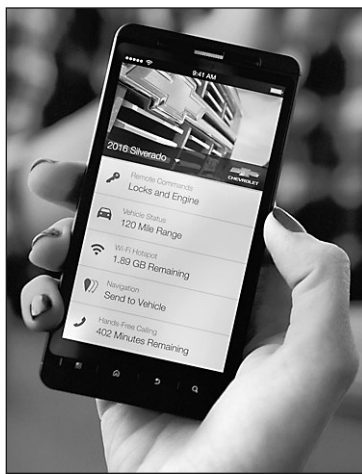
Users can also check vehicle diagnostics such as fuel range, tire pressure and oil life, receive personalized retail offers through the AtYourService feature, and send directions to the vehicle's navigation system.

Customers with an OnStar 4G LTE-equipped vehicle can manage their Wi-Fi hotspot and data plan.

Chevrolet owners used the OnStar RemoteLink app more than 50 million times in 2015, totaling more than 6 million requests in the month of November alone.

The myChevrolet app will integrate the RemoteLink features while still offering the ability to contact roadside assistance, schedule maintenance, access the vehicle owner manual and set parking reminders.

Users will be able to customize the app home screen by ordering the tabs they use most often and removing those they don't use.



myChevrolet app

The inclusion of the RemoteLink features into the myChevrolet app is part of an overarching redesign of the Chevrolet Owner Center experience to make vehicle management and ownership seamless, Cross said.

Beginning next year, my.chevrolet.com will allow customers to manage their OnStar account, along with tracking vehicle service history, scheduling maintenance and checking vehicle information.

The myChevrolet app will be available on select 2010 and newer retail Chevrolet vehicles in the U.S. and Canada.

To access the full set of app features, users will need to activate their OnStar service and agree to the terms.

NAIAS Vehicle Display 'Unlike Anything We've Ever Had'

Robb Report – the official media partner for the 2016 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS), has named Katrina Szish as the anchor of *Robb Report's* broadcast – *Robb Report LIVE*, from the floor of the NAIAS, said *Robb Report* spokeswoman Elyse Heckman.

Szish, best known for ongoing appearances on ABC's "Good Morning America" and NBC's "TODAY Show," among others, will take to the stage for three days of interviews, programs and entertainment, all filmed amidst the backdrop of a collection of vintage and contemporary luxury cars on display at *Robb Report's* two-story show floor studio, Heckman said.

Szish, alongside *Robb Report's* own automotive experts Robert Ross and Laura Burstein, will lead scores of interviews with the world's top auto designers, from BMW and Lamborghini to Aston Martin and Rolls Royce.

Szish will also host intimate discussions with leaders and notables from Detroit, including trendsetting change-agents who are at the forefront of the city's dynamic renaissance, Heckman said.

"*Robb Report* brings an exciting dynamic to the NAIAS show floor for Preview Week, from the vehicles they'll have on display to the interviews they'll conduct with some of the auto industry's most influential individuals," said Paul Sabatini, 2016 NAIAS chairman.

"The vehicle lineup *Robb Report* has put together, ranging from cutting-edge supercars to priceless classics, is unlike anything we've ever had on display in one exhibit at NAIAS."

The lineup of luxury automobiles on display at *Robb Report's* studio will include:

- Acura NSX;
- American Expedition Vehicles Brute Doublecab;
- Aston Martin Rapide S;
- BMW i8;
- Cadillac ATS-V;
- Corvette Z06;
- Lamborghini Aventador SV Roadster;
- Mercedes-Benz AMG GT-S;
- Rolls-Royce Dawn Convertible;
- 1967 Corvette 427, courtesy of Ken Lingenfelter, The



Katrina Szish

Lingenfelter Collection;

- 1969 Lamborghini Miura, courtesy of Andrew Romanowski, president of The Lamborghini Club of America;

- 1953 Rolls-Royce Silver Dawn Drophead Convertible, courtesy of Larry Wolf from Detroit.

The collection of cars, which range in price from \$110,000 to \$1.5 million, will be on display at *Robb Report's* studio on the show floor of the NAIAS Jan. 11-13, Heckman said.

FCA Recalling 450,000 Jeep, Durango SUVs

NEW YORK (AP) – Fiat Chrysler Automobiles is recalling nearly 450,000 SUVs worldwide in two separate recalls that includes the Jeep Grand Cherokee.

