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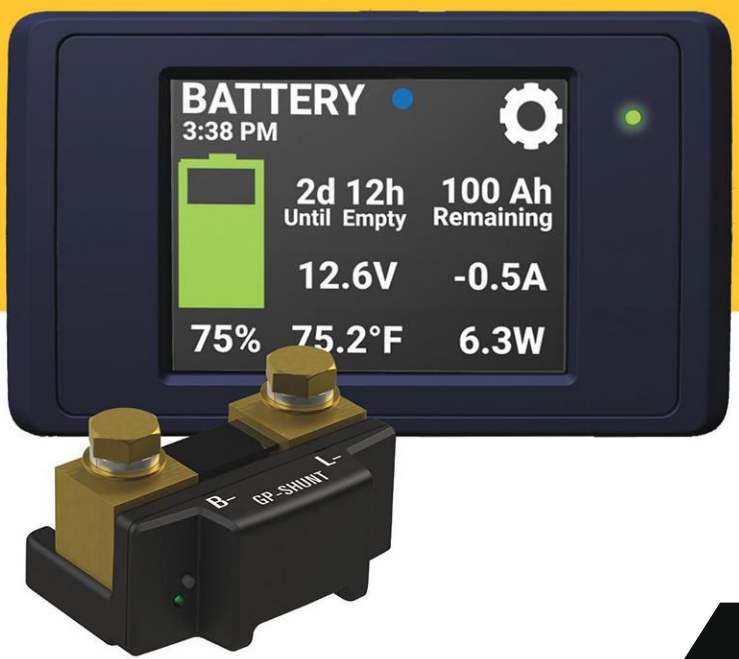
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CERTIFIED AUDIENCE

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RV PRO



As I write this, the RV PRO team is just a few days away from hopping on a plane and heading to the NTP-STAG Expo in Kissimmee, Florida – the perfect escape from the chilly weather we've been experiencing where we live in Colorado…and Alabama.

Yes, it's been chilly in Alabama, too!

We're excited for a little warmth, but also to touch base with our friends in the industry and hopefully meet new people, too.

I think that's what I'm excited for most this year – meeting new people. I have been lucky enough to be a part of the RV industry for almost two years now, and meeting new people has been a joy every step of the way because the folks in this industry are some of the friendliest and most welcoming that I've ever encountered. You also have some of the biggest hearts around, which is why we've decided to highlight the ways in which you give back with a new Focus on Community page (see page 12). We want to hear from you – how has your dealership or company helped your community? What projects have brought you the most joy? Send us about 500 words plus a couple images, and we'll feature you in an upcoming issue (to be considered, email Managing Editor Jordan Benschop: jbenschop@cahabamedia.com).

This industry is also full of innovators, and we have the privilege of presenting their awesome products and solutions to you every month. Turn to pages 20 and 24 to get to know the latest single-axle offerings from Eclipse RV and Ember RV; both companies are bringing innovations to the market in their own way.

And speaking of innovations, on page 28, Avanti Lalwani, CEO of Briter Products, explains the impact lithium battery technology has had on the industry and what's next. There's no doubt that lithium batteries are here to stay.

As for what's in store for this year? We asked the experts who head up some of the most influential associations in the RV industry – the RV Industry Association, the RV Dealers Association, the RV Technical Institute and the RV Women's Alliance – to tell us what they expect for 2024, and how they will guide the industry through any challenges. Look for their reports starting on page 30.

Lastly, our Running the Business section this month is full of great advice from our merchandising expert, Linda Cahan; our parts and accessories inventory expert, Mel Selway, and more. Those articles start on page 36.

We want to know what you want from these pages, too. What business management advice do you most need in 2024? Please write me a note and let me know what we can cover for you this year: jdking@cahabamedia.com.

Thank you for making the RV industry one of the brightest and most exciting to work in – we can't wait to shake your hands this year and keep bringing you content that helps make your jobs easier and more successful.

As always, thanks for reading!

