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RV PRO



Editors' Picks

Must-see models for 2024

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BLUENOSE RV CENTRE

RICHLOOM'S
ON-TREND FABRICS

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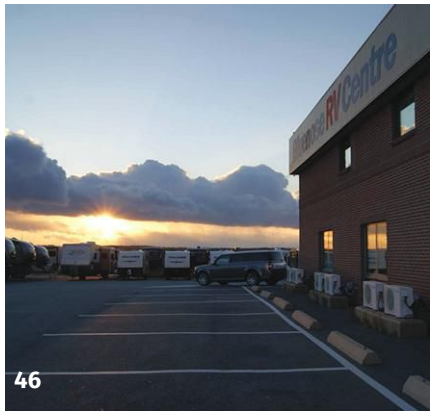
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ON THE COVER
RV PRO spotlights the best new units for model year 2024.

CERTIFIED AUDIENCE

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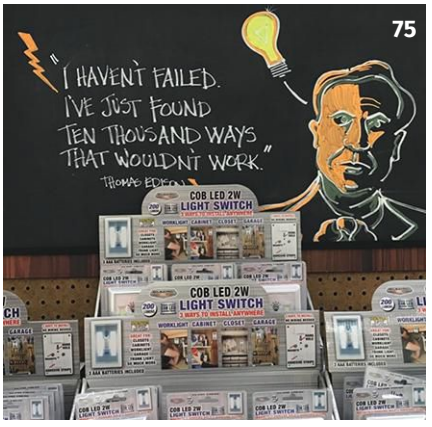
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MOMENTUM

Play hard and rest easy in the Momentum series. With its tall ceilings and spacious slide outs, the Momentum has truly raised the bar —and the square footage — when it comes to Toy Haulers. So go ahead, go big — comfortably. *Go where there's more to life.*

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MORE OF WHAT MATTERS

RV PRO



One of my favorite holiday movies is "Elf" with Will Ferrell. I love the story, the cheerful colors, the songs and Buddy's infectious enthusiasm for, well, everything. My favorite scene may be when he pops into a busy Manhattan coffee shop and loudly exclaims, "You did it! Congratulations! World's best cup of coffee. Great job, everybody!"

In fact, during a trip to New York City to visit the Met and see the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center, my friends dared me to re-enact this scene. My face burning red and my heart pounding, I took the dare. And, like typical jaded New Yorkers who've seen it all, the people in my chosen coffee shop glared at me and went right back to their conversations and coffee.

But being told you're "the best" is pretty fun, isn't it? Doing the research to make RV PRO's Best of Open House Editors' Picks is fun, too. Our team takes selecting standout RVs seriously. We mimic the industry's enthusiasm, excitedly pointing out new features, showing pictures to one another to "walk through" a new floorplan, oohing and aahing over secret storage compartments or appealing exterior graphics. We do our best to take in as much as we can and "debate" passionately about our picks. Turn to page 14 to take a look at our editors' picks for the 2024 models. And, if you were at Open House in Elkhart in September, or you've seen a manufacturer's new offerings for 2024, let us know if you think there was something we missed!

In this issue, we also offer advice from some of our best columnists and industry partners. Check out Henkel's article on page 54, explaining how adhesives are used in RVs. On page 66, Jesse Stopnitzky of Performance Brokerage Services (who is also an honoree of the 40 Under 40 Class of 2023), talks about how a dealership's worth is determined during the selling process. Leonard Buchholz of DealerPRO Training explains how you can prepare for the next market shift with three action steps on page 69. Linda Cahan writes about how to set your dealership apart from the competition on page 75. And Mel Selway focuses on interiors on page 72 – one theme of this month's issue – drawing attention to the interior of your parts and accessories retail store.

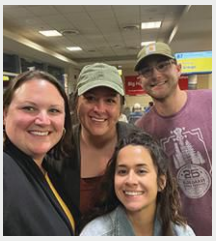
Speaking of interiors, learn more about which fabrics are trending from Richloom on page 48 and which faucets are catching consumers' eyes from Dura Faucet on page 51.

We hope you learn something in this issue, and every issue, as we strive to bring you the best information each month. We're happy to be a part of one of the best industries alongside you, and we thank you for helping us celebrate the best of the best!

As always, thanks for reading!

Jennifer King

Snapshots From Open House 2023



(l-r) Jen King, Rebecca Tittel, Jordan Benschop and Gannon Greene



Myron Mixon preps the 'cue at the THOR display



Jordan fits inside a roomy storage space



Jen and Stacy Marshall, director of sales, relax in an East to West Ahara

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Jennifer King
205-278-2826
jdking@cahabamedia.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Jordan Benschop
720-784-8074
jbenschop@cahabamedia.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Tony Kindelspire
720-784-8079
tkindelspire@cahabamedia.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Linda Cahan, Leonard Buchholz, Mike Harbour, John McCurry, Stephanie Patrick, Mel Selway, Ronnie Wendt

CREATIVE SERVICES

ART DIRECTOR
Melanie Magee

DIGITAL PROJECT MANAGER
Greg Ragsdale

DIGITAL PRODUCTION DESIGNER
Shelby Dempsey

WEB DEVELOPER
Greg Caudle

ADVERTISING

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Gannon Greene
205-915-7296
ggreene@cahabamedia.com

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Rebecca Tittel
720-784-8081
rtittel@cahabamedia.com

SALES DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTAIVE
Kaylor Hagerla
205-745-1883
khagerla@cahabamedia.com

CLIENT SERVICES COORDINATOR
Holly Strickland
hstrickland@cahabamedia.com

CAHABA MEDIA GROUP

Publisher
Matthew G. Conroy

Vice President of Sales
Greg Meineke

Vice President of Finance
Brandon Whittemore

Director of Content
Elizabeth Manning

Director of Events
Russ Turner

Director of Operations
Laurie Tisdale

Director of Sales
Stacy Marshall

Cahaba Media Group, Inc.
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RV PRO Unveils 40 Under 40 Class of 2023

RV PRO has chosen honorees for its fourth annual 40 Under 40 recognition. Each year, 40 professionals from across the RV industry are spotlighted as some of the brightest up-and-coming leaders under 40 years old. Honorees were nominated by their peers for above-and-beyond determination, leadership and success in their respective markets. The RV PRO team selects winners based on contributions to their workplace, industry tenure and involvement in their communities.

The Class of 2023:

Aaron Bashore – Tom Schaeffer's Camping & Travel Center
Alissa Reyes – Thetford
Allison Leonhardt – Renegade RV
Ally Moncayo – MBA Insurance
Anna Ruiz – Octane Lending
Austin Ciambriello – Intellitec Products
Ben Johnson – Meyer Distributing
Brent Smith – Craig Smith RV
Brian Loscheider – Sika Corp.
Brock Allen Ward Sr. – Ed Allen's Campground & Cottages
Camila Ramirez – Go Camp
Catherine Barsanti – RV Industry Association
Christina Gose – Mapletree Transportation
Corey Payne – Patrick Industries
Cristal Doll – Hilltop Camper and RV
Derek Weaver – NTP-STAG
Diane Miller – Firefly Integrations
Jesse Stopnitzky – Performance Brokerage Services
Jessica Herrmann – Blue Compass/ Airstream of Tampa
John Jones – Cruiser RV
Justin Rickett – RV Technical Institute
Joe Mehl – Alliance RV
Kyle Peterson – Airstream Adventures
Megan Stouder – Newmar Corp.
Michael Yanni – Wilkins Recreational Vehicles
Michelle Blosser – Grand Design RV
Paul Choquette – Blue Ox
Phyllis Beyers – Genesis Products
Ryan Eash – Jayco
Ricky Chynoweth – Campers Inn RV
Robert Kowalczyk – Fleetwood RV
Sam Martin – Airxcel
Seth Buchheit – Chinook RV
Shannon Regan – Crestview RV Center
Steven Riley – Rileys RV World
Summer Trammell – Storyteller Overland
Tony Lizzi – Grand Design RV
Travis House – Temecula Valley RV
Trevor Kropf – Kropf Industries
Trevor Youngblood – Youngblood's RV Center

The Class of 2023 will be celebrated in-person on Tuesday, Nov. 7, at the RV Dealers Convention/Expo in Las Vegas. The invite-only ceremony will be 7-9 p.m. at the Paris hotel. Winners will also be featured in the December issue of RV PRO magazine. In addition, and new for this year, 40 Under 40 honorees will receive generous discounts to attend both the RV Dealers Con/Expo on Nov. 6-9, and the springtime RV Industry Association (RVIA) Leadership Conference, slated March 5-7, 2024, in Bonita Springs, Florida. Sponsors of the event and 40 Under 40 awards are Rollick and United States Warranty Corporation.

Timbren Promotes Dwayne Ryan to National Sales Manager



Dwayne Ryan

Timbren Industries has promoted Dwayne Ryan to national sales manager.

Ryan has been with the company since 2021 and was most recently its business growth specialist.

"Dwayne Ryan has been an integral part of the Timbren family and a key figure in our growth over the last three years," said Andrew Hodgson, executive vice president. "With Dwayne now as our national sales manager and John Marshall recently brought on board as vice president of sales, I'm extremely excited for our future growth and expansion as we continue to work with our retail, wholesale and OEM partners."

Added Ryan: "Great company, great product, great people. I'm happy to be part of this winning combination! It's easy to love your job when you believe in the product and what the company stands for. Here's to future years growing the Timbren brand."

RVWA Names New Managing Director



Patricia Carrera

The RV Women's Alliance (RVWA) recently hired association management professional Patricia Carrera to serve as the organization's new managing director. Carrera has experience providing strategic leadership and program expertise while driving daily operations, membership recruitment and services and organizational strategies, RVWA said. These skills are critical as the RV Women's Alliance continues to pursue its mission to educate, elevate and promote women in the RV industry.

"Trish comes to us with incredible experience delivering value to members and partners while harnessing the power of volunteers, something that is very important to the success of our organization," said RVWA President Susan Carpenter. "The board was very impressed with the breadth of her skills and her passion for promoting women throughout her career."

"Supporting and promoting women in traditionally male-dominated industries has been a passion of mine for my entire career," Carrera said. "I am very excited to bring together my personal love of RVing and my professional experiences helping women thrive in their careers through programs and education."

Most recently, she served as the managing director for professional education at the American Diabetes Association.

Over the coming weeks, Carrera will transition fully into the position with the assistance of current managing director Jessica Rider.

"Jessica was the perfect person to serve as our first managing director. Her management of the organization, operational expertise, and work with the board of directors helped set the groundwork for the long-term success of our organization," Carptenter said.

"Working with the members and leaders of the RV Women's Alliance has been a very rewarding part of my career," Rider said. "I am very proud of the progress our organization has made and I look forward

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to supporting Trish as she leads the organization into this next chapter."

Sobel U.'s Training Dates Through End of 2024

Sobel University announced dates for its Comprehensive Sales Course into 2024 to accommodate the growing demand for current and relevant sales and management training. "More dealers are realizing that in order to keep thriving in this competitive marketplace, they cannot delay taking their staff to the next level," said Jered Sobel, university president. "This announcement allows dealers to save money on travel expenses by booking early and have a clear plan to start 2024 in a strong position."

Comprehensive Sales Course dates:
Nov. 27-Dec. 1 – Atlanta
Dec. 4-8 – Tacoma Advanced
Jan. 8-12, 2024 – Tacoma
Feb. 5-9 – Tacoma
April 15-19 – Virtual
June 3-7 – Tacoma
Aug. 5-9 – Virtual
Oct. 14-18 – Tacoma
Nov. 18-22 – Atlanta
Dec. 2-6 – Tacoma Advanced

The Comprehensive Sales Course is a "boot camp" class for new and experienced salespeople and managers. Students can expect a challenging eight hours of classroom instruction with homework every night and exams every day. Students are also put into role-playing situations, which helps sharpen their skills.

Dragonfly Energy Claims Breakthrough in Lithium-Ion Battery Recycling

Dragonfly Energy Holdings, makers of Battle Born Batteries and energy storage solutions, in collaboration with Aqua Metals, pioneers in sustainable lithium battery recycling, said it has successfully created a breakthrough advancement in sustainable lithium-ion battery production. The companies used high-purity lithium hydroxide, recovered by Aqua Metals from recycled lithium-ion batteries, to manufacture a lithium-based battery cell using Dragonfly Energy's patented dry battery electrode coating technology. The successful recovery of battery-grade lithium hydroxide and cycle testing of a sustainably manufactured lithium battery cell is a significant advancement for sustainable lithium-ion battery production for the companies.

The process demonstrates a potential path toward a more circular and sustainable lithium battery manufacturing industry that addresses the finite and costly nature of battery materials, the companies said.

"This is an exciting step forward for the emerging lithium battery industry, as we have qualified the high-purity lithium hydroxide Aqua Metals recovers from recycled lithium batteries to manufacture new battery cells," said Vick Singh, director of research and development for Dragonfly Energy.

Aqua Metals, also based in Reno, Nevada, recovers high-purity lithium hydroxide from lithium-ion battery "black mass," which is the industry term for the metallic mixture of crushed and shredded end-of-life battery cells that contain valuable minerals, including lithium. The companies said that this new breakthrough confirms that sustainably recycled materials can meet the high standards for advanced battery cell production and can be an essential part of building a circular supply chain for the domestic battery industry.

"This is an exciting milestone for us in establishing the efficacy of our sustainable recycling process and affirming that our high-purity recovered material is battery grade and of equal quality to virgin mined material – with a much lower carbon and waste footprint," said Steve Cotton, president and CEO of Aqua Metals.

Added Denis Phares, CEO of Dragonfly Energy: "The use of recycled lithium addresses two major initiatives for Dragonfly Energy: it helps close the loop by filling in that all-important recycling component, and it provides a ready and sustainable supply of lithium for use in upcoming cell production. Dragonfly Energy is committed to securing a robust supply chain that is compliant with the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act – relating to both mineral processing and battery recycling goals – to support our growth and our future expansion efforts while practicing material circularity and sustainability."

Society of Certified RV Professionals Recognizes Recent Grads

The Society of Certified RV Professionals recognized seven individuals from six participating dealerships who earned a new certification, and one individual that renewed their certification, during the third quarter of 2023 through the Mike Molino RV Learning Center Fixed Ops Certification Program.

Participation in the recognition program allows the society to publicize individuals' certification achievements on the national level. Those participating in the recognition program are a subgroup of the 10 individuals from nine dealerships who earned certification.

"On behalf of the entire RV industry, we congratulate these professionals and their dealerships. These accomplishments are proof of their outstanding commitment to customer service and satisfaction," said RVDA President Phil Ingrassia. "Not only do they elevate our industry, but on an individual level, each joins an elite group of certified personnel who have successfully met high professional standards."

Those in the recognition program that earned a new certification are John Aylor (service writer/adviser), Sandra Fitzsimons (warranty administrator), Daniel Wilson (parts specialist), Angel Bragg (parts specialist), Kali Wilson (parts specialist), Christopher Cook (parts specialist) and Jordan Godfrey (parts manager). Anna Freeman (recertified parts specialist) renewed her certification.

Fixed-ops professionals can earn certification as parts managers, parts specialists, service writers/advisors, service managers and warranty administrators through the Mike Molino RV Learning Center, which offers online testing, certification and recertification.

The Society of Certified RV Professionals promotes and recognizes certification among employees who work in the RV industry. For more information about the society and to learn how your dealership can participate in the recognition program, visit rvda.org/rvlearning.

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Best New Model 2024

With all the awesome offerings at Open House this year, the RV PRO team had a hard time narrowing down our favorites for the 2024 Best New Models. OEMs are offering more price points and looking to capture RVers across the camping spectrum. Here are 20 editors' picks for your consideration.