The automaker said Dec. 24 about 353,000 Jeep Grand Cherokee and Dodge Durango SUVs with model years 2011-12 are being recalled because wiring in the vanity mirror may overheat and create a fire hazard. No injuries or accidents were reported.

The second recall is for more than 93,000 Jeep Compass and Patriot SUVs with model year 2015.

The company says it will inspect and fix a clamp that may be out of position.

The out-of-position clamp may allow power steering fluid to leak, creating a possible fire hazard.

Ford Inventing the Future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and spares human test drivers from such physically demanding tasks as driving over curbs and through potholes to prove vehicle durability.

Patent leadership continues on efficient powertrain technologies, Henkel said. Ford has increased filing of electrification patents nearly 200 percent in the past five years.

In 2014, Ford filed for more than 400 patents dedicated to electrified vehicle technologies.

Prior patents on technology that benefits consumers include

Ford's EcoBoost engine lineup, which offers a combination of fuel efficiency and power to meet a wide range of driver needs, Henkel said.

Ford has 275 U.S. patents on EcoBoost, with another 200 pending. Ford has more U.S. patents on gasoline turbocharged direct-injection – EcoBoost – technology than any other automaker today, Henkel said.

Inventing is an important part of Ford DNA, Nair said, pointing out that Henry Ford earned more than 150 patents for his inventions.

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Ford Shelby GT350 Mustang, BMW 340i Among Ward's '10 Best Engines'

The 10 best engines in the industry are honored every year by *WardsAuto* editors.

The publication released in December its list for model year 2016, and the winners represent a broad spectrum of the industry. The 3.6L DOHC V6 (Chevrolet Camaro/Cadillac ATS), the 2016 Chevrolet Volt propulsion system and 3.0L Turbodiesel DOHC V6 (Ram 1500 EcoDiesel) engines were written about in a previous issue of this newspaper.

- Other winners included:
- 5.2L DOHC V8 (Ford Shelby GT350 Mustang);
 - 3.0L Turbocharged DOHC I-6 (BMW 340i);
 - 2.0L DOHC 4-cyl./50-kW Drive Motor (Hyundai Sonata PHEV);
 - 3.5L DOHC V-6 (Nissan Maxima);
 - 2.0L Turbocharged DOHC 4-cyl. Boxer (Subaru WRX);
 - 1.8L DOHC 4-cyl./53-kW Drive Motor (Toyota Prius HEV);
 - 2.0L Turbo/Supercharged DOHC 4-cyl. (Volvo XC90).

WardsAuto editors really liked the Ford Shelby 5.2L DOHC V8 engine. They wrote, "Ford has no trouble muscling its way onto this year's list with a 526-hp naturally aspirated 5.2L bruiser of a V8 in the new Shelby GT350 Mustang.

"With its heralded flat-plane crankshaft and weight-reducing Plasma Transfer Wire Arc cylinder coating, Ford's "Voodoo" V8 casts a spell on *WardsAuto* editors by demonstrating that a red-line of 8,250 rpm is not something to fear but embrace.

"Derived from the 5.0L 'Coyote' V8 that won *WardsAuto* 10 Best Engines trophies in 2011 and 2012, the 5.2L, with old-school port fuel injection, 6-speed manual transmission and using premium fuel, reaches the 100 hp/L threshold, which is extremely difficult for a big engine without forced induction.

"Truly suited for hammering around the track, the GT350's engine is described as 'positively demonic' by a Mustang loyalist intoxicated by the brash exhaust note and subtle but soothing shimmy at idle.

"The Voodoo engine does everything well, from pattering around town to frightening small animals. *WardsAuto* editors consider it the pinnacle of internal-combustion engineering."

Editors noted that BMW remains "the most-honored automaker, with 32 *WardsAuto* 10 Best Engines trophies since the competition began in 1995. The latest comes for the new B58 3.0L turbocharged inline-6 that resides in the 340i sedan and is destined for numerous BMW applications in years to come.

"The 320-hp B58 replaces the N55 turbo 3.0L, which earned three trophies from 2011 to 2013. With a larger twin-scroll turbocharger, higher compression ratio and the impeccable balance afforded by an inline layout, BMW proves once again an engine need not make outrageous horsepower or torque numbers to be enormously rewarding and thrilling to drive.