Jennifer King

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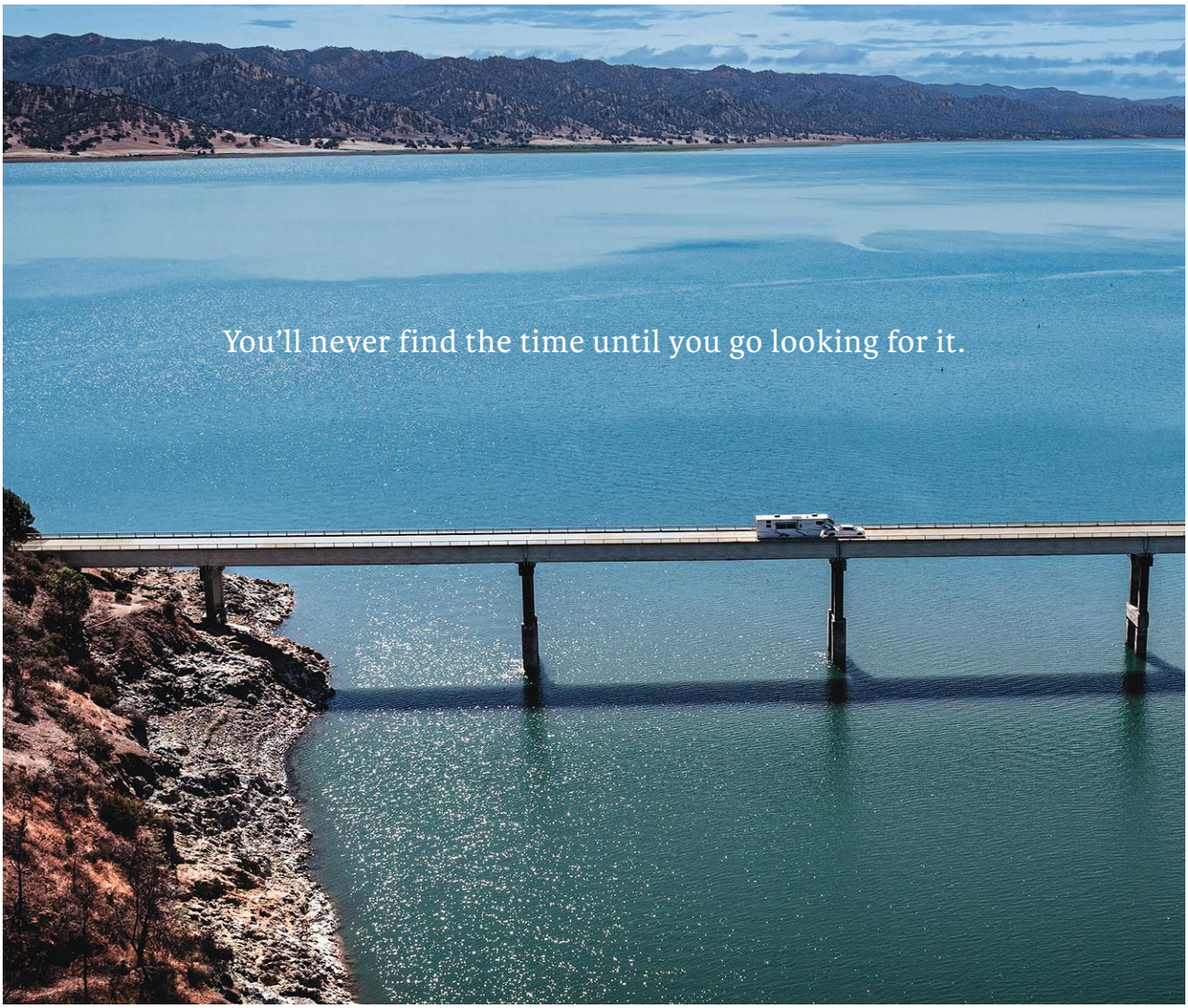
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MORE OF WHAT MATTERS

Early Bird Special for Supplier's Show Available Through Feb. 29

Registration for the 2024 Hall of Fame RV Supplier's Show opened Nov. 1, 2023, and as of Jan. 1, the show is over 55% sold out (that includes the new 36,000-square-foot addition as well as Ingram Hall).

The Hall of Fame's Early Bird Special, which offered a significant discount to the suppliers who registered early, originally ended Dec. 31, 2023. The Hall of Fame extended the Early Bird Special 2.0 until Feb. 29. Those who sign up and register for a booth(s) by that date will receive $250 off on each booth that they purchase.