BY JORDAN BENSCHOP, MIKE HARBOUR & JENNIFER KING

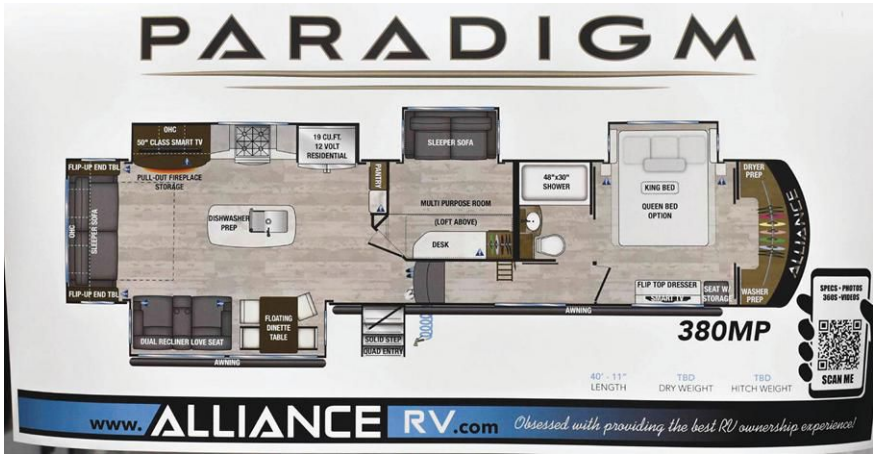
**Disclaimer: As development continues on these new units, features offered by these OEMs are subject to change.*

Alliance RV Paradigm 380MP

Working from the road – or having a separate space for kids – is now easier with the Alliance Paradigm 380MP's multipurpose room, which includes a sleeper sofa with a loft bed and desk. The king bed at the rear, plus another sleeper sofa in the living space, provides plenty of sleeping options in this fifth wheel.

Additional features:

- Length: 40 feet, 11 inches
- GVWR: 16,800 pounds
- 19-cubic-foot, 12V refrigerator
- Floating dinette table
- 50-inch smart TV in living space
- Flip-top dresser in bedroom
- 48-inch by 30-inch shower
- 3 A/C units standard
- Super G-Range 14-PLY tires
- MORryde CRE-3000 Suspension System
- MORryde heavy-duty 1/2-inch thick shackles and wet bolt kit









RV PRO Best New Model 2024

Chinook RV Maverick 360MB



The Murphy bed has been turning any space into a bedroom for almost a century, and now the popular feature is available in Chinook RV's latest model, the Maverick 360MB. Based on a Ford Transit chassis, the B+ coach made its debut at this year's Elkhart Open House.



Besides the main element that lends the unit its name, it also offers:

- Solar panels with 600W capacity
- A trio of Expion360's e360 lithium batteries providing 720 amp-hours of power
- Dual alternators
- On-demand hot water
- Fire suppression system in engine bay and other critical areas
- MSRP: $24,814



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RV PRO Best New Model 2024

Ember RV Overland 240TKR



Ember's Overland Series 240TKR is a trailing-arm, independent suspension, off-road-capable toy hauler. "The entire door side of the unit is an open floorplan for toy and cargo storage, which is convertible into sleeping or living space using our EmberTrack system," says Chris Barth, Ember founder, vice president and COO.

Features include:

- Tandem CURT Independent Suspension setup
- Ramp door
- Repositionable EmberTrack E-track storage system in the interior.
- Front twin/king Murphy bed concept
- Newly upgraded Max Solar Package with a 3,000W Victron inverter and Cerbo GX Communication Center
- 270Ah 12V Battle Born Gamechanger lithium-ion (LiFePO4) battery (with room for an additional battery for a total of 540Ah)
- Two additional roof-mounted 200W solar panels (for 800W total)
- Upgraded Victron Bluetooth MPPT controller
- Cold-weather battery disconnect
- REDARC DC to DC trailer battery charger



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The rear "Do-It-Yourself" cargo area with the EmberTrack™ Bunk/Storage System features two easily removable and repositionable double-bunk composite laminated platforms that can also act as shelves or a desk. A single bunk has a 300# capacity and the double bunk has a 600# capacity. There are also 300# D-ring tie down anchors on the floor. Versatile and adaptable, this system allows customers to change their Ember RV's purpose each trip!



Featured on:

- Overland Series
- Touring Edition
- E-Series

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RV PRO Best New Model 2024

Encore RV VENŪ 10KB

The VENŪ 10KB has a unique shape that helps it stand out from the small adventure trailers offered by other manufacturers. Founding Partner Rich Schnippel explained, “We’re not reinventing the wheel by any means, but we are finding ways to make small trailers feel big, and that’s important to the buyers we’re targeting.”

Additional features:

- Length: under 10 feet
- L-Base kitchen cabinet and solid-surface countertop with undermount sink
- Matching L-Overhead cabinets
- Optional 3.5-cubic-foot 12V refrigerator
- Dinette converts into a bed
- 12V MaxxAir fan
- 21-gallon freshwater tank
- 60-inch by 22-inch frameless curbside window and roadside kitchen window
- Basement A/C with a heat pump
- 32-inch 12V TV and mount
- Off-Road package
- Wood-free construction, all-aluminum frame
- Exterior high-gloss fiberglass from Polser USA backed with Azdel
- One-piece fiberglass roof





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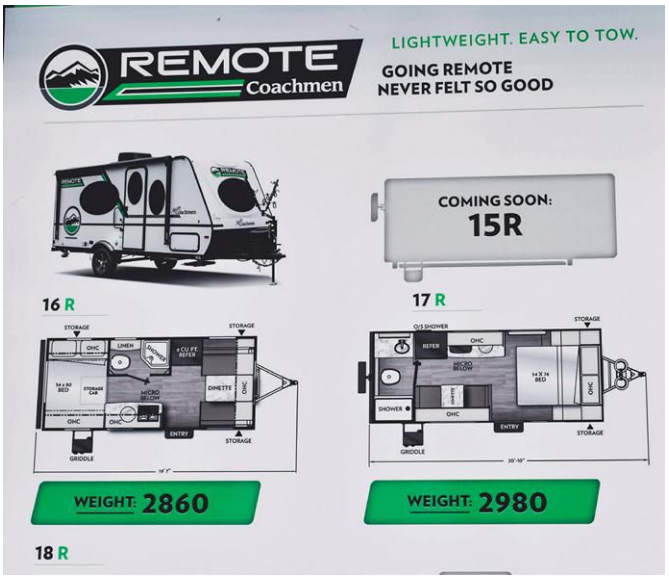
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RV PRO Best New Model 2024

Forest River

Coachmen RV Apex REMOTE



Originally designed as an adventure camper, Coachmen's 2024 Apex REMOTE lineup is coming to the small, off-grid market to give travelers a traditional RV experience in a 7-foot-wide travel trailer with a weight class of 3,500 pounds and below.

Additional features:

- Updated exterior look – large, circular windows and green LED lights
- Length: 22 feet and under
- Optional Super Solar package – 3 panels totaling 650W, 2,000W inverter, lithium-ion battery and 40-amp control charger
- Standard all-terrain tires, cast iron griddle, bike rack and TST TPMS system
- Two-person dinette
- Standard queen bed with outlets on either side
- Non-slide models weigh under 3,000 pounds
- Three fully developed models with more anticipated in 2024



RVPRO
Best New Model
2024

REMOTE
Coachmen

- Designed for the 3,000 lb. sweet spot
- Standard features: 12V Heat Pads, All Terrain Tires, and Bike Rack
- Traditional Box with Teardrop Weights
- Super Solar Option lets you go "unplugged"
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RV PRO Best New Model 2024

Forest River

East to West Ahara 390DS



With king-size double bedrooms and two full baths, East to West's new Ahara fifth wheel fits the entire family with ease. A large loft above the unit's rear suite is the perfect space to entertain the kids, and a spacious living area makes a comfortable camping experience for all.

Additional features include:

- 102-inch wide body frame
- Length: 42 feet, 10 inches
- Drop-frame pass-through storage
- 16-foot awning plus 10-foot, 6-inch awning off living area
- Standard three A/C systems
- 64 gallons freshwater, 88 gallons blackwater, 132 gallons greywater
- 5,100 BTU furnace
- 50-inch TV with fireplace and hidden storage
- 16-cubic-foot, 12V refrigerator
- Stackable washer/dryer prep
- 30-inch by 48-inch shower with skylight, plus 30-inch by 36-inch shower in rear suite







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EAST TO WEST



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RVPRO
Best New Model
2024



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RV PRO Best New Model 2024

Forest River

Riverstone Legacy 4513DST



The newest toy hauler to hit Forest River's Riverstone brand is as versatile as a hauler gets, with a new pass-through window between the kitchen and garage to make entertaining a breeze. Ample space to store toys can transform into a living area with a drop-down queen bed, removable carpet flooring and an 11-foot, 6-inch awning off the garage.



Additional features include:

- 21-foot awning
- Cargo capacity of 5,400 pounds
- Length: 45 feet, 1 inch
- Dry weight: 18,415 pounds
- GVWR: 24,000 pounds
- Double theater sofas
- Full-size Insignia oven
- Entertainment center with TV, fireplace and hidden storage
- 72-inch by 80-inch king bed
- 40-inch TV with dresser below
- Washer/dryer prep
- MSRP: $222,186

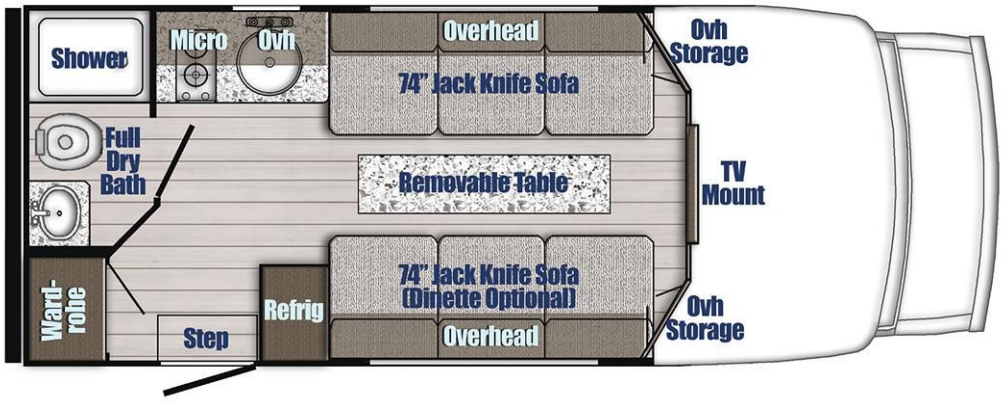


Gulf Stream Coach BT Touring Cruiser 5220

With seating for eight (including a removable table), this new floorplan from Gulfstream is a great option for tailgating and couples camping, of course. Fans of Chevy will be happy to see the BT Touring Cruiser on a Chevrolet gas chassis for this B+.

Features include:

- Length: 22 feet, 6 inches
- Width: 96 inches
- 19,000 BTU furnace
- Full dry bath
- Two 74-inch jackknife sofas and optional dinette
- Rear entry door
- Sleeps 2, seatbelts for 8

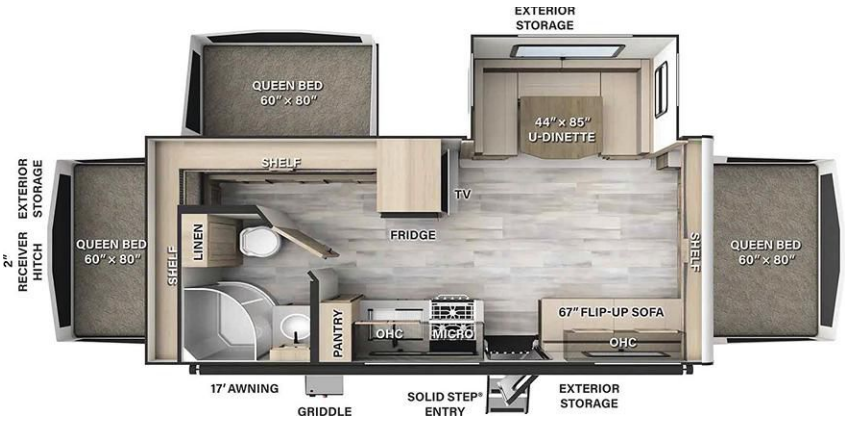






Forest River

Rockwood Roo/ Flagstaff Shamrock



Whether you're looking for more interior space or the feel of a traditional travel trailer, the new Rockwood Roo and Flagstaff Shamrock 233S will give you both. With the potential to sleep 10 people in a coach that weighs just over 5,000 pounds, this popular floorplan is back and updated for 2024.

Additional features include:

- Three expandable 60-by-80-inch queen beds with bunk fan/light combo
- Slide out featuring 44-by-85-inch U-shaped dinette
- 67-inch flip-out sofa
- 17-foot power awning with LED lighting
- Outdoor griddle with LP hookup
- Sedona wood cabinets and drawers with residential hardware
- 35,000 BTU ducted furnace, 15,000 BTU ducted air conditioner
- 200W roof solar panel with 1,800W inverter
- Electronically controlled heated holding tanks
- TST TPMS system with monitor
- 3-burner gas range, 21-inch gas oven and double bowl kitchen sink





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ROCKWOOD *Flagstaff*



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Grand Design RV Influence 4003BH

With a fold-down bunk, a tri-fold sofa, an additional bunk and a queen bed (king bed optional), the new Influence 4003BH from Grand Design has room for the whole family plus a couple friends. Outstanding features include a sleek, minimalistic exterior and fun touches like a free-standing dinette and a pull-out pet dish beneath the 16-cubic-feet, 12V refrigerator.

Additional features:

- Length: 40 feet, 3 inches
- Outdoor kitchen
- Half bath in bunkroom
- Built-in desk and dresser in bunkroom
- Freestanding dinette
- MORryde CRE3000 Suspension
- 17.5-inch wheels with Cooper H-Rated tires
- Stealth A/C race track ducting
- Electric auto-leveling
- 14.5-inch awning
- No carpet on slides or upper deck
- Pantry storage
- Evenflow ductless heating vent system
- Roller shade window coverings
- Rear hitch with 5-pin plug
- MORryde entry steps
- Front and rear entry







Grand Design RV Serenova 150BH

The Serenova travel trailer is a brand-new offering from Grand Design and the 150BH floorplan offers a fun option for families. The unit offers a tankless water heater, high-efficiency air conditioner and panoramic front window.

Additional features:

- Length: 19 feet, 11.75 inches
- Height: 8 feet, 10 inches
- Universal docking station
- 200W solar panel
- 30-amp charge controller and inverter prep
- Dinette seating
- 38-inch by 81.5-inch bunk beds
- 12-inch awning
- Power entry step
- Observation cameras (3)
- European polyvision windows with integrated privacy shades
- Goodyear Endurance tires







RV PRO Best New Model 2024

inTech RV Black Wing

Offered in two floorplans, the 722 and the 828, inTech's Black Wing concept trailer is an eye-catching off-road RV that is ready to play in the mud and haul any manner of toys. Comfortable sleeping options make the adventure even better.

Additional features:

- Length: the 828 is 28 feet; the 722 is 22 feet, 6 inches
- GWVW: 5,980 pounds for the 722; 8,000 pounds for the 828
- 14-foot or 12-foot power awning
- Drop-down bunk for the 722
- The 828 has an exterior kitchen, including refrigerator, a Happi Jack bed and a 3.6 KW generator









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RV PRO Best New Model 2024



KZ RV

Venture RV SportTrek Touring Edition

Venture RV is growing its product range in 2024 with its first-ever fifth wheel, the SportTrek Touring Edition. Debuting pass-through storage with more than 185 cubic feet of space, the new lineup will offer four floorplans set to hit dealer lots in the late fall.