"The 340i loves to stretch its legs in the upper reaches of the powerband, which didn't stop a number of editors from topping 25 mpg during our evaluations.

"The B58 springs from a new modular architecture that begins with the 6-cyl., then lops off pistons to make 3- and 4-cyl. variants. Those B38 and B48 engines, evaluated in Mini Hardtops in this year's competition, also impressed the editors, but not quite like the BMW 340i."

Editors called the Hyundai Sonata plug-in hybrid "remarkable." It employs an "excellent 2.0L 4-cyl. paired with a 67-hp electric motor, which draws energy from a 68-kW lithium-polymer battery.

"Plug in the Sonata and bank on at least 27 miles of electric range before the direct-injection 2.0L starts the heavy lifting. Charging takes 2.7 hours with 240V or nine hours with a 120V wall socket.

"But plan to be pleasantly surprised, like one editor was, when a 30-mile commute with a full battery ends with 8 miles of electric range still in the battery. Thank the software that allows for aggressive regeneration while decelerating and braking.

"In real-world situations that included a mix of gasoline and electric driving, *WardsAuto* editors achieved fuel economy between 41 and 80 mpg. But it's not just about saving fuel. The high-compression 154-hp 2.0L is the soul of this hybrid and makes it enormously fulfilling and smooth to drive. And don't forget the \$4,500 in various federal tax credits."

WardsAuto editors said that Nissan has always been a strong performer when it comes to engines. The company collected its 17th *Wards Auto* 10 Best Engines trophy and the 15th for its 3.5L V6 that comes from its vaunted VQ engine family.

The VQ, in displacements ranging from 3.0L to 3.7L, won 14 straight trophies between 1995 and 2008.

"This year, it returns with a sig-

nificant overhaul in time for its launch in the all-new Maxima sedan, carrying over the aluminum block, port fuel injection, compression ratio and bore and stroke.

"But 61 percent of the new VQ's parts have been redesigned to reduce friction and weight and promote better breathing. The new heads, intake ports and intermediate locking valve timing make for more complete combustion, and a new intake manifold with wider and shorter runners improves airflow.

"Like the 3.0L that dazzled us in the Maxima in 1995, the improved VQ makes for light, lively and refined power delivery, and the sterling midrange torque is still there. And we can't recall ever getting 30 mpg from this engine long ago."

Editors said that Subaru was a returner to the list with another winner – its 2.0L turbocharged 4-cyl. boxer that turns the Subaru WRX into a riotous weekend racer or a docile suburban cruiser.

Editors wrote, "producing 268 hp and 258 lb.-ft. of torque, this direct-injection "FA" boxer has become the poster child for high-output, affordable turbocharged 4s. Last year, it managed to float to the top of our list among a sea of 15 4-cyl. turbos, many of them quite good.

"This year, there were eight 4-cyl. turbos, and the WRX capitalized on that mathematical advantage with its low weight, twin-scroll turbocharger and palatable \$28,895 base price, with Premium trim.

"The FA boxer makes the WRX fast, fun and spirited, while being perfectly suitable for daily driving. This is a great engine that completes the package: a reasonably priced practical sports car with a rally racing heritage."

Editors also praised Toyota's fourth-generation Prius engine. They wrote that "with an all-new 95-hp 1.8L 4-cyl. paired with two electric motors pumping another 53 kW of juice from batteries stored in the rear, the new Prius delivers seamless acceleration and real-world fuel economy during our evaluations of up to 61 mpg.

"There's a lot of new technology onboard, such as the cooled exhaust-gas recirculation used for the first time on a Prius to improve fuel economy and emissions. It's quieter and silkier than the old Prius, and a 'Power' button provides a noticeable kick on freeway entrance ramps.

"With an attractive as-tested price of \$24,700, the Prius is the least-expensive vehicle on our list, while selling at the highest volume."

Volvo also received praise

from the *WardsAuto* editors for the company's consistency.

Editors wrote that last January, Volvo's Michael Fleiss collected a trophy for the 2.0L T5 turbocharged 4-cyl. in the S60 sedan and told a *Wards Auto* editor he would be back in January 2016 when the more powerful 2.0L T6 engine wins an award as well. It was a gutsy statement. And one that Volvo was able to make good on.