When Show Director and Hall of Fame President Darryl Searer was asked about this early registration opportunity, he replied, "By having suppliers take advantage of the Early Bird Special(s) it will allow the Hall of Fame much more time to organize the details, promote our exhibitors and improve the overall quality of the show. The end result will be a better experience for the exhibitors and attendees. Each year our goal is to be better than the year before."

Beginning March 1, the standard show price of $3,500 per indoor booth and $2,500 per outdoor booth will be strictly in effect.

To download the registration forms and other information, rvmhhalloffame.org/rv-hall-of-fame-suppliers-show.

Camping World Closes Alabama Acquisition, Touts Upcoming Additions

Camping World Holdings has closed on the acquisition of Ashley Outdoors in Salem, Alabama. Including this location, the company intends to add 15 dealership locations in the first quarter of 2024 through a combination of opening existing facilities and closing previously announced acquisitions.

Marcus Lemonis, chairman and CEO of Camping World commented, "As we start 2024, we are driven to work towards our goal of increasing our dealership count to over 320 locations in the next five years. Based on continued demand stabilization, the team is confident in opening 15 additional locations ahead of the selling season. These openings are separate from any future RV dealership acquisitions that may happen throughout the 2024 calendar year."

Camping World intends to open the following dealership locations in the first quarter of 2024:

- Salem, AL – Camping World
- Byron, GA – Jayco Macon
- Benton, AR – Jayco Little Rock
- Cape Girardeau, MO – Camping World
- Little Rock, AR – Forest River RV Little Rock
- Springfield, MO – Camping World
- Melbourne, FL – Camping World
- Orange Park, FL – Camping World
- Pinellas Park, FL – Camping World
- Clermont, FL – Camping World
- Ocala, FL – Forest River RV Ocala
- Greenville, NC – Forest River RV Greenville
- Statesville, NC – Forest River RV Statesville
- Lewisville, TX – Camping World
- Brooksville, FL

Lazydays Closes $35M Mortgage Loan Facility

Lazydays has closed on a $35 million mortgage loan facility funded by clients of Coliseum Capital Management.

The facility is secured by mortgages against certain dealership facilities and land held for future development. It bears interest at a rate of 12% and matures in December 2026.

The facility provides both liquidity in the current operating environment and flexibility to secure alternative financing arrangements on a property-by-property basis in the future. Owning and financing dealership locations is core to Lazydays' strategy as it maintains site control and prevents fixed costs from increasing due to rent adjustments over time. The transaction allows the company to continue to execute on its ownership strategy while providing liquidity as it locates other real estate financing, similar to the mortgages funded earlier this year in Knoxville and Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Lazydays said it intends to use the net proceeds from the facility for general corporate purposes.

Industry Leaders Push for RV-Friendly EV Charging Stations

As states decide how to spend unprecedented amounts of federal funds directed to the expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure, RV industry leaders want officials to keep the country's recreational travelers in mind. Elkhart-based THOR Industries has partnered with the RV Industry Association (RVIA) to commission a report on the EV landscape that begs the question: Are current plans to build and expand electric vehicle charging stations inclusive of all drivers?

Key to their pitch is consideration for a growing sector of travelers who are using electric vehicles, like trucks or SUVs, with a hitch to tow RVs, boats or utility trailers behind them.

"For the RV industry, the real hurdle we're trying to overcome is that the vast majority of charging in the country is pull-in charging," said Jason Rano, RVIA vice president of government affairs. "If you're driving a passenger electric vehicle, the charging port is usually on the front of the vehicle on either side. You pull head in into a charging port and you plug in and you're fine. Now, if you are pulling a towable RV, which is upwards of 90% of our industry, then that doesn't really work, right?"

Why pull-through charging?

An alternative to the pull-in charging design, which often forces towable drivers to decouple their trailers or take up multiple spaces, is a concept called pull-through charging which allows drivers more room to maneuver without unhitching their vehicle.

The conversation comes following the U.S. Department of Transportation's creation of the National Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program, funded by $5 billion from 2021's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

That money will be allocated to individual states – Indiana, for example, is slated to receive nearly $100 million over five years – to contract with EV partners to build out charging infrastructure coast to coast.