"Customers have been asking for this for a long time and we're excited to give people what they want," said Dave Boggs, Venture RV general manager.

- Bedroom with king-size bed, large dresser with fireplace, four closets and a window seat
- Oversized bathroom vanity with 30-by-48-inch fiberglass shower
- Large outside kitchen with standard 40-inch TV
- Two awnings totaling more than 28 feet
- Large pantry with oversized drawers, adjustable shelves and a wine rack
- 50-inch smart TV with theater seats and storage in living area
- Standard Goodyear tires
- Length: 37 feet
- 11,210 pounds





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- Augments the suspensions of the tow vehicle & trailer
- Backup without disconnecting
- Limited lifetime warranty



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Tongue Weights: 600, 800, 1000, 1300 lbs.

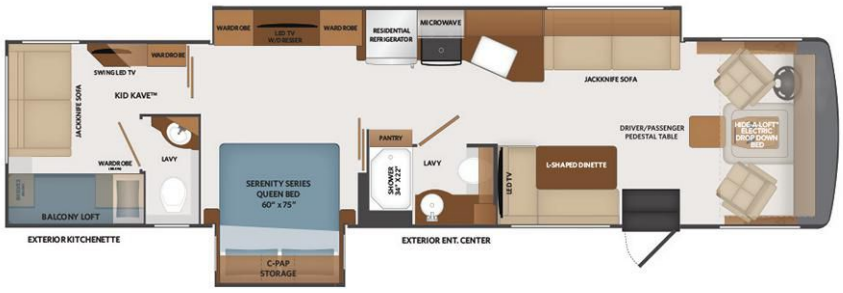
- **Rigid L-brackets provide additional points of friction**
- Caster in the hitch head constantly centers the trailer
- Augments the suspensions of the tow vehicle & trailer
- Backup without disconnecting
- Limited lifetime warranty

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RV PRO Best New Model 2024

REV Group

Fleetwood RV Fortis 36Y



Coming new to Fleetwood RV's gas Class A motorhome lineup is the 36Y floorplan to set a new standard for family-friendly with its "Kid Kave." The rear hideaway features a balcony loft, jackknife sofa, swing LED TV, wardrobe and a half bath. There's room for the whole family with an additional queen bed and electric drop-down bed above the driver/passenger seats.



Additional features include:

- Exterior entertainment center with 50-inch LED TV
- L-shaped dinette and additional jackknife sofa
- Residential appliances and ample pantry storage
- 8,000-pound towing capacity
- 335-horsepower engine, 468 pound-feet of torque at 3,000 RPM
- Smartphone-based climate control
- Exterior kitchenette with microwave, griddle and sink
- Driver/passenger pedestal table
- C-PAP storage above the primary bed

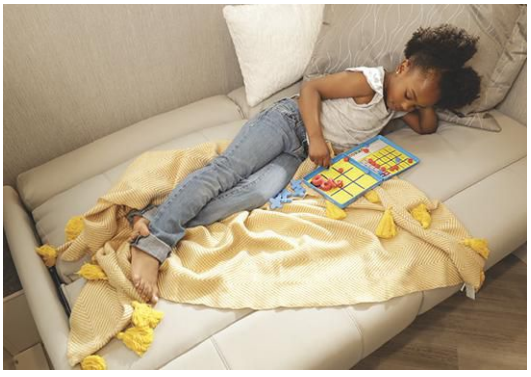




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A tradition of award-winning innovation and dependability continues with the 2024 Fortis 36Y.
Featuring the exclusive Kid Kave™ with the a loft-bed and jack-knife sofa, the 36Y is equipped for adventures of all sizes.

Learn more about the Fortis 36Y and see the entire 2024 Fleetwood line-up at FleetwoodRV.com

RV PRO Best New Model 2024

Storyteller Overland HILT



Coined the official adventure truck of "wild-at-heart trailblazers everywhere," Storyteller's newest debut is eye-catchingly rugged, yet offers all the creature comforts with a warm interior. Designed to withstand the elements, the unit is insulated with up to 2 inches of closed cell foam, and also has a zero torsion subframe so the capsule moves independently from the chassis.



- Length: 27 feet
- RAM 5500 chassis with 6.7-L diesel power
- 1,325W of solar power and two 3,000W inverters, plus 16.8 kWh lithium-ion batteries
- Hydraulic smart suspension system
- Closed-cell acoustic and thermal insulation
- 360-degree, full spectrum trail lights
- 120 gallons freshwater, 40 gallons greywater (electrically heated)
- Loft queen bed with 3.7 cubic feet of bin storage, 110V outlets and wireless charging stations
- Large dinette that converts into 60-by-78-inch queen bed
- Dual induction cooktop and stainless steel refrigerator/freezer
- Wet bath with shower, sink and flushable cassette toilet



THOR – Jayco

Highland Ridge RV Open Range 189RG

The 189RG floorplan for Highland Ridge's Open Range offers all the technology bells and whistles in a lightweight travel trailer. With roomy storage options over the queen bed and a jackknife sofa, the comfortable modern interior is perfect for weekend getaways.

Additional features:

- GVWR: 6,400 pounds
- Length: 25 feet, 2 inches
- Jackknife sofa
- 60-inch-by-80-inch queen bed
- 16-foot power awning
- Xtend Solar II Package with two 200W solar panels with 30-amp solar controller, 1800W inverter
- Electric stabilizer jacks
- Theater seats with table trays
- Freestanding table and four chairs or two chairs plus a bench
- 15,000 BTU roof-mounted A/C
- JBL Aura Cube stereo with Bluetooth and miZONE technology
- JPL Premium indoor and outdoor multizone speakers







RV PRO Best New Model 2024

THOR

Keystone RV Outback 296URK



With a panoramic view and an office desk, Keystone's new Ultra-Lite travel trailer offers top-notch views through three windows in its rear kitchen. The lineup was translated from the Outback Premium into smaller, ultra-lightweight floorplans, with the newest 296URK offering RVers an open layout that sleeps up to six people.



- Fully walkable 3/8-inch roof decking and 1-piece TPO membrane
- Painted fiberglass front cap with LED strip lights and rock guard
- 54 gallons freshwater, 60 gallons greywater, 30 gallons blackwater
- Standard prep for back-up camera, cargo rack and solar
- Fiberglass-backed linoleum floor with no carpet
- 78-inch arched interior ceilings and extra-tall slide height
- Dream Dinette with max storage
- Dual 30-pound propane bottles with auto changeover
- 10-cubic-foot, 12V GE refrigerator
- 60-by-74-inch queen bed with built-in pet kennel storage



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SPRINTER
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BEST OF SHOW: SPRINTER 3810QBS

No one builds better RVs for families than Keystone Sprinter. Every detail of the Sprinter Limited 3810QBS 100" wide body, quad bunk is finessed for big group camping including two baths, endless storage, and expansive outdoor living.

OUTBACK
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BEST OF SHOW: OUTBACK 296URK

The completely redesigned 2024 Outback travel trailers once again set the standard for style. The stunning views from the 296URK's wraparound kitchen are just the start of this no-compromises floorplan which also includes a workspace, kitchen island, and storage for days.

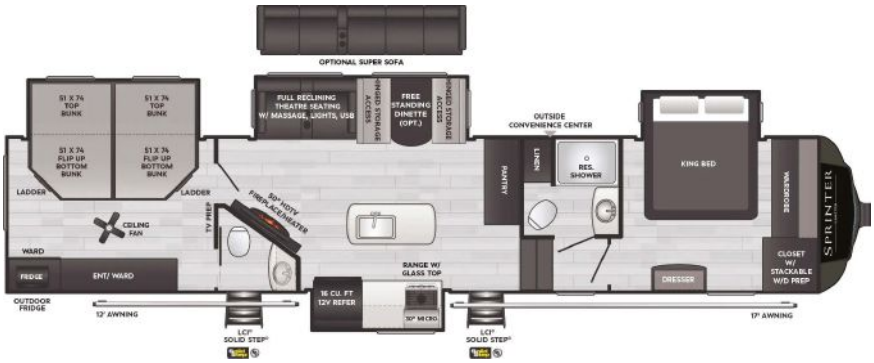




RV PRO Best New Model 2024

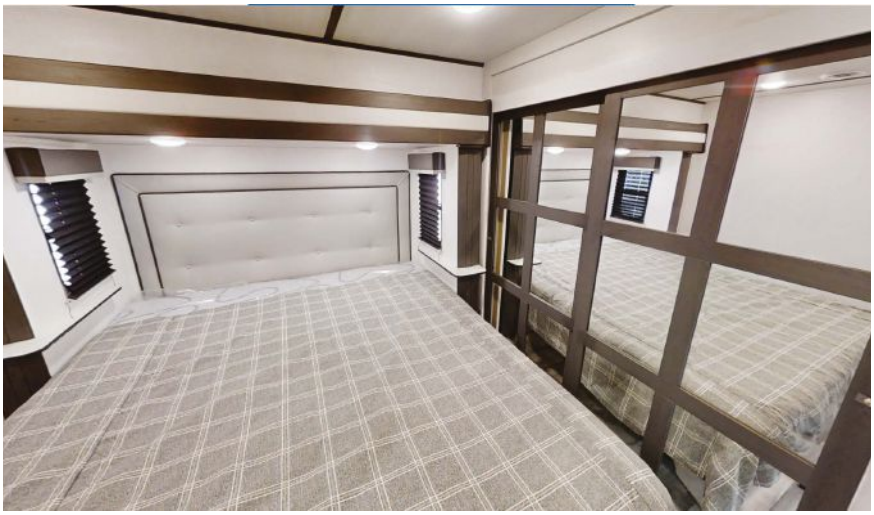
THOR

Keystone RV Sprinter 3810QBS



Keystone's newest Sprinter fifth wheel with a bunkroom loft can fit double the family with two full baths, dual sinks in the primary bedroom and four bunk beds in the coach's rear. The 100-inch wide-body frame offers two separate entrances and double awnings.





- 2-inch aluminum framed and laminated sidewalls
- Heated pass-through storage with lockable slam latch baggage doors
- Dual layer insulation and standard thermal package (performs from 0-100 degrees)
- 4-point leveling system with return hookup memory
- Fully walkable roof
- Congoleum vinyl flooring with one-piece, marine-grade decking
- 80-inch interior height and crown molding
- 22-inch deep drawers with full extension guides in kitchen
- Optional legless dinette with four chairs and storage
- Two A/C units and 30,000 BTU furnace
- Entertainment center with HD LED TV, soundbar, exterior TV hookup and speakers
- 16-cubic-foot, 12V refrigerator
- Washer/dryer prep with optional install
- Four 51-by-74-inch bunks with flip-up bottoms

TrailManor SPORT 2720QB

This lightweight, low-profile travel trailer from South Dakota manufacturer TrailManor has two beds that pop out on the sides – a queen and a double bed. When fully open, the unit is 27 feet in length, but when folded up for storage, it reduces down to just 18 feet and can fit inside a standard 20-foot garage.

Additional features

- Dry weight: 2,960 pounds
- Dinette: 48 inches by 78 inches
- 13,500 BTU A/C
- 20,000 BTU furnace
- 3-cubic-foot refrigerator
- Off-road tires
- Awning with LED lights
- 2.5-inch lift kit
- Custom roof rack
- Laveo dry-flush toilet
- Microwave/air fryer combo
- Outdoor 17-inch griddle plus 12V six-pack cooler

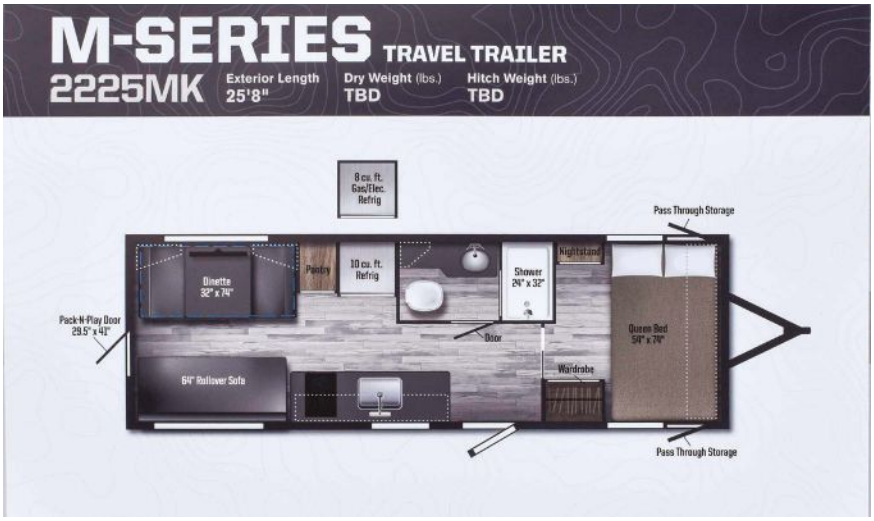








Winnebago M Series







Adam Christoffersen, general manager in Winnebago's towables division, says Winnebago's new M Series is "the perfect towable." "Based off the success of our current Micro Minnie, the M Series offers the same quality build and innovative floorplans you come to expect from Winnebago, at an affordable price – starting MSRP of $27,860," Christoffersen says in a recent Winnebago news release.

Additional features:

- Three compact floorplans: the 2326RK, 2225MK and 2326MBBH
  - The 2346RK and 2225MK both feature queen beds and a jackknife or rollover sofa, while the 2326MBBH has a Murphy bed and bunk beds
- Lengths are 26 feet, 7 inches to 25 feet, 8 inches
- Dry weights are less than 5,000 pounds
- All three models include dinette seating
- Large shower, ample storage
- Standard 10-cubic-foot, 12V refrigerator
- Optional 8-cubic-foot gas/electric refrigerator
- Factory-supplied solar on each floorplan
- 11-inch awning
- GVWR: 6,000 pounds
- JPL Premium indoor and outdoor multizone speakers

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Nova Scotia's Go-To for FIFTH WHEELS & TRAVEL TRAILERS

Bluenose RV Centre's owner Mike Porter sets the scene for RVers in the Great White North.

BY STEPHANIE PATRICK

Named after the famous Nova Scotian sailing schooner known for never losing a race, Bluenose RV Centre anchors nearly 50 years of success on its commitment to serving the outdoor travel needs of its Maritime province in the LaHave River area.

"We do sell things to those in Newfoundland, we sell to people in New Brunswick [and] we have customers in Prince Edward Island," says Mike Porter, Bluenose's longtime owner. "But the bulk of the business comes from Nova Scotia."

Porter says both Bridgewater-based Bluenose's longevity and its devotion to Grand Design brands such as Imagine, Transcend Xplor, Solitude and Reflection travel trailers and fifth wheels appeal to families seeking fun in the province's parks on the beach – the majority of the dealership's customer base. So much so, Bluenose's inventory grew from 50 to 60 units at a time in 2001, to about 150 units at any time now.

Also on the lot are Sandpiper fifth wheels from Forest River, Northern Spirit from Coachmen, Canada-based RV Care's exclusive line of travel trailers and several other brands. All are chosen by Bluenose for three-season use.

"The majority of our customers are young families with kids," says Porter, a father of five. "They are no different than I am; they are trying to get their kids off of their tablets and their phones."

A FAMILY AFFAIR

At Bluenose, its longtime neighbors selling to their friends – many of whom are repeat customers between ages 35 and 55. Two of Bluenose's three-person sales team, Kristen Turner and Adrian Gladwin, have been with the dealership for more than 15 years. New employee Bill McConnell replaced an employee who retired last year after years with Bluenose.