"But a year later, after our editors have driven the new XC90 and routinely got better than 24 miles per gallon in a big 7-passenger CUV with all-wheel drive, the *WardsAuto* staff now is equally enthusiastic about this all-aluminum engine rated at 316 hp and 295 lb.-ft. of torque."

Editors also liked the way that only four pumping pistons provided the power necessary to effortlessly drive this 3-row people-mover. This results in the XC90 "having the composure, power and refinement of a high-feature V6. The T6 arguably is the new benchmark for high-output 4-cyl. engines."

This, editors wrote, sets this direct-injection powerplant apart from other small engines employing forced induction in the pairing of supercharging to provide immediate punch with turbocharging to carry on at higher rpm.

Macomb Community College is offering the following courses free of charge through March 2016:

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- Overview of Bio-based Material Productions – 1/25/16 thru 1/26/16
- Overview of Experimental Testing and Industry Standard Testing of Bio-based Material – 2/2/16
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2016 Midnight Edition of the Chevrolet Trax

Chevy Trax Strikes Midnight

Call it going over to the dark side.

Chevrolet will be producing the 2016 Trax Midnight Edition - a blacked-out styling statement for the small SUV.

The new model offers customers a bold choice and "adds to the momentum of the brand's record 2015 crossover sales," said GM spokeswoman Leslie Rajewski.

"Introduced just a year ago, the Trax has quickly become an important vehicle for Chevrolet, bringing in new, younger and more female buyers to the brand," said Betsy Flegg, senior marketing manager, Chevrolet Crossovers.

"The small SUV segment is the fastest-growing in the industry and models such as the new Trax Midnight Edition provide customers an expressive option."

Based on the LTZ trim, the Midnight Edition features black wheels, bezels, beltline molding and door handles, along with a black rear license plate applique. Inside, the seats are trimmed with gray accents and the floor mats feature gray piping.

Trax sales were 57,707 for the first 11 months of 2015, placing it

second in the segment, with almost 20 percent market share, Rajewski said. Chevrolet crossover sales were up 35 percent for the same period.

Fusing small-car agility and utility convenience of an SUV, said Trajewski, Trax offers up to 48.4 cubic feet of cargo space. A 1.4L turbocharged engine offers the efficiency of a small displacement engine - an EPA-estimated 34 mpg highway (FWD models) - with the power of a larger engine on-demand, she said. Connectivity features include an available 4G LTE Wi-Fi hotspot.

Trax is joined by a full complement of Chevy crossovers and SUVs including the Equinox, Traverse, Tahoe and Suburban, Rajewski said. The Trax Midnight Edition will be assembled at GM's Bupyeong-gu facility in South Korea. It's based on GM's Gamma II platform. The original Gamma platform was developed by Opel. The Gamma II platform was developed under the leadership of GM Korea.

The Trax Midnight Edition goes on sale in late February 2016, with a package price of \$500, in addition to the Trax LTZ's \$26,125 suggested MSRP.

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DENSO to Display Its New Technologies at NAIAS

Automotive supplier DENSO will showcase its safety, autonomous drive and environmental technologies with interactive, augmented reality displays at the 2016 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS), to be held at Cobo Center in Detroit Jan. 11-24.

A premier sponsor of the event, DENSO is exhibiting at the show for the 12th consecutive year, said DENSO spokeswoman Bridgette LaRose.

The supplier, which has its North American headquarters in Southfield, will use an augmented reality platform to show its vision for "smart cities" of the future, and how its tech could be used to make life smarter, safer and easier, LaRose said.

The display shows how vehicles, infrastructure, homes and grids can become connected and more energy-efficient in future smart cities. In this Smart City, vehicles talk to each other and to the city infrastructure.

Visitors will see how these technologies can be used to time traffic lights, prevent accidents, or work with a phone app to book a parking space or get transportation within city limits.

In the residential area, users will see how their home will "know" when you're approaching and automatically adjust your heating/cooling and lighting, LaRose said.

In the farming area, unmanned machinery could work the fields and maximize all areas of crop productivity based on communicating information from a centralized location. Users will see how this tech can be used in semi-truck long-haul platooning.

DENSO, LaRose said, will also be showing off its safety technol-

ogy. The company's exhibit will feature a Harmonious Communications Cockpit equipped with safety support systems and intelligent technologies to help drivers and passengers arrive at their destinations safely.