The NEVI program funds 80% of charging station installation with five years of operations and maintenance with the remaining 20% to be picked up by site-owner operators.

Many states now are in the process of requesting proposals from interested parties seeking to own, operate and maintain charging stations.

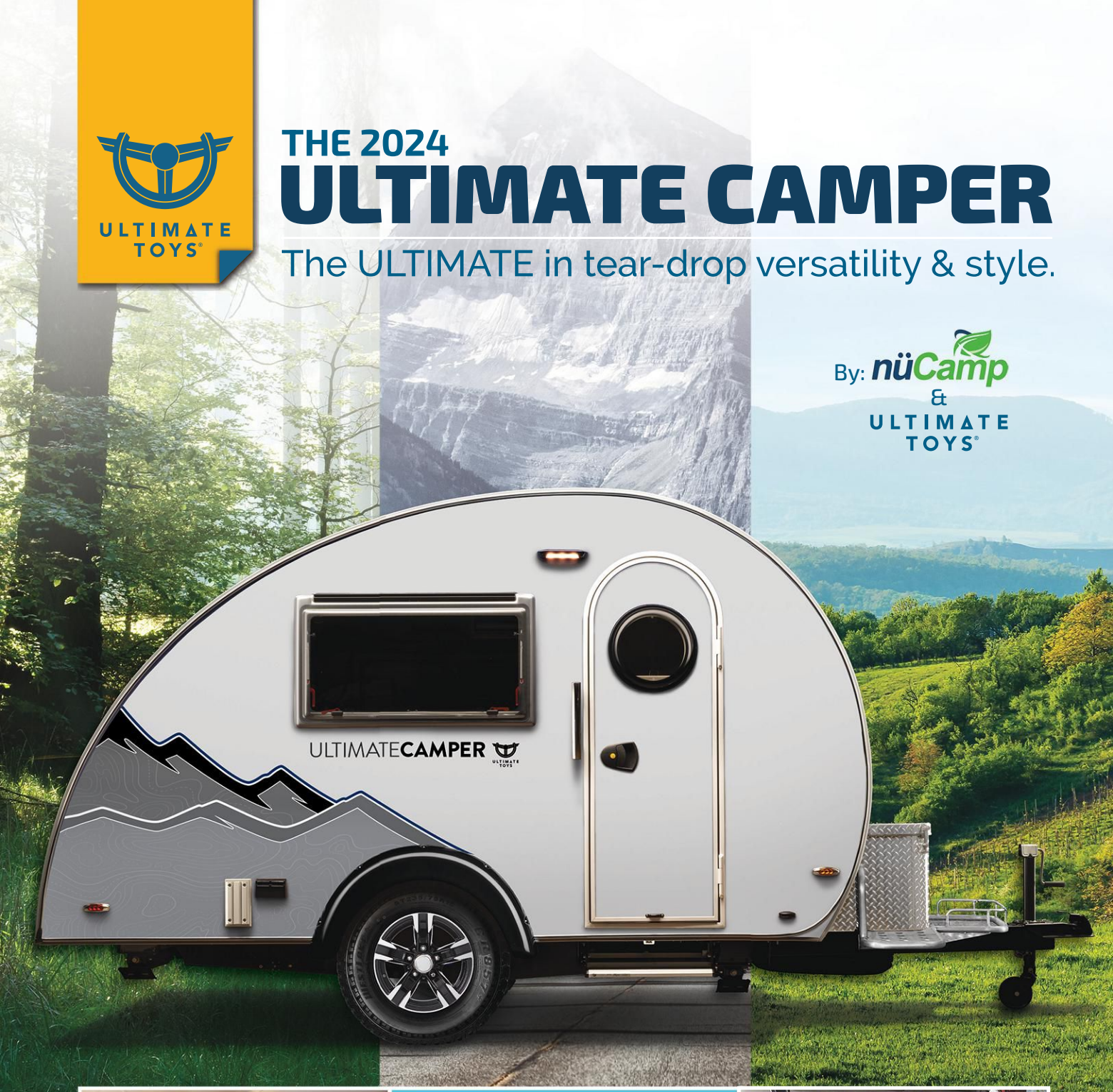
As that happens, Rano said, the RV industry would like states to incentivize vendors that incorporate pull-through charging in their plans. After all, RV drivers – unlike small vehicle drivers who do most of their charging at home – have the most

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to lose if not included in plans, industry officials say.