Shop foreman Royden Naugler joined Bluenose in 1989, and warranty administrator Janice Worth has been with the dealership more than 15 years. Parts manager Richard Thomson also has more than 15 years with Bluenose.

"It's important that customers recognize that people are happy here," he says. "It's part of feeling welcome."

The result: Bluenose has been able to reach annual revenue north of $15 million (about $11 million in the U.S.), Porter says. That's in a province of just over 1 million people, according to novascotia.ca.com – roughly equivalent to the populations



of Delaware or San Jose, California, worldpopulationreview.com's statistics reveal.

A lifelong camping enthusiast whose family owned travel trailers, Porter joined Bluenose in 2001 as the dealership's first finance employee. He moved into general management a few years later before purchasing the dealership from its original owners in 2014. Bluenose originally opened in 1975.

All of Porter's children, ages 9 to 23, have helped at the dealership while growing up. The two oldest graduated from college and moved on to other careers. Porter's daughter Hannah, 18, became a service tech three years ago and was scheduled to complete RV Technical Institute's Level 1 service tech training in September. She is Bluenose's first female service tech.

"She's always been that kid who sort of takes things apart and puts them back together," Porter says of Hannah. Fixing back-up cameras is one of her best skills, he adds.

CAPTURING CANADIAN RVERS

Much of the Porters' attention now is on expansion. Plans are to relocate Bluenose to a nearly 20,000-square-foot building in nearby Cookville in early 2024, although a specific date is not set. The new store will include a full RV showroom in front with a large parts and accessories display area, a coffee bar, customer lounge and four camping spots for customers. The dealership will also boast 10 service bays, eight of which will be drive-through.

"We will also feature a level display area for all new and pre-owned units, all accessible for customers to view at their leisure," Porter says.

Bluenose is sales-focused because Canada's outdoor travel season usually only lasts from May until Canadian Thanksgiving in October, requiring six bays to be used solely to repair units sold by the dealership. The expanded service department could allow for some outside service work in the future.

"I am big on training…propane certifications and keeping up with tech training," says Porter, who recently sent three techs to Ontario for training. "[With] the technology that's going into trailers now and different components, training is very important.

"Fixing it right the first time is important."

Bluenose will use eight more acres, with another 40 acres or so planned for growth. It's the Porters' first land purchase, as the current property is leased from the dealership's original owners.

The new location will offer on-site golf carts for customers with mobility issues to use and will feature several environmental additions to help limit Bluenose's footprint, including cisterns to harvest rainwater for use when washing units.

"I wanted to design something that [is] going to be a destination for campers and RVers," says Porter, who worked with Hannah on the shop's initial plans.

Often referred to as Main Street of the South Shore, a recent planning review of Bridgewater projects predicts the town's population will reach 10,000 by 2036 – up from about 8,700 now.





Porter says the rise of interest rates does affect Bluenose and the community, but they often don't experience economic volatility as much as businesses and towns in both Canada's western and the oil-rich provinces. However, he is assessing Bluenose's product offerings into 2025 and looking for manufacturers that are quick to solve customers' problems.

Grand Design and RV Care brands will stay, he says, because both make extra efforts to look after both customers and dealers. That includes honoring warranties and continuing to search for answers to customers' issues.

"Our customers are looked after, whether they are in Canada or Connecticut," Porter says.

While other potential offerings were not mentioned, one thing is certain – don't look for new motorhomes on Bluenose's lot.

"Travel trailers and fifth wheels," Porter says. "That's what the majority of Atlantic Canada is." RVP

The Art of Trendy Fabrics

How Richloom taps into what's hot to be a must-have supplier in the industry.

BY JOHN MCCURRY



Michael Saivetz and Meta Steeb

Home furnishings specialist Richloom hopes to grow its RV business substantially in the coming years. The New York City-headquartered company currently does business with more than 90% of RV brands.

"Our goal is for sales to the RV industry to encompass 25% of our overall business," says Michael Saivetz, Richloom's president and chief operating officer. "In 2021 it hit almost 40%. It was a very good year. As trends in home furnishings evolve, and as more people are using RVs, we have the opportunity to grow. It will depend on our ability to constantly integrate new technology into the industry."

Saivetz describes Richloom's current RV business as "doing OK," but not what it was during 2021 and 2022.

"We definitely had the pandemic bump, which was remarkable and excellent," he says. "I would say we are on pace with the industry. We track how far the industry is up or down every year, and we look at our textile fabric sales accordingly. We are trending with the industry. We obviously would like it to be bigger, but we are well positioned for when the industry does increase. We are beginning to see a bit of it now."

Richloom sources its fabrics globally, from reliable suppliers in China, India, Pakistan and Turkey. About 90% of its RV fabrics are produced in China.

Richloom sets itself apart from other fabric manufacturers with its diversity, according to Saivetz. It is a large family-run company that also supplies fabrics for residential upholstery, hospitality businesses, outdoor products and decorative fabrics.

"Allowing for the breadth of products and utilizing all the company has to offer differentiates us from others," Saivetz says. "The hands-on approach and the ability to execute special projects sets us apart."

Richloom has stringent requirements for its fabric suppliers. Fabrics go through many tests before being released to the market. New suppliers must go through an audit process before being given an order.

The company boosted its manufacturing capabilities near the end of 2019 with the purchase of Chambers Fabrics, a weaving company in High Point, North Carolina. The 150,000-square-foot plant, now known as Richloom Weaving, specializes in upholstery-weight, performance and decorative fabrics. The company's domestic upholstery business has doubled each year since the acquisition, and its RV customers are now buying fabrics made there.

"We have a dedicated development



(left to right) Gay Eby, Krista Horn and Meta Steeb

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by PullRite

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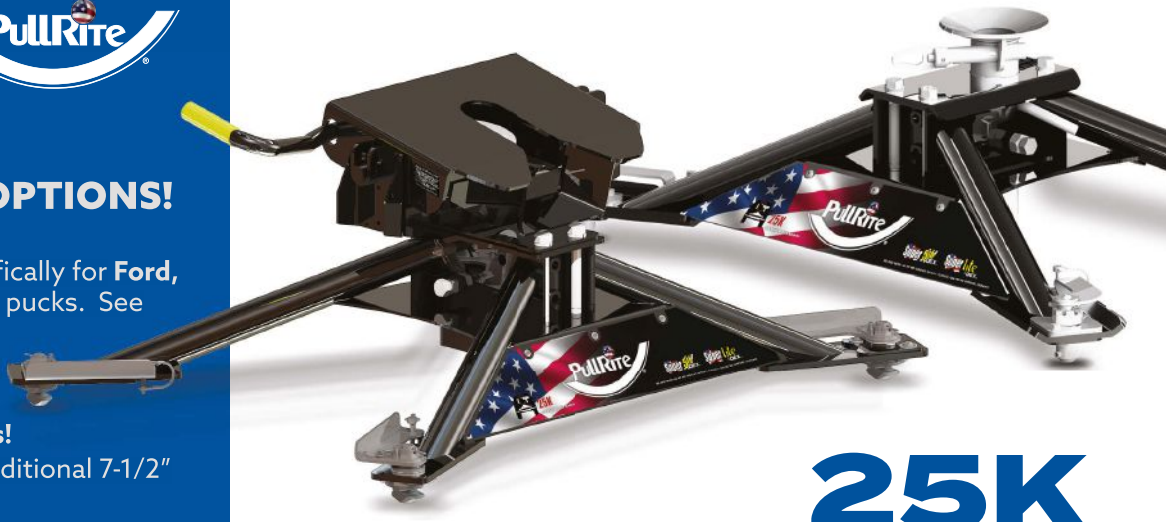
- » SuperLite's Remote Latch Handle is designed to reach the Release Latch from a lowered tailgate
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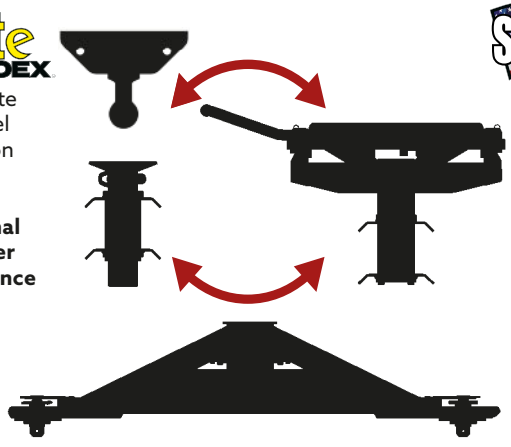
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OEX SuperLite Ball & Funnel Configuration

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Super 5th OEX

OEX Super 5th Hitch Plate Configuration

4" additional cab-to-trailer turning clearance



PART#	DESCRIPTION	LIFTING WEIGHT
#4700	#4700 25K OEX SUPER 5TH FOR 2010-2023 FORD	101 lbs. (head rmvd.)
#4715	#4715 25K OEX SUPERLITE FOR 2010-2023 FORD	85 lbs.
#4800	#4800 25K OEX SUPER 5TH FOR 2013-2023 RAM	116 lbs. (head rmvd.)
#4815	#4815 25K OEX SUPERLITE FOR 2013-2023 RAM	100 lbs.
#4900	#4900 25K OEX SUPER 5TH FOR 2020-2024 GM	94 lbs. (head rmvd.)
#4915	#4915 25K OEX SUPERLITE FOR 2020-2024 GM	78 lbs.

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team in our Shanghai office," says Meta Steeb, Richloom's design director for RV and manufactured housing. "It is a very streamlined process. I do the design work here, working closely with our Shanghai team, and they work closely with the manufacturers. Michael and I have traveled to China many times, so we know our suppliers well."

Relationships within the RV world are key, and perhaps now more important than ever. Understanding what each of the brands want and their focal point in the market is crucial.

"We have multiple customers for everything we do," Saivetz says. "Communication is key, early on in a project and early on in the model year, outlining with what our capabilities are, what their demand is going to be and what their expectations are."

Richloom typically unveils a new line of fabrics about every six months, and a new line is planned for this fall. Steeb works closely with interior designers for RV manufacturers during the fabric development process. Richloom's design team keeps close watch on trends in home furnishings. She says Richloom's designers are seeing a lot of exaggerated textures, earthy tones and wood tones.

"We have everything from off-white to warm chocolate. This palette has been on the sidelines for a number of years, because the interior palette has been dominated by grays. We also look at the tile floors and cabinets. We need to make sure we follow all of these trends. At the end of the day, in the RV unit, you have your living room and kitchen and bedroom all within the same room, so that is important. People want warm and cozy, but with lighter tones than before. We are seeing a lot of blonde woods in the cabinetry and flooring."

Steeb notes that RV furniture is built-in, making it difficult to change, so that is something she keeps in mind in the design process.

"RV units are small, so it is easy to overwhelm those spaces," she says. "Even a small unit is a major financial



investment. We want to have timeless décor that will last for the customer.

"Another thing we keep in mind is that this is an extension of your home. What we have seen develop as a new trend since the pandemic is the need for a home office in an RV. People spend so much time in their RVs traveling, and remote work is here to stay, so a lot of

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manufacturers are now incorporating this element into the RV."

Color and texture trends have life cycles as they progress from residential furniture to RV interiors. Steeb and her team monitor this progression.

"If we follow a life cycle of a trend, for example, Pantone announces a color of the year, and first it becomes a fad, then it shows up in fashion," Steeb says. "Then residential will pick it up in some of their elements, but it is toned down to a more neutral shade, and it begins to be available in commercial goods. We have to adjust to make them work in small spaces."

Steeb says Richloom considers itself as a one-stop shop for RV builders.

"Whoever comes into our showroom can select everything, from fabric for furniture to valances. The vinyl always has the largest array of colors. We are also introducing a ton of new solids for bedding. The trend for bedding is going more solid, especially linen colors and linen textures. We spice it up with bolder colors for pillows or a valance, to give an accent that differentiates."





Count Richloom among the growing number of fabric-makers striving to eliminate per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the "forever chemicals" that have long been used in textile finishing. Saivetz says Richloom decided to be on the forefront of this movement, and began to eliminate all PFAS chemicals from water repellant or soil release products.

"We are prepared for the time when there is a national regulation. We are also a member of the National Council of Textile Organizations, so we are kept up to date with the regulations around the country. Our commitment to the industry was that we wanted to be done with PFAS chemicals by the end of 2022, and we did achieve that goal." RVP



Dura Faucet Stays Ahead of Design Trends

Connecting with designers and home builders helps this RV faucet company deliver on what's "in."

BY RONNIE WENDT









Dura Faucet's website proclaims the company eats, breathes and sleeps RV faucets. In an interview with Darrell Higgins, general manager for Dura Faucet, it appears this isn't an exaggeration.

Not only does the Camas, Washington-based company offer faucets to individual RV owners through aftermarket distributors and RV dealers, but it also supplies faucets to RV manufacturers. Its faucets can be found in RVs from Jayco to Grand Design and Keystone RV.

Though Higgins has been with the company for almost 20 years, he says Dura Faucet actually has a much longer history.

"We have been in the plumbing industry for over 25 years," Higgins says. "And the founder of our company has over 40 years of experience in the residential plumbing industry. So, we have always had our hands in the plumbing industry in one way or another."

Not only that, but Dura Faucet focuses on faucets and only faucets, he adds.

"We only do faucets, and we've been doing faucets for a long time," he says. "A lot of other competitors offer great products, but they focus on other products, too. Our total focus on faucets is one thing that really sets us apart. Because we're also in the residential market, we are always on the frontlines of new trends in fixtures."

Designed for RVs

A key consumer complaint in the RV industry has long been that RVers want their faucets to look like the ones in their homes. But all too often, Higgins says, they look anything but.

Even when they look the same, he says, underneath the RV sink they are very different. Designed to fit with RV plumbing, they often have flexible hose connections versus actual pipes. In contrast, a residential faucet has metal, threaded connectors that enable it to connect to threaded metal pipes and hoses. To use these faucets in an RV, he says adapters are usually required.

Dura Faucet has discovered it's far easier to take residential designs and make them RV-ready from the get-go. To keep up with the latest, the company has its designers visit with residential faucet designers and attend home building shows to understand emerging design trends and finishes.

"We try to understand the trends

then develop faucets that incorporate these design trends for the RV industry," he says. "A decade ago, the RV industry was always two or three years behind the residential market. Today, RVers expect to see residential trends in RVs immediately. The gap has narrowed to less than 12 months. Customers and designers are pushing to change to new finishes more quickly."

Dura Faucet meets this need by working with product managers and designers from RV manufacturers to facilitate faucet updates.

"We are in constant conversation with them to find out what they are looking for and to bring our research on designs and finishes to them," he says.

Trends in Finishes

Finishes are an area that is ever-changing, according to Higgins, who notes rubbed bronze and matte black finishes are moving aside as polished nickel, brass and gold finishes make a comeback.

"The finishes are all over the map. We are seeing two-tone, matte black with gold and different shades of gold, from true gold to rose gold," he adds.

One shift coming from the residential market is the popularity of mixed metals. Where once upon a time, mixing different metals together was a faux pas, now consumers want faucets in duotones. A gold faucet with silver handles or a matte black faucet with accents of gold are becoming popular, he says, as are high-shine gold metals versus the matte finishes.

Design Details Abound

Today's faucet designs focus on practicality and integrated design. Consumers also seek a sleek faucet with a customizable finish; one that functions as intended but offers a unique look, Higgins says.

RVers want professional pull-out faucets and models with a high spout and spray faucets with several modes, he adds.