To move to a society free of driving accidents, LaRose said, this cockpit features Head-up Display so drivers can keep their eyes on the road. Features include:

- Harmonious Lumi that illuminates to inform drivers of obstacles in the road;

- Driver Status Monitor, a camera to monitor the driver's attentiveness; Active Footrest to notify the driver when lane change assistance is activated;

- Electric Mirror, which displays rear and side images when a potentially threatening situation is detected.

DENSO also will display its Advanced Driving and V2X technologies.

The company will also display its newly developed standardized Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) unit, which received the *Automotive News* Premier Automotive Suppliers' Contribution to Excellence (PACE) Award in 2015 for its industry-first standardized HVAC unit that is 20 percent smaller and lighter than conventional units, said LaRose.

It's the world's first standardized HVAC component that can be used in a variety of vehicles, which will allow carmakers to realize a cost savings, LaRose said.

DENSO also will feature its Gasoline Direct Injection (GDI) and Hybrid, Electric Vehicle (HEV) and Stop/Start technologies.

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<p>CAMARO 2016 1LT</p> <p>Stk. #460564</p> <p>PURCHASE FOR \$26,992*</p> <p>NOW IN STOCK</p>	<p>TRAX 2016 LS</p> <p>Stk. #560706 Stk. #560706</p> <p>LEASE FOR 24 MONTHS \$79*</p> <p>PURCHASE FOR \$15,869* WAS \$21,195</p> <p>NO SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIRED</p>	<p>TRAVERSE 2016 LS</p> <p>Stk. #560275 Stk. #560275</p> <p>LEASE FOR 24 MONTHS \$199*</p> <p>PURCHASE FOR \$26,269* WAS \$32,650</p>	

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Superior Appoints Bruynesteyn to Its Board of Directors

Southfield-based Superior Industries International, Inc., a manufacturer of aluminum wheels for passenger cars and light-duty vehicles in North America, appointed Michael Bruynesteyn to its board of directors, effective immediately.

Bruynesteyn's appointment increases the size of the board to eight directors, seven of whom are independent, said Superior spokesman Kerry Shiba.

Bruynesteyn currently serves as treasurer and vice president of Strategic Finance at Turner Construction, the largest non-residential commercial construction company in the United States, Shiba said.

He has more than twenty years of finance experience, largely focused on the automotive industry in a variety of global senior roles spanning corporate finance, investment banking and equity research. He has also served, since 2013, as a member of the advisory board of Levant Power Corporation, a privately-held developer of automotive active suspension technology.

"We are extremely pleased to welcome Michael Bruynesteyn to the board of directors of Superior Industries," said Margaret S. Dano, chairman of the board. "His extensive experience in finance and capital markets and his in-depth knowledge of the automotive industry, along with a proven track record as a financial strategist, comes at an exciting time of transformation at our company."

IHS Purchases Canadian Car Info Company

IHS Inc., a global source of critical information and insight, on Dec. 28 acquired CARPROOF Corporation, a Canada-based company that offers products and services in vehicle history, appraisal and valuation for the automotive industry, for \$650 million USD (approximately \$460 million USD), said IHS spokesman Dan Wilinsky.

More details on the acquisition will be provided on the IHS fourth quarter and year-end 2015 earnings call on Jan. 12, 2016, Wilinsky said.

CARPROOF was founded in 2000, Wilinsky said, and is the industry standard in Canada for providing automotive vehicle history reports to dealers, auto auctions, original equipment manufacturers, lenders, insurers, governments, law enforcement agencies and consumers.

Wilinsky said CARPROOF has been repeatedly recognized as one of Canada's best managed companies and has appeared on Deloitte's Technology Fast 500 and Fast 50 lists.

In July 2013, IHS acquired CARFAX, the leading vehicle history expert for used car buyers, sellers and the automotive industry in the U.S., Wilinsky said.

"Like CARFAX, CARPROOF is a high-growth business and gives IHS the opportunity to expand our vehicle history report services into Canada," Jerre Stead, chairman and chief executive officer of IHS, said. "By combining the capabilities of CARPROOF and CARFAX, we also will accelerate product development to better serve the needs of our customers. This acquisition will add a highly accretive revenue-growth and EBITDA-margin business for IHS, and provide significant room for further growth."

CARPROOF (carproof.com) employs more than 130 people in Canada and is headquartered in London, Ontario, Canada, Wilinsky said.