RV travelers are more likely to take longer trips requiring multiple stops to charge and burn through battery range quicker than the average driver. Though there is not an industry-adopted figure on the effect of how vehicle towing affects electric battery range, one Rivian case study found an R1T electric pickup experienced a 50% reduction in range with a 6,500-pound trailer attached.

"If you're a state that is big on outdoor recreation and doesn't plan for this, it could impact visitation," Rano said. "It's a $140 billion industry across manufacturing, supplying, dealers and campgrounds. We understand the economic impact of this industry."

Read the full interview on insideindianabusiness.com.

Anglemeyer Joins Executive Leadership Team at Thetford-Norcold

Thetford LLC has added Tracy Anglemeyer to the organization as vice president, sales and marketing, the company announced during its annual holiday luncheon and town hall meeting in December. Anglemeyer will be responsible for setting strategic direction and leading all aspects of the sales and marketing functions, Thetford announced Wednesday in a release.

Anglemeyer will report directly to Mary Pouliot, executive vice president, Americas, and her primary office will be in the Thetford-Norcold Elkhart, Indiana location keeping her close to the heart of the industry. Thetford produces RV and marine toilets and sanitation solutions along with Norcold LLC, which produces RV refrigerators.

Anglemeyer brings more than 30 years of experience in the RV industry to Thetford-Norcold. Most recently as director of recruitment for the RV Technical Institute (RVTI), Anglemeyer was instrumental in recruiting and training over 1,000 technicians to serve the industry. She previously held senior leadership positions in sales and product management supporting both RV OEMs and the aftermarket.

Her efforts to elevate, educate and promote women in the industry earned her the RV Woman's Alliance (RVWA) Trailblazer Lifetime Achievement Award this year. She moved to the position of chair elect on Jan. 1.

"Tracy is a great fit for the Executive Leadership Team at Thetford," stated Pouliot, "her passion for the industry, dedication to our customers and commitment to technical training cannot be matched."

Dan Pearson Legacy Fund Generates $13K for RV Learning Center

The Mike Molino RV Learning Center legacy fund established to honor the late Dan Pearson, CEO of PleasureLand RV Centers, has raised $13,500 since it was established in November 2023. The fund honors Pearson's memory and longtime industry service.

PleasureLand RV Centers, headquartered in St. Cloud, Minnesota, pledged a $25,000 matching gift, which will provide a dollar-for-dollar match for each donation received to the Pearson Legacy Fund until the $25,000 amount is reached.

Pearson served as the RV Dealers Association (RVDA) chairman of the board 1993-94, was a member of the RVDA board of delegates, vice chairman of the RV Learning Center, and served as co-chairman of the Go RVing Coalition. He was inducted into the RV/MH Hall of Fame in 2018. He also received RVDA's James B. Summers Award in 2001 and the association's Titan Award in 2023 (posthumously).

Pearson began his career in 1971 at age 11 with PleasureLand RV, which was owned by Dan's father. Pearson took over the dealership in 1982 with just 20 employees and later became CEO. Today, PleasureLand RV Center is one of the largest RV dealership groups in the Upper Midwest with locations in Minnesota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Online donations to the RV Learning Center Dan Pearson Legacy Fund, can be made on the learning center website. Donors must be logged into their RVDA account and indicate the gift is in Pearson's honor at the bottom of the donation form. Checks can also be mailed to: The Mike Molino RV Learning Center, 3930 University Drive, Fairfax, VA, 22030.

Other RV Learning Center Legacy Funds have been established for: Jerry Greer, Rex Floyd, Barbara Herleman, Sharon Horsey, Bob Strawn, Jim Shields, Jim Summers and Raymond Van Pelt.

For more information, visit rvlearningcenter.com.