"They want unique handles and



different spray heads," he says. "They want a faucet that's very current but then developed into a design that's a little more unique. That way, when the customer walks into the unit, they see something different instead of seeing the same thing over and over as they walk up and down the dealer's lot. Every RV does not have the same faucet anymore."

Dura Faucet introduces new designs every year to dealer partners and at distributor shows to fill these unique needs. "We always try to innovate and bring out new designs," he says.

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The Inner Workings

Dura Faucet's attention to residential details extends to the inside of the faucet as well, adds Higgins.

"All of our faucets are true residential-grade fixtures," Higgins says. "You could even use our RV faucets in your home. I have five kids, so there are seven of us in our home. I often change out our faucets to test Dura Faucet's new products. They always hold up. Many of our customers ask for our faucets for their homes, too."

The company tests every faucet before it's installed in an RV or shipped to a distributor, and backs all products with a lifetime warranty.

Dura Faucet warrants its RV faucets to be leak- and drip-free during normal use for as long as the original consumer purchaser owns the faucet. If the faucet should leak or drip during normal use, Dura Faucet will, free of charge, mail the cartridge necessary to return the faucet to good working condition.

Dura Faucet also warrants all other aspects of the faucet or accessories to be free of defects in material and workmanship during normal usage in an RV for as long as the original consumer purchaser owns the Dura Faucet. However, faucets with plated metal and plated plastic finishes are warranted for one year.

If a fixture fails, all a customer has to do is contact Dura Faucet's customer service team through the company's online contact form or via email to customerservice@durafaucet.com.

For warranty claims, the company requires all pertinent information regarding the claim, including a complete description of the problem, the product, model number, color, finish, the date the product was purchased and from whom. It also requires the original invoice. Then Dura Faucet will either send a needed part or a new faucet.

"We do all this free of charge to make sure they are happy and taken care of," he says.



Though consumers can replace the faucets themselves, those who are not as tech savvy may want to have the dealership install their replacement faucet, he adds.

"They need to have a little bit of knowledge on how to install a faucet, though we send them directions on how to do it," he says. "Some customers prefer to install the faucets themselves, while others just let the dealer take care of it." RVP



Transforming RV Construction With Adhesives

How new methodologies can produce units that are lighter, stronger and cost-effective.

BY R. DANNY ARCHER AND AARON ROSHECK, HENKEL ADHESIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Over the last decade, there has been a shift in RV construction methodologies with OEMs moving toward adhesives over conventional mechanical fastening for applications such as sidewalls, floors, roofs, slideouts and ceilings, and for numerous substrate materials including wood, aluminum, steel, composites and fiberglass. There are plenty of good reasons for this migration. The advantages of adhesives for both towed and motorized RV designs include factors such as:

Stress Relief: Using mechanical approaches like screws and rivets create stress concentrations at the joining location, leading to reduced strength or total failure. Adhesives distribute stress evenly across the bonded area of the assembly.

Inventory Simplicity: When using screws or rivets, mechanical components of multiple sizes must be inventoried. Adhesive formulations can be used for several vehicle applications, simplifying sourcing, storage and inventory control.

Manufacturing Ease & Automation Capability: Eliminating hole drilling and manual attachment saves time and cost. This is true for lamination, but there are also parts of online final assembly that can potentially be automated, which would further streamline overall production.

Design & Material Flexibility: Screws and welds require specific substrates for robust joining. For example, thermal joining is limited to connecting similar metals. Likewise, screws may not retain mechanical strength with certain substrates. Adhesives can join dissimilar substrate materials, and the variety of formulations delivers extreme design flexibility and choice. [Figure 1]

Aesthetics: Seam-minimization and hole-free sidewalls can be visual benefits of adhesives. Reducing the number of seams and eliminating visible screws can result in a streamlined, aesthetically appealing exterior. Plus, it makes painting and decal application easier. The same holds true for interior walls, cabinetry and decorative finishes. [Figure 2]

Warranty Protection: The more openings there are in the sidewalls, roofs and exteriors, the more opportunity there is for water and moisture ingress. As water penetration is one of the most prevalent warranty claims, reducing its likelihood is advisable. While estimates vary, repair and transportation costs to honor warranty claims can amount to several thousand dollars, which the manufacturer must absorb.

Vehicle Weight: Transitioning to aluminum frames and laminated composite structures from conventional construction (wood and corrugated aluminum walls) for travel trailers and fifth wheels has helped lighten the vehicle's total weight. This can serve two purposes: greater fuel efficiency and/or the ability to construct larger vehicles that comply with towing capacity regulations. Adhesives have aided in these lightweight advances.

The Innovation Journey

These are some of the many compelling reasons that RV OEMs are migrating toward adhesive joining, but it is not the end of the road. As new

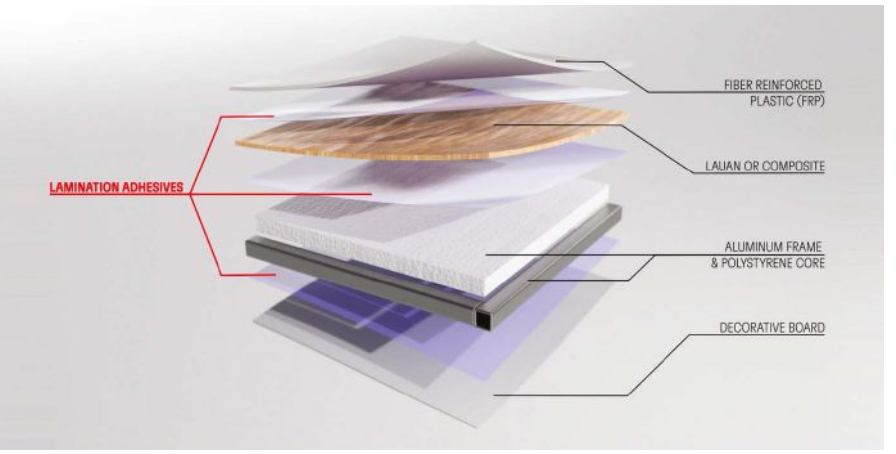


Figure 1: Lamination using robust adhesives allows the bonding of various substrates and elimination of seams, screws and welds.

composite materials are developed to improve strength, durability and weight reduction, innovation in RV assembly materials is more necessary than ever. Next-generation composite and aluminum adhesion are two areas where new developments are proving successful.

New Composites Highlight Sustainability & Adhesive Staying Power

Current composite materials used in sidewall lamination and floor construction are varied, with multiple material types, including wood paneling, fiberglass reinforced polypropylene, high-density foam cores for additional strength and fused thermoplastic composites. However, newer composites are being developed as part of continuous improvement initiatives that will serve to further enhance appearance strength, design flexibility and cost-effectiveness. Generally speaking, composite materials are lighter, water- and corrosion-resistant, UV-resilient, do not promote mold and mildew growth, and some are even recyclable. The strength of newer composites also challenges that of conventional wood.

These factors make for a longer life, a more sustainable solution and highlight the importance of adhesives for robust and versatile structural joining. However, any modifications to substrates for existing trailer and motorized RV designs require significant testing and validation to ensure adhesives are compatible with new materials. To that end, it is advisable to partner with knowledgeable material suppliers with accredited labs for American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) testing to evaluate the best-performing combination of adhesive formulations, structural components and substrates.

By some estimates, aluminum accounts for nearly 30% of an RV wall and is often used in critical areas that may be subjected to high stress. With aluminum as the predominant frame construction material, in addition to its use as a siding and roofing substrate, improving its cost-effectiveness and integration will further support economical assembly protocols.

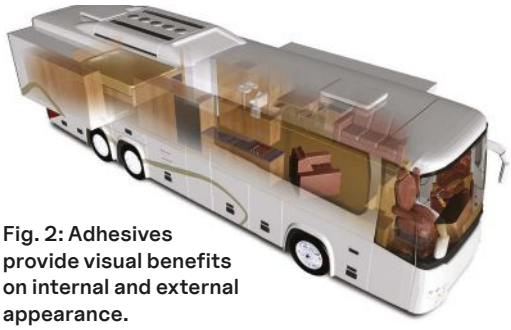


Fig. 2: Adhesives provide visual benefits on internal and external appearance.

To this end, a new single-component, solvent-free, liquid polyurethane adhesive has been developed that provides strong adhesion to aluminum substrates with minimal requirement for pre-treatment. The ability to eliminate or significantly reduce the aluminum conditioning step prior to RV construction improves process time and lowers overall cost.

In lab testing, the novel liquid polyurethane demonstrated superior adhesion to untreated aluminum, outperforming previous-generation products. [Figure 3] It has also shown





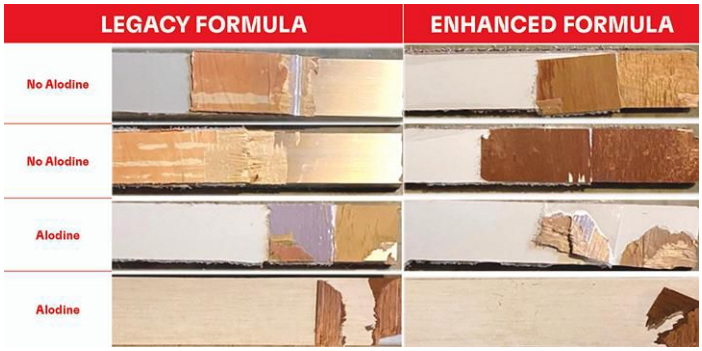


Figure 3: Typically, aluminum requires preconditioning to promote adhesion, but a new liquid polyurethane material enables enhanced adhesion to aluminum without compromising bond strength to the remaining structural substrates. Using a soak-and-peel test, the enhanced formula polyurethane material outperformed previous-generation products on aluminum with and without Alodine conversion coating pretreatment.

increased adhesion to other substrates including fiber-reinforced plastic (FRP), wood, expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam, steel and composite.

Just commercialized earlier this year, this new adhesive is currently being implemented by several leading OEMs. The liquid polyurethane can provide:

- Added perimeter cure strength to offer better overall sealing and water intrusion over time
- Assurance of strong bonds at critical adhesion points such as hitch/gooseneck tubes and slideout header tubes
- Improved seam bonds for décor panels
- Reduced cosmetic maintenance and rework
- More consistent sealing for work-in-progress

Helping Expand the RV Enthusiast Community

Advances in RV construction, modernization of features and affordability have helped develop an RVing culture that has persisted worldwide – and particularly in the West – for decades. During the pandemic, this enriching mode of travel and lodging saw explosive growth and welcomed many first-time RVers as people sought freedom, space and unfettered access to the great outdoors. Ongoing innovation in RV design, production methodologies and affordability – all enhanced with adhesives – will help OEMs continue to attract new generations to RV life. RVP

R. Danny Archer is the lead application engineer for Henkel Adhesive Technologies. Aaron Rosheck is the company's senior application engineer. For more information, visit henkel-adhesives.com.

Camper Jack Primer



How to use camper jacks to lift, lower, support and store a truck camper.

BY RONNIE WENDT

Whether small or large, truck campers can be quite heavy, with the smallest units weighing around 1,000 pounds and the larger ones, with multiple slide units, weighing upward of 5,000 pounds.

A durable and dependable component is essential to lift, lower and support a heavy truck camper. Camper jacks come standard on new truck campers, but occasionally these units do not perform as intended or need replacing. That is not the case for Rieco-Titan products.

The Frankfort, Illinois, company manufactures jacks and linear actuators for use with truck campers and custom applications. Electric camper jacks, convertible camper jacks, mechanical camper jacks, and heavy-duty 2000 tripod jacks are available. The company also offers camper dollies, Stable Stix, pull-down stairs, brackets, extensions, camper jack parts and kits.

"Camper jacks allow camper owners to load and unload their campers. If owners plan to camp for a couple of weeks, they can lower the camper to the ground to take their truck and go," says Rachel Pavin, director of marketing for Rieco-Titan.

TYPES OF JACKS

Industry-wide, truck camper jacks are available in manual and electric versions. Each option has benefits and drawbacks, and the ones ultimately chosen depend on a camper owners' budget, needs and preferences.

Mechanical jacks, which require cranking to adjust the height of the camper, are the most affordable option. These jacks, which have been around for over 50 years, are reliable and durable, but they can be time-consuming and physically demanding to operate.

Susan Habegger, customer service expert for Rieco-Titan, explains the process as follows: Place a crank handle on the shaft of the gearbox, then turn the crank handle clockwise to raise the camper and counterclockwise to lower it. "There is a drill adapter available to crank the mechanical jacks to make the process faster and easier," she says.

Habegger says electric camper jacks are gaining popularity, despite the industry's traditional use of mechanical jacks. "Electric jacks make it very easy to raise and lower the truck camper, compared to using a crank handle on a mechanical jack," she says. "It takes little time at all to unload the camper at the campground and load it back up when it's time to leave."

Electric jacks are pricier than manual jacks but, as Habegger noted, more user-friendly. A motor is used to lift and lower the camper, saving time and effort. However, these jacks can limit camping options because they require a battery or an electrical hookup to operate.

Rieco-Titan recently stopped making hydraulic jacks – these units used hydraulic fluid to raise and lower a camper. But they were also expensive to maintain and repair. "Demand dropped for hydraulic jacks when electric jacks became more popular," she adds.

Rieco-Titan also offers tripod-style, heavy-duty jacks rated at 2,000 pounds with a tripod foot. "These jacks are used when the camper requires support from the bottom," she says. "It all depends on how the mounting brackets are attached to the camper. Electric jacks, for example, would be mounted on a camper corner."

With several options available, choosing a camper jack can get complicated. If the manufacturer installed tripod jacks on the truck camper, Rieco-Titan recommends sticking with them. "They should continue using tripod jacks if a jack gets worn or breaks," she says. "The camper was built for that style jack. If it's a mechanical jack, mounted on the corner, then stick with that style jack. However, this jack could also be switched to an electric jack, because electric jacks are also mounted on the corner."

Accessories such as the company's Speedy Landing Gear can be added to fifth wheels and travel trailers. This technology helps raise and lower the rear to stabilize the camper, Habegger adds.

ADDING AN ELECTRIC JACK

Electric jacks work well on large truck campers. Rieco-Titan's electric jacks offer a 2,500-pound-per-jack capacity and operate via a remote control.

Switching from a mechanical jack to an electric jack is a five-step process:

1. Remove the mechanical jack from the mounting bracket, which is held to the camper with three bolts.
2. Use the same mounting bracket to bolt on the electric jack.
3. Install a 6-inch-by-6-inch receiver, also known as a "brain box," on a wall inside the camper. This is the heart of what operates the electric jack system. Habegger recommends picking a site that's easy to access should the receiver ever need service.
4. Run wires from the jacks on the outside of the camper to the receiver.
5. Hook up the camper battery to the receiver. Now it is ready to operate.

Habegger explains that some OEMs have prewired the inside for an electrical jack, even if they have a mechanical jack on the camper. Some people take it further and install a receiver. "In those cases, you just need to switch out the jacks," she says.

The process is simple enough that a handy RVer could follow instructions and do it themselves, she adds.

PROPER JACK USE

To ensure proper usage and loading/unloading of the camper, Habegger suggests that dealers demonstrate proper use with all chosen jacks. "We recommend that dealers first show the new owner the process, then have them do it themselves before they leave," she says. "Raise and lower the camper off the truck bed so owners can see the entire process and how it's done."

Incorrect use can damage the jacks or the camper itself, Habegger warns. "Damage can result if they don't have the jacks level or the front of the camper higher than the rear at all times as they lift and lower the camper," she says.

According to Habegger, the camper's front should always be 3 inches higher than the rear when raising or lowering it. She says to ensure the front jacks and back jacks are level with each other.

Rieco-Titan Electric Camper Jacks feature a wireless remote control where one button will raise and lower all jacks (or each independently or any combination) to simplify this process. These jacks feature a 2,500-pound capacity per jack, 36 inches of lift, a head that swivels 360 degrees for installation, and a large foot pad for additional stability. Another feature is a receiver box that includes four dual green and red LED lights that light when raising and lowering.

"Our electric jacks use an auto lift button to raise and lower all four jacks together, making it a very simple process," she says. "However, even with electric jacks, you must have the front of the camper 3 inches higher than the rear to let the front jacks catch up to the rear jacks as you raise them."

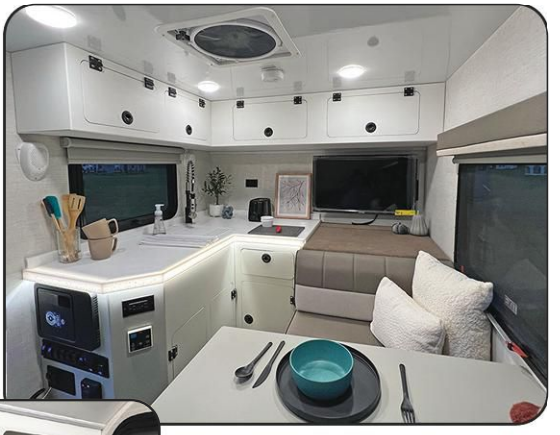
Habegger says owners should be able to see when the camper is level or if the rear is higher than the front. "They need to lower the rear immediately in that case," she says.

Stable Stix are also available to avoid camper tip overs because of incorrect or unstable positioning, high winds or overloading. Truck campers sway while on their jacks, Habegger says, and Stable Stix remove this movement when people are inside the camper.

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MAINTAINING JACKS

No matter the jack, all Rieco-Titan offerings require annual maintenance. The Rieco-Titan website recommends maintaining jacks in the spring before going out camping for the first time.

To maintain jacks, the company recommends raising up the camper and washing jacks with soap and water. If there are any rust spots, sand off the rust, then apply a coat of Rust-Oleum paint to cover the spot. Next apply a coat of liquid wax, such as Turtle Wax.

Rieco-Titan recommends using spray wax monthly to keep jacks looking good but warns this step does not replace annual upkeep. Jacks exposed to dirty and sandy environments, high salt and temperature extremes may need more frequent washing and waxing.

Most garages are not tall enough to store the camper while it's on the truck. For this reason, the Rieco-Titan website recommends storing the camper on a platform as low to the ground as possible. This takes the stress off the camper but keeps the weight on the camper floor, not its sidewalls.

With camper dollies, owners can efficiently store their campers off the ground and away from their trucks. Owners simply unload the camper from their truck to put the dolly underneath. "Ideally, they just want to raise the camper up high enough to get the truck out from underneath," Habegger says.

Next, they roll the dolly underneath the camper and use jacks to lower the camper onto the dolly. The final step is to lower the jacks closer to the floor. The dolly takes most of the weight of the camper, but having jacks on the ground stabilizes it. Now it's ready to store, she says.

Problems can occur if the dolly is not lined up correctly.

"You want to make sure the dolly is lined up to the basement of the camper," she says. "Then take your time as you lower the camper onto the dolly so that if you need to make adjustments, such as move the dolly a little to the left or to the right, you can do that before the camper hits the dolly."



Habegger encourages campers to call the company any time they run into problems. "We are happy to help with whatever they need," she says. "Especially for those camper owners who purchased their truck campers from private parties. We are more than happy to help them learn about the products that are in or on their camper." RVP

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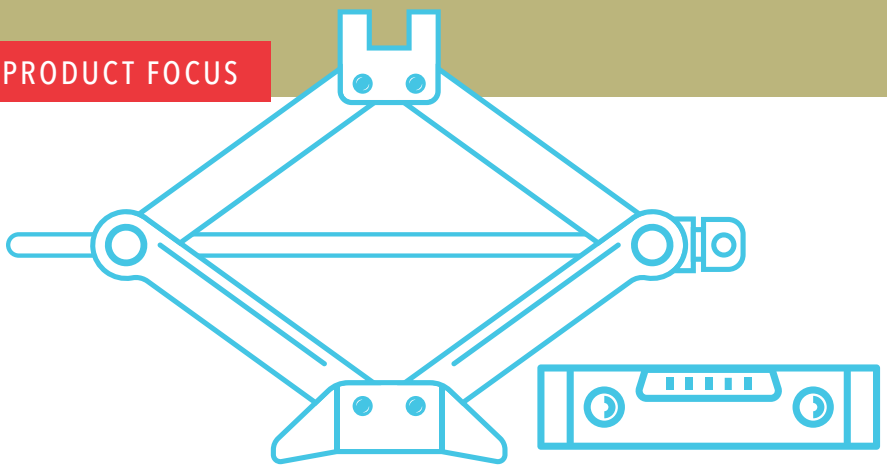
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JACKS & LEVELERS





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Camco, Greensboro, North Carolina, presents its Curved Leveler and Wheel Chock. Level your vehicle effortlessly with Camco's Curved Leveler. This highly durable and lightweight leveler gives you an impressive 4 inches of extra lift, thanks to its innovative honeycomb design. Achieving precise leveling has never been easier – simply drive onto the leveler until you reach your desired height, then secure it with the included nonslip rubber gripped chock. The leveler's compact size makes it ideal for vehicles with tandem wheel spacing. Experience top-notch leveling with this efficient patented leveling system.

camco.net

SWAY CONTROL HITCH

Equal-i-zer Hitch, Provo, Utah, presents its flagship Equal-i-zer Hitch. The original Equal-i-zer Sway Control Hitch has kept families safe on the road for more than 75 years. Manufactured from 100% American-made steel, it is the only hitch with Integrated 4-Point Sway Control. The result is superior sway control performance, weight distribution, quality and ease of use. Towing with America's Favorite Hitch gives you confidence, peace of mind and the best protection for your journey.

equalizerhitch.com





AUTOMATIC LEVELING SYSTEM

EQ Systems, Cassopolis, Michigan, offers its EQ Smart-Level. EQ Systems manufactures hydraulic lifting and leveling systems for the RV, horse trailer, motorsports and commercial industries. EQ Smart-Level is an automatic leveling system that can be configured for most RVs on the market – systems for diesel, Class A, Class C, Class B+, fifth wheels and travel trailers.

eqsystems.us



AUTOMATIC JACK FOOT

Fastway Trailer Products, Provo, Utah, offers its Fastway FLIP Jack Foot. The FLIP Automatic Jack Foot is the faster and easier trailer jack solution. The FLIP effortlessly extends your trailer jack by 4 to 6 inches, eliminating 48 cranks in one direction, saving you time and effort. With twice the contact surface area, there is no need for woodblocks or rocks to put under the trailer jack. Installation takes less than 30 seconds, with no drilling, measuring or tools needed for most installs.

fastwaytrailer.com



TWIST CHOCK

Heng's Industries, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Twist Chock. Now you can use a drill to set up your RV between the wheel stabilizers. With the new Twist Chock, just place it between the tires, use a drill with included adapter to firmly extend the Twist Chock, then twist it into its final position. Faster set up means more time to enjoy.

hengsindustries.com

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AUTOMATIC LEVELING SYSTEM

Lippert, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its Ground Control 3.0 Leveling Kit for prepped units. Did your RV come prepped for the Ground Control 3.0 automatic leveling system by Lippert? Then this is the kit you need to upgrade your rig with ease. In no time, you'll be leveling your RV with the simple push of a button. Lippert's 6-point electric leveling system saves you time setting up your campsite. Plus, it comes equipped with Hall Effect technology, which measures the jack leg's motor revolutions, instead of amps — ensuring accurate leveling for your fifth wheel.

lippert.com

POWER JACKS

NTP-STAG, Exeter, Pennsylvania, presents its Brute Power Jacks. Brute was the first jack in its class to offer a ball screw for low rolling friction, compared to the sliding friction of standard power jacks with ACME screws. Rolling friction means the motor works less, draws less amperage, creates less heat, reduces noise and increases motor and jack life. A ball screw is standard on all Brutes.

viantp.com





SCISSOR JACK ADAPTER KIT

RV SnapPad, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, offers its SnapJack SJ. After years of development, the company presents SnapJack SJ – a complete SnapPad adapter kit for scissor jack stabilizers. With a premium, custom metal foot, a pre-installed SnapPad and all the hardware you need to make the switch, SnapJack SJ will take your scissor jack from average to awesome.

rvsnappad.com



ELECTRIC JACK

Rieco-Titan Products, Frankfort, Illinois, offers its Electric Jack. The Electric Jack is built with quality to meet your needs for the life of your camper. The jack has a 2,500-pound capacity per camper jack and 36 inches plus lift. The head swivels 360 degrees for ease of installation. The powerhead is weatherproof sealed, and the jack is painted in powder coat to resist corrosion. The footpad is large and strong for added stability.

riecotitan.com









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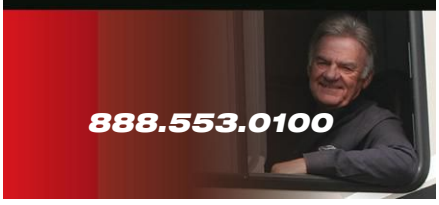
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JACK PADS

RoadWarrior RV Jack Pads by DICA, Urbandale, Iowa, presents its RoadWarrior Jack Pads. All RoadWarrior Jack Pads manufactured by DICA are made in the USA, and are designed for use with all jack types, including manual, electric and hydraulic jacks. The square shape increases contact area, reduces pressures to give users support, stability and peace of mind. Their compact size allows for easy and convenient storage options in your camper or truck/trailer.

rvjackpads.com



SCISSOR JACK SHOE

Stromberg Carlson, Traverse City, Michigan, presents its Base Pad Scissor Jack Shoe. Stromberg's new scissor jack shoe features built-in jack pads specifically designed for all RV scissor jacks with bow tie bases. The 2-pack pads remain securely attached, increasing contact more than 130%. The scissor jack shoe is molded EPDM rubber (not crumb rubber) that won't crack, break and returns to its shape. Fear no rock or root in your site. Built-in drain holes release water. Made in the USA.

strombergcarlson.com



KING-PIN TRIPOD STABILIZER

Ultra-Fab Products, Newberry, Indiana, offers its Tripod Stabilizer – Steel (19-950001) – the ultimate in king-pin stabilization. Makes even the heaviest trailer front-end rock solid. Great for avoiding waking your partner when you get out of bed. Stabilizes against both front-to-back and side-to-side movements. No tools required – simply pull up on the center chain and slip over catch. No need to adjust each leg independently. Self-adjust for uneven surfaces. Unique design is fastest to set up and store. No need to collapse, stores easily. Largest footpad (5 inches by 5.5 inches) to combat sinking and tilting. Easily lockable to pin – even includes the padlock. Heavy-duty steel construction. Weighs 23 pounds. Adjusts from 42 inches to 50 inches.

ultra-fab.com



LEVELING/JACK PAD SYSTEM

Valterra Products, Mission Hills, California, presents its Stackers. Use Stackers for leveling or as a heavy-duty jack pad. As a leveler, you can easily position your RV and safely drive-on/drive-off. Use it as a jack pad under your scissor, hydraulic, fifth-wheel drop down and stabilizer jacks. The EZ grip handle makes it simple to use and acts as a transition to the next step. Safe for up to 40,000 pounds of gross vehicle weight while being lightweight and easy to store.

valterra.com





What Is The Blue Sky?

Understand the different value components that determine a dealership's worth at time of sale.

BY JESSE STOPNITZKY, PERFORMANCE BROKERAGE SERVICES

Whenever a dealer is interested in selling his or her business, the most frequently asked question is, "What is my business worth?"

The sale of a dealership is comprised of numerous value components, each having varying methods for determining their values. Fixed assets may be sold at net book value, negotiated value or at appraisal. Parts and accessories factor obsolescence. New vehicles might be subject to curtailment. Used vehicles consider age and condition. But the crux of the value calculation is determining the goodwill portion of the business – also referred to as "Blue Sky." This is the intangible value of the business, in addition to the hard assets, that is not as easily quantifiable. It requires industry expertise, a deep understanding of financial benchmarks, a steady finger on the ever-changing market pulse and an intimate knowledge of buyers and their current buying parameters. It is as much an art as it is a science.

Adjusted Earnings

In the small business environment, and especially in the dealership industries that we service (automotive, RV, marine, powersports, trucking and equipment), the leading method is the Earnings Value Approach, where the value lies in the dealership's ability to produce future income and cash flow. The most common method is

the Capitalization of Earnings, which predicts the expected cash flow based on past earnings, adjusted for any unusual income or expenses, and multiplies it by a capitalization factor. This capitalization factor is similar to an industry-familiar concept referred to as the "multiple of earnings." The adjustments to earnings are an attempt to reflect the true profitability of the business. Additionally, we often find that dealers, as sole proprietors, expense through the operation nonbusiness-related items. Acceptable adjustments in the RV industry include:

- **Owner's Salary:** Providing the dealership has an active general manager. However, any excess owner's salary (above market rate for a general manager) could be added back.
- **Excess Family Salaries:** Consider your family members' roles in the day-to-day operations and their salaries compared to the market rate for a similar hire.
- **Management Fees:** If the dealership is part of a larger organization, the dealership may pay a fee to a management company for centralized services. However, a portion of this fee might be required to replace essential functions, so, only the excess should be considered.
- **Travel & Entertainment:** Providing it is discretionary and not required in the ordinary course of business. However, trips to Las Vegas for the RV Dealers Association Convention/ Expo or 20 Group meetings are a necessary dealership expense.
- **Contributions:** Consider if the nature of the contribution generates business, such as supporting local businesses, charitable events, schools and sporting sponsorships.
- **Other Interest:** Since flooring is an essential part of the business, only interest other than flooring can be considered an adjustment.
- **Fair-Market-Value Rent:** Since real estate must generate a reasonable return on asset, rent should be adjusted to reflect the fair-market-value. If you intend to lease the property for an amount different than your current occupancy rate, then the delta must be factored.
- **One-Time Expenses:** An equipment purchase or service expansion that was expensed as opposed to capitalized, a lawsuit settlement, excessive employee bonuses during the pandemic.
- **Depreciation & Amortization:** Illustrates cash flow and is consistent with the generally accepted principle of EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, amortization).
- **LIFO Reserve:** The delta of the accumulated LIFO Reserve from one year to the next.
- **Discretionary Expenses:** Any other expenses not required to operate the business.

Conversely, one-time income, such as PPP money and government grants, employee retention tax credits, or the gain on a sale of an asset, should be deducted from the earnings.

The Intangibles

Once the adjusted earnings of a business have been calculated, a host of tangible and intangible variables are considered:

- The history, quality and reputation
- The financial health and condition
- The historical earnings, future projections and uncaptured potential
- Brand strength, popularity, desirability and support from the OEM
- The Dealer Assigned Territory, market size, demographics and the competition
- The availability to purchase the real property, its acreage, facility size, number of service bays, required remodeling, the purchase price and anticipated rent expense

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- The outlook of global and U.S. economies, and the RV industry in particular

In an artistic fashion, combining the adjusted earnings with the intangibles would yield a multiple of earnings to determine the dealership's goodwill value. However, it is important to recognize that to an extent, the intangibles are already reflected in the adjusted earnings. Consider how sales volume would be impacted by market size, how gross profit would be impacted by competition, or how earnings would be impacted by rent expense. The greater importance of these intangibles is the value they represent to a prospective purchaser. Since buyers have varying criteria as to what makes for an ideal acquisition candidate, each buyer will naturally place a different value on the same business.

Further, buyers have their own systems and processes, company culture, expense structure, etc. Therefore, it is our strong opinion that the goodwill value cannot be determined solely by track record and applying a multiple. Instead, it must be a combination of the historical adjusted earnings, the earnings of a buyer's pro forma, and the buyer's desired return on investment. Buyers will use the adjusted earnings and evaluate the income and expense structure to establish a baseline for their projections, and back themselves into an offer that satisfies their buying criteria, including their threshold for return on investment. If you're reading between the lines – the value of your business is ultimately determined by the buyer.

Sellers must use caution when applying multiples to their earnings as the concept is not as straightforward as most believe.

1. How are the earnings calculated?
2. How many years are evaluated?
3. What weight is applied to each year?
4. What multiple is applied to the earnings?
5. Which assets are included in the multiple?

Considering the basic principles of supply and demand, premier opportunities and highly desired brands command a premium as they are less available for acquisition. Smaller operations and widespread brands might command a lesser multiple as they could be viewed as more available, especially in the current buy-sell market. The higher and more stable the earnings, the less risk associated with the investment. This assurance could yield a higher multiple as it gives the buyer greater confidence in maintaining the performance.

Despite this article's focus on earnings and the connection to value, as a broker, our objective is to find the unique buyer who accomplishes our client's business and personal goals, which at times includes much more than the sale price. It is important to also consider the character and quality of the buyer who will be taking care of your team, your customers and your life's work. One who will negotiate in good faith, maintain confidentiality, and be an all-around pleasure to work with. Not all buyers cross the finish line. There is monetary value in transacting with one who will. RVP

Jesse Stopnitzky is a partner and director of the RV Division for Performance Brokerage Services, North America's highest volume dealership brokerage firm advising on buy-sell activity for automotive and RV dealerships. Family-owned, the company benefits from over 30 years of experience, 900 dealerships sold and a 90% closing rate. Contact Stopnitzky, an RVDA associate member, at 949-309-2851 or jesse@performancebrokerageservices.com.



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Get Ready for the Next Market Shift

Prep your dealership by focusing on these three action steps now.

BY LEONARD BUCHHOLZ

The market has shifted again. Rising interest rates, increased inventory, less maintenance work, and more warranty work, longer delays in getting claims processed and paid – just to name a few of the current conditions affecting the industry's profitability.

What about sales? Slow is what I'm hearing.

So, my question to you is: Wouldn't it be better to start preparing your store now for the next set of market conditions before it's too late? Or would you rather wait until the next wave of change crashes on the market?

Let's talk about profitability in service. Here are three actionable items for you to get profitable now.

1. Update your communication model. Every customer that comes into your store has a smartphone. Every single customer. My dad has a smartphone, and he is 84. Customers can call, email, text, record a video and send it, use an app to take a picture and send a visual message, use the voice feature and record a message and send it – there are so many ways they can communicate.

May I ask what are you doing at your store to keep up with it?

If you think of your dealership as a living, breathing business, then you know that effective communication and messaging is the key to sustaining life. Effective communication and messaging are instrumental to a thriving business.

Do you have a viable and active website? Are you on Facebook? LinkedIn? When was the last time you looked at any of these accounts? Are they up to date? Can a customer find you and communicate with you using one of these communication streams?

Do you regularly post educational or "How to" videos, sales specials, service specials, weather conditions, etc., on your website and explain how each of those affects your customer?

Are you following up with your service customers using text? I don't know how a busy service department stays in touch these days using just a landline. Everybody checks their texts all the time. Their phone dings, buzzes and chimes all day long, and people respond to the notifications like a toddler to an ice cream cone – hands outstretched and saying "gimme, gimme, gimme."



Leonard Buchholz is the sales and marketing manager for DealerPRO Training. His background includes fixed operations, professional workshops and seminars, and communications. He has worked with brands like Audi of America and Mazda facilitating Service Performance Groups, and fixed operations training in-person and online. He has completed hundreds of on-site, in-depth fixed operation evaluations in automotive and RV dealerships across the country.

I recently had this conversation with my son-in-law who happens to own a 24-foot travel trailer. It went something like this:

"I dropped my trailer off for repairs, and I didn't hear from the advisor for three weeks. I called him several times, emailed him three times, and finally gave up. He didn't call me back until it was time to discuss the stuff I had to pay for."

Not much of a conversation, is it? I had no answers other than, "That's why we train."

I once took over a dealership where an adviser was struggling because of poor communication with his customers. Nice guy but struggling. He was generating so much heat, I could cook hot dogs at his desk.

I signed all the advisers up for a text service from their desktop. (Google has this and anyone can sign up to use it, or you can use WhatsApp, or find something else.) Overnight, it turned him into a superman with super sales.

He became the top-selling adviser for three months in a row, and he stopped getting heat, stopped me from getting his heat, and customers liked him – total game-changer. He became an effective communicator, staying in touch the way his customers wanted him to stay in touch.

When evaluating your communications, you need to look at everyone. How are the advisers communicating with the techs? Parts? Customers? Are you still wandering through the lot yelling his/her name in row after row of rigs for sale? Or paging over the intercom (if you have one) "Bob, you have a call holding on line 1, Bob… line 1?" If so, how do you think that sounds to the customer who is 20/30/40-something and uses their smartphone for everything?

Maybe you just tell the customer you'll take a message (voicemail – what's that?) and just give up. I can tell you this, my 30-something son-in-law doesn't understand why his RV dealer can't communicate effectively, and it's the reason he is not taking his travel trailer back there.

Think about time, convenience and value, and grade your store on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the best on how well you communicate with your customers.

Are you timely with updates? Are you communicating the way the customer likes to be communicated with? Is it convenient for the customer to stay in contact with you?

2. Advertise effectively. Have you watched "open source" television lately? Me neither. Most of my views are on a streaming service like Amazon Prime or Netflix. Rarely do I flip to the local channel and see what's on.

Your customers are doing the same thing. Most surveys say the average person is watching between two to three hours of video a day, using platforms they want to use and not regular cable television. And they are turning from traditional radio to app-driven "listen to what I want to" platforms.

It doesn't mean that TV and radio are dead – it's just that they are gasping for oxygen in the form of advertising dollars while being squeezed to death between the many entertainment choices we have today.

If you are not moving forward on social video platforms, getting on the app-driven music platforms and advertising where the customer is, you are going to have a tough time in the future. You will find an ever-shrinking audience for your message.

Set a budget of dollars per repair order for your fixed operations and start a campaign that takes advantage of social platforms that people are paying attention to. Send videos explaining everything from the hours you are open to how to check the breaker panel for the stove. Everything can be videoed and sent to the customer and put on your website.

Use every means of communication that is effective, not just the "tried and



true."

Advertise to educate first and entice second. People watch two to three hours of video a day because they want to be entertained and they want to learn something while they are being entertained.

3. Train your personnel to capture and keep this – and future generations – of customers. Transparency, convenience, time, competency, value proposition – these are all words that describe what our customers want, and what they say will lead to them making a repurchase decision or coming back for service.

The problem is, we have been behind the times in many RV dealerships. Often dealers are faced with outdated processes (or no processes), slow to respond communications (or not responding at all), and poor to nonexistent communication skills.

What if we used a service sales process that includes a walk-around and brief inspection, an honest discussion of maintenance required, a multipoint inspection (so we can spot items that require attention), triage within a reasonable time frame (the key being reasonable), constant contact and updates (even if it is to say "I don't have any news for you at this time), an explanation of the repairs completed and, finally, a review of items requiring attention at a future date. (I just gave you the basic service sales process for increased sales, customer satisfaction and retention.)

What If?

The average customer pulling a trailer into your dealership is seeking something different. They don't want an "industrialized" or "institutionalized" service experience. They want a personal experience that makes them feel valued and appreciated. Think attraction. Think value. Think about personal contact and relationships.

I don't want a relationship with the guy who loads my tray at McDonald's. I do want a relationship with the adviser who is responsible for the repairs to my rig.

Being value-driven answers the question: "Why would I choose your dealership over any other service provider out there?" Focus on the benefit the customer gets by doing business with you. Because, quite frankly, they can get a lot of the same stuff someplace else.

Which means you must stress personal service and relationships. We do this by reeducating our service personnel to build value by being human, personable, helpful, caring and empathetic while using a service sales process that walks the adviser and the customer down the aisle together.

Prepare your dealership with effective communications, advertising in a way that makes sense to the buying public, and retrain your personnel to build value by stressing what makes the experience personal and value-driven. RVP







Optimizing Your Interiors

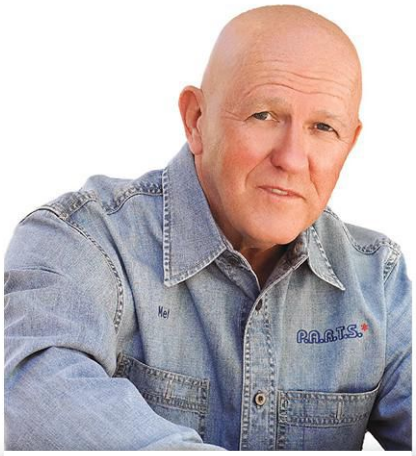
Make the most of how you display and store items in your retail store.

A section in this month's issue of RV PRO focuses on RV interiors, so I have decided that my column will also focus on RV interiors. However, the RV interiors addressed in my column are those interior portions of your RV business.

Materials and products that could enhance the interior of your customer's RV will be discussed in this issue. While reading your copy of RV PRO, you and your staff might decide to purchase some of these items. When these items are received, where in the interior of your RV business will they be placed? Let's talk about these interior portions of your facility.

Display, Storage or Both?

The type of interior items that you have purchased will impact your decision as to where in your facility these goods will be placed. Factors such as type of product, size, quantity purchased and packaging could determine this placement. However,



Mel Selway is the president of P.A.R.T.S. Inc., a Sahuarita, Arizona-based firm providing business management analysis and training to retailers. He can be reached at 520-336-8606 or melselway@aol.com.

it is important that your customers are made aware of these new opportunities to enhance their RV interiors, so you might want to consider how best to merchandise each of these products.

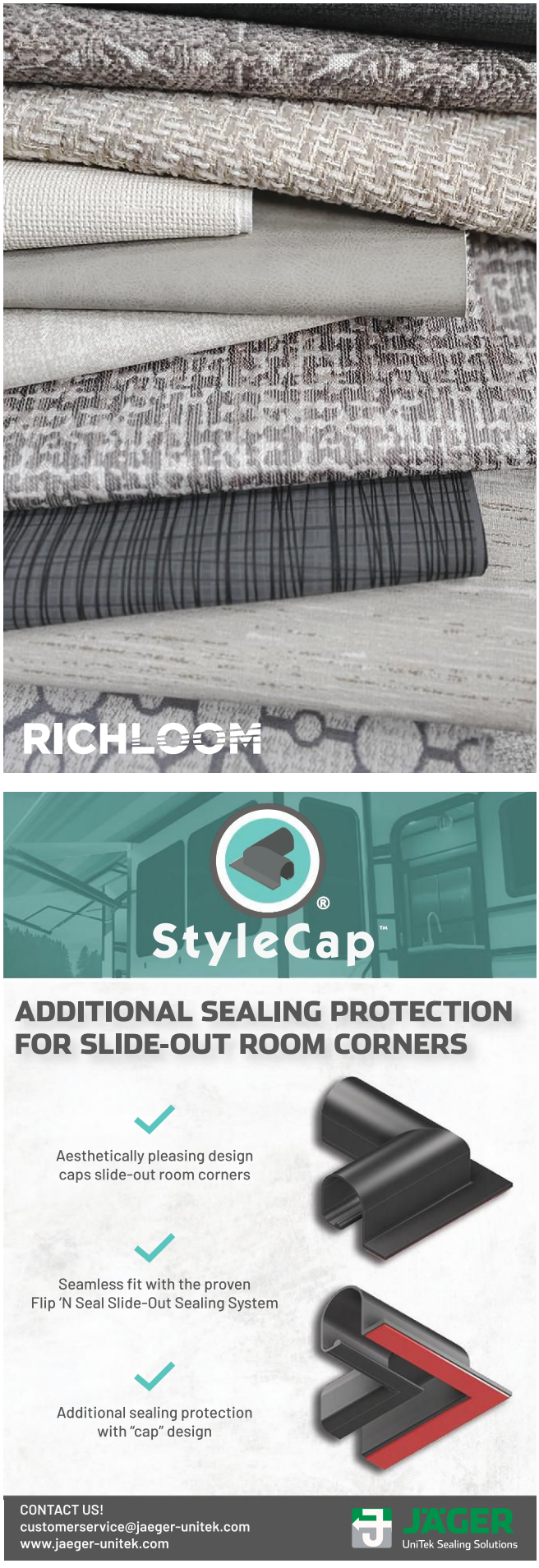
Obviously, the optimal choice is your retail display area (or areas). Customers should be able to easily view these products as they stroll your showroom. Can your customers easily view the products displayed in your retail areas? How will you place these new products so that your customers are attracted to them? Did your supplier provide an attractive Point-Of-Purchase (POP) display fixture that could be strategically situated to draw your customers' attention? Have you determined the hot spots in your retail areas so that you can place goods there to improve the chances of your customers noticing these new products?

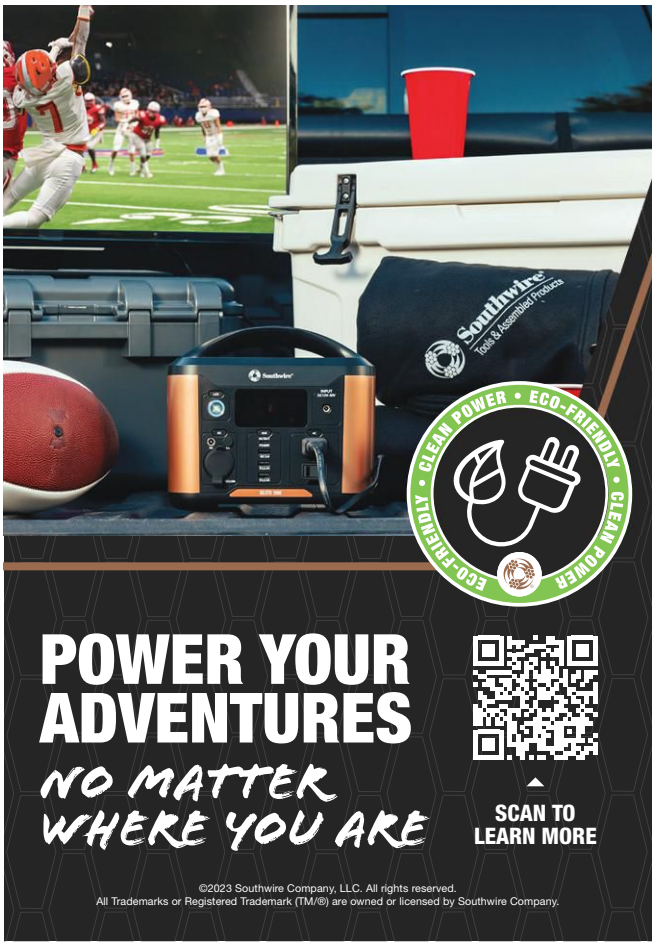
If one of these newly acquired interior products is not conducive to placement in your retail areas because it is too large or not packaged for display, you will have to determine how to merchandise these types of goods. Perhaps you could schedule a new products presentation and brainstorming session for your entire sales staff. This brainstorming session should include any employee who sells goods, services or major units, and it should focus on the features and benefits of each item that will be demonstrated.

In addition to the features and benefits of these items, you could suggest that the age of the customer's RV could be a starting point for the sales agent's presentation of these new goods that could enhance the comfort and livability of the customer's RV. During this new products presentation and brainstorming session, you could solicit input from your sales agents as to how best to market and merchandise these products. Since these are the personnel who will be interacting with your customers, it is important to obtain the sales agents' buy-in regarding how and where to present these goods.

What else could be included in the agenda for this new products presentation and brainstorming session? Would any signage be appropriate to use? What if your sales team decided to install one of these new interior products in a previously owned RV on your lot? Could signage be created to direct customers to view the interior of that RV? Signage inside the RV could highlight the features and benefits of the product.

Most likely, your sales agents could brainstorm other ideas for how best to market and merchandise these new interior items.







Storage Issues

If the items cannot be displayed or had to be purchased in large quantities, here are a few questions that could assist in determining how and where to store the goods.

Who will be installing the product? If this product can be installed by the customer, then it could enhance the transaction processes by storing the product as close to the selling workstation as possible. However, if this is an item that might require installation by your technicians, then the product could be placed where it is easier to distribute to the service department.

What is the size of the product? Suppose it is a full-size refrigerator. Then it might best be placed in a storage location that can be accessed by a forklift or a pallet jack so that it can be easily transferred to the service area; or, to the customer's pickup truck. However, if the product is small enough to be easily carried, then an attractive display in the retail showroom could be the optimal place for this product.

Is the product displayed in the retail sales area? If this is a product that you have purchased in large quantities in the anticipation of high sales volume, then the back-stock of this product could be placed where it can be easily and quickly retrieved. Of course, if your parts operating procedure includes a retail restock process whereby at least once each day a parts associate re-stocks the display fixtures, then it is not necessary to store the back-stock near the retail showroom.

One More Factor

Assuming your RV business uses a computer system to track your inventory of goods, it is important to track the receipt of and sales of these new products. I assume that the interior space in your facility is limited and that your budget for the inventory of goods is also limited. Therefore, you should consider tracking the sales of these new goods that you have purchased and have placed in your facility. Are each of these goods being sold at a rate that will provide you with an acceptable return on investment (ROI)? What reports can be run within your computer system that will assist you in determining if a specific item is selling – or not? What methods could be applied to increase the sales rate of any item that is not selling?

Could this item be:

- placed in a sales hot spot?
- returned to the supplier for a credit or in a swap for another product?
- offered at a discount?

The Close

If you are offering products to enhance the interior of your customer's RV, you should also consider enhancing the interior of your RV business. Where these products will be presented and/or stored will make a different to your customers, and to your staff's efficiency. RVP

The Red Sink

Setting your dealership apart visually can make for memorable customer experiences.

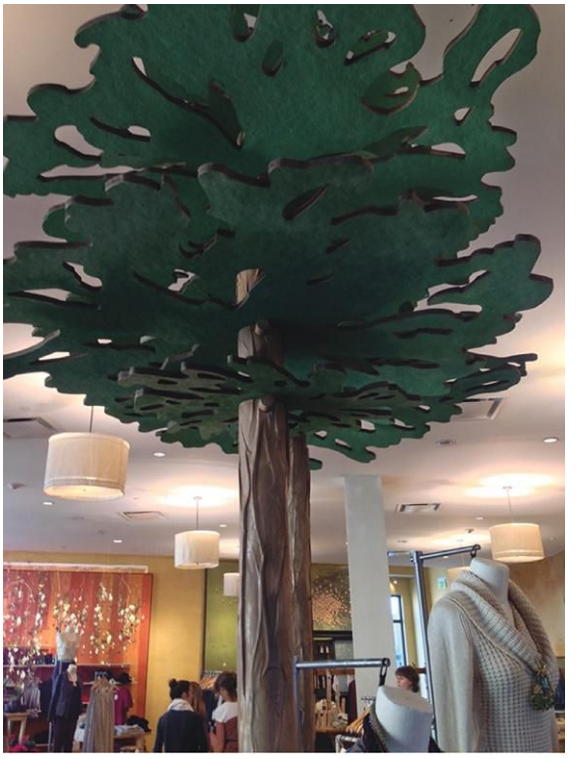


Linda Cahan is the president of Portland, Oregon-based Cahan & Co., a consulting firm that works with retailers of all sizes and categories to improve their bottom line through creative, affordable and appropriate visual merchandising, store design and renovations. For more information, visit lindacahan.com.

Every time I go into an RV dealership or parts store, my first thought is, "What sets this space apart from all the other RV stores I've been in?" I'm always hoping for a visual reminder of where I am other than a bunch of RVs sitting on the lot, with the parts desk visible and the accessories area as a crowded afterthought inside.

A few years ago, I was in an elegant tile showroom in southern Oregon. I had been hired to give a seminar to tile/stone/marble retailers and was on a fact- and photo-finding mission. After I walked around the store, the store's manager, Shawnette Blank, gave me a tour of their restrooms. Now, normally I would have made that trip on my own as I had a long drive back up north to Portland, but I immediately understood why she was so proud of the three restrooms. They were truly fabulous! They were a combination of great tile work and creativity. Blank told me the rooms were her store's "red sinks" and went on to explain that every store, in every category, needs a red sink – a visual "wow" that a customer will remember long after leaving the store.

What is your red sink? What sets you apart visually from your competitors? It's most definitely not your rows of gondolas. Knowing that you can get an idea that's "great, cheap and easy"



Anthropologie has influenced the visual merchandising field with consistently excellent DIY props and décor. This tree is floor-to-ceiling height. The branches seem to be cut from homasote board or gatorboard, which is very lightweight. As the trunk doesn't taper, it may be a carpet tube covered with paper mâché. Because the boughs are flat and parallel to the floor, this could work in stores with ceilings above 9.5 feet. As many RVers travel to be in nature, several of these trees scattered or clustered in the showroom or accessories area would create a memorable visuals.

maybe once in this lifetime, I had to look beyond getting all three at once. Most great things take some effort, time or money – or all three. But having a memorable image can drive a customer back to your store – 80% of a memory is from something we saw and retained.

I hope the past couple of years have been good for you. COVID-19 got people looking for alternative ways to live and, for many, the RV business boomed. Once it was "under control," people started to go back to old patterns, including not wearing masks. As a new wave of the flu is predicted, let's hope it doesn't impact your business in a negative way – including receiving parts and accessories in a timely manner.

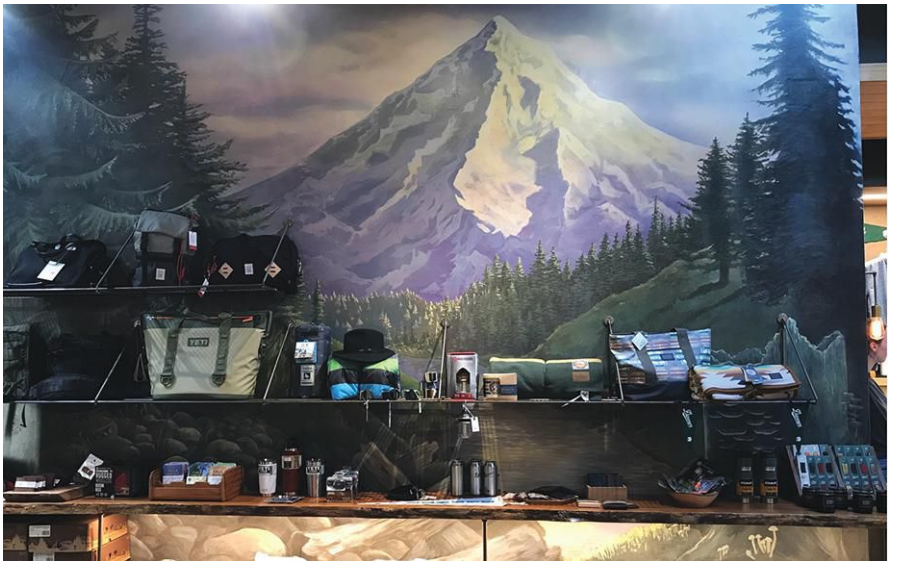
If you haven't updated your showroom or accessories area in more than a couple of years, it may be starting to feel dated and faded. As you know from other aspects in your life, all things change, grow or die. The high levels of COVID-related business is not exempt from that rule. Consider adding a "red sink" to your showroom now, while money is (hopefully) flowing.

A memorable visual can be in a window, free-standing, on a high wall or hanging from a high ceiling. It can also be in a focal area where people walk through your front door. It always makes sense to shine some light on it, so your time, money and effort don't go to waste. Adding a few LED spotlights may be out of your budget after you create your red sink, but plan them into the budget from the start – it won't hurt so much once the compliments start pouring in. If your red sink visual is in your front window, have one or two LED spotlights shine on it from the window wall. Have the 2-foot or 4-foot track attached to the wall and make sure the lights are pointed on the face of your display – not over the top of it. When the front of the display is well-lit, people can see it from the street. An overhead light is a wasted light.

When you put the effort into adding something fun and memorable to your showroom or accessories area, your customers will talk about it and spread the word. RVers communicate with



Big Foot lives in a hiking store in Portland, Oregon. I have no idea where they found this, but it makes the entire store more intriguing. At night when the store is closed, this guy has a spotlight shining on him all night, so people see him as they walk and drive by after hours. Notice the small (in comparison) potted plant to the left/rear of Big Foot. The live plant adds a sense of realness to the wood sculpture.



Danner Boots has three stores in the Portland area. This mural is in its Union Way store and shows Mt. Hood, the iconic image for the area. What is an iconic image for your area? Locate your prime focal wall by scanning your showroom or accessories area from the front door or entry to the accessories section. Consider having a local artist paint it for you. Perhaps they'll take a discount on an RV in exchange or, even better, do it for the publicity. But make sure you see samples of their work before agreeing to let them paint your wall. This is not a "but it's Sam's nephew and he really needs the work" type of project. If you need to stock merchandise below the prime area of the mural, make sure you notify the artist ahead of time where the merchandise will go, so they can design accordingly.

one another, and you want your company name in their conversations in a positive way.

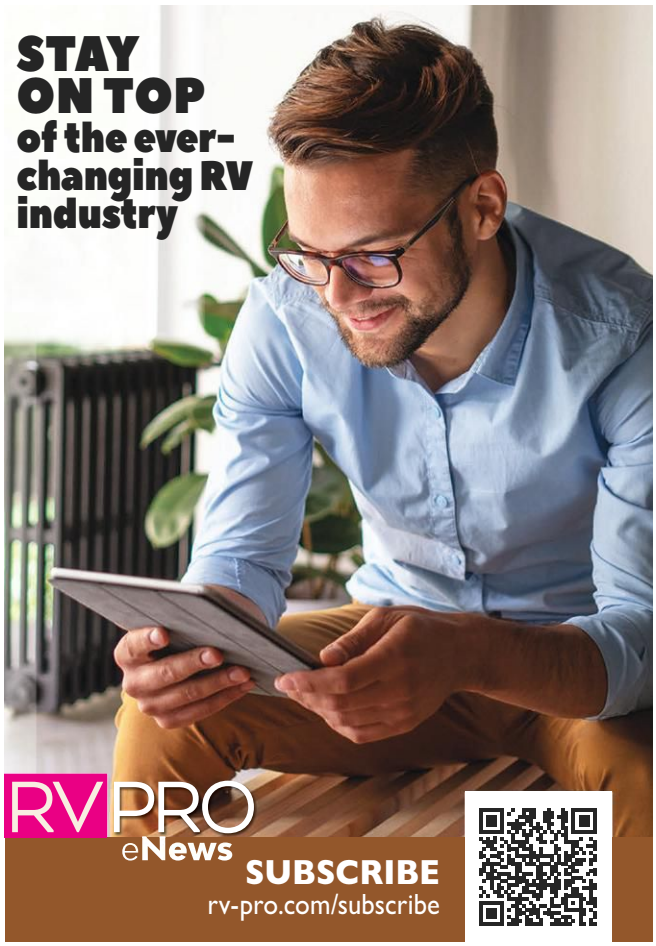
Years ago, the owner of a garden center in Westport, Connecticut, kept a large cage with his very talkative and friendly parrot inside. People adored the bird and brought their children to hear the bird sing and chat with them. It was a memorable experience. Of course, this only works if someone has a bird that they are willing to share with the public (and the bird's vocabulary isn't particularly salty). Also, that person ideally will be with your company for a long time, so the popular attraction will keep customers coming back. RVP





Instead of one large focal display, if you have someone creative on staff, consider reworking your endcaps. Parkrose Hardware in Portland had a man on staff who was very creative and artistic. They asked him to have fun with the endcaps and provided him with chalkboards and chalk paint markers. I enjoyed walking around the store, looking at the art and how it highlighted the products below.





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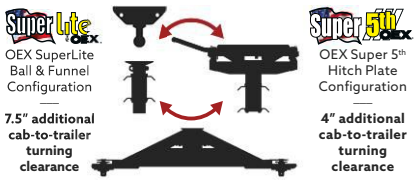
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Pit Stop



Best of Open House: *New & Notable*

Kropf Eldorado Park Model

Debuting last year, this high-end offering's updated interiors are nothing less than showstopping. Customizable from top to bottom with luxurious finishes, the 1 bedroom/1 bathroom layouts provide plenty of space.

Additional features:

- 9-foot triple slider with contained blinds off a porch
- Diamond-coat siding
- Ceiling beam and mantel color options
- Steel stair railing and wooden stair options
- Under kitchen cabinet motion-detection lighting
- Washer/dryer prep inside wardrobe





Ladies at the Lot

The September 2023 trends report from Go RVing noted an increase in female RV ownership. Findings include:

- **13%** increase in female RV ownership from 2021 to 2023
- **16%** increase in women traveling in RVs
- **61%** of millennial women say they seek adventure/thrills on their vacations

"This presents an opportunity for the RV industry to enhance female representation both among its workforce and enthusiasts," the report's authors wrote. To ***"seize the momentum,"*** they recommended:

- Creating and sharing digital content that highlights women RVers and their stories to showcase how RVing is empowering and enables their goals
- Expanding workforce inclusivity by recruiting and training more women

RESULTS OF THE AFTERMARKET PARTS & ACCESSORIES SURVEY

RVIA's 2023 survey looks at how aftermarket products contribute to the overall RV experience. Findings include:

- 9 out of 10 RVers suggest there's at least one type of improvement needed on their RV after purchase – more than half mention **plumbing and sanitation**
- **75% of buyers** say they sometimes or always shop at a brick-and-mortar location, then purchase online
- In-store purchases are most likely to be replacement parts, while online purchases are more likely to be RV accessories
- **Return policies and immediate availability** are most important when choosing where to purchase from
- For in-store purchases, the average spend is more than $400, with **new RVers spending more than $500**

28,071 TOTAL RV SHIPMENTS

16.9% DECREASE compared to August 2022 (33,783 units)

To Date, RV SHIPMENTS 45% DOWN with 213,421 units

AUGUST SHIPMENTS

"In recent years, we've seen RV buyers get younger and more diverse. September is an exciting month for the RV industry as many manufacturers debut new units and features to appeal to these new RV buyers," said RV Industry Association President and CEO Craig Kirby. "With RVs available at nearly every price point and with features that allow people to work from the road and get off-grid, RVing remains one of the most affordable ways for people and families to travel and make lifelong memories."

RVshare recently partnered with electric RV startup Grounded to bring a pioneering electric RV rental program to the Detroit market. The rentals are exclusively available on RVshare.com, making RVs from Grounded the first electric vehicle fleet on the platform.

"This program, which is also supported by the Michigan Office for Future Mobility and Electrification (OFME), will provide sustainable travel options for travelers in a historically underserved city via a fleet of E-RVs available for daily hire," organizers said.



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