Certified Industry Personnel Recognized by Society of RV Professionals

The Society of Certified RV Professionals recognized 18 individuals from 13 participating dealerships who earned a new certification, and four individuals that renewed their certification during the fourth quarter of 2023 through the Mike Molino RV Learning Center Fixed Operations 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 31 individuals from 19 dealerships who earned certification.

Those in the recognition program that earned a new certification are:
Cain Armstrong *(Service Writer/Adviser),* **Sarah Roake** *(Service Writer/Adviser),* **Marquell Lacy** *(Service Writer/Adviser),* **Joseph Dimunno** *(Service Writer/Adviser),* **Jessica Peters** *(Service Writer/Adviser),* **Sandra Layne** *(Service Writer/Adviser),* **Wayne Schaepe, Jr.** *(Service Writer/Adviser and Parts Specialist),* **Alison Stewart** *(Service Writer/Adviser),* **Delores Thompson** *(Warranty Administrator),* **Chloe Bellomo** *(Warranty Administrator),* **Sharen Weisen** *(Warranty Administrator),* **Anna Freeman** *(Warranty Administrator),* **Jesse Higgins** *(Parts Specialist),* **Megan Eby** *(Parts Specialist),* **Rachel Eddy** *(Parts Specialist),* **Joseph Rein** *(Parts Specialist),* **Heather Tingley** *(Parts Specialist)* **and Samantha Swier** *(Parts Specialist).*
Tina Maynard-Dodson *(recertified Service Writer/Adviser),* **Adam Traut** *(recertified Service Writer/Adviser),* **Luke Brutger** *(recertified Service Writer/Adviser)* **and Kristin Della Camera** *(recertified Parts Specialist)* **renewed their certifications.**

Fixed-ops professionals can earn certification as parts managers, parts specialists, service writers/advisers, service managers and warranty administrators with the Mike Molino RV Learning Center. For more information, visit rvda.org/rvlearning.

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FOCUS ON

COMMUNITY

As part of this month's philanthropic focus, Utah-based General RV Center is spotlighting its recent multiday volunteer project with Life Remodeled, a nonprofit with more than 5,000 volunteers working to revitalize neighborhoods throughout Detroit. Read below for the Q&A with RV PRO.



What was accomplished during this year's event?

General RV Center joined the Detroit nonprofit for its annual multiday volunteer project to clean up blight and beautify neighborhoods throughout the city. This year's project had more than 5,000 Life Remodeled volunteers working to create lasting revitalization, turning vacant properties into community hubs. Volunteers mowed lawns, raked leaves, cleared sidewalks, trimmed trees and bushes, picked up trash and cleaned up more than 500 vacant and residential lots over the six volunteer days.

How many General RV volunteers participated?

This is the second year General RV's marketing department has participated in Life Remodeled. In 2023, General RV had 28 team members take part in the project. In 2022, 21 members of General RV's marketing department took part. In addition to providing volunteers, we are also an event sponsor.

Why does the company choose to work with Life Remodeled?

More than 60 years ago, we opened our first location in the city of Detroit, and it is only appropriate that we return to give back to the community that helped our company get its start. Life Remodeled is an organization focused on building a better and brighter future for Detroit and General RV is proud to be a part of that mission.

What are the organization's goals? Does it extend outside of the Detroit area?

Life Remodeled is a local nonprofit. General RV has not volunteered with them outside of the Detroit area. The organization's unique model repurposes residential and vacant properties throughout the city into one-stop hubs that also includes other nonprofit organizations that help communities thrive. The nonprofit has three main goals:

- Help Detroit students perform at or above grade level in math and reading
- Ensure families have access to essential health and wellness services
- Help community members obtain higher paying jobs and achieve economic self-sufficiency

What other volunteer work or support does General RV offer to its surrounding community?

General RV does not participate in other volunteer work. However, the company does proudly support several charities and nonprofit organizations. As a company, we are focused on helping campers make memories in the great outdoors. Our philanthropy philosophy focuses on four pillars: environment, people, community development, and diversity and inclusion. We currently have more than 100 sponsorships across our nationwide network of stores and have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into our communities in 2023. Some examples of those we've supported this year include the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, Muskegum Watershed Conservation District (Ohio), Penrickton Center for Blind Children (Michigan), Mentoring Monday's with Penn Live (Pennsylvania), Relay for Life and more.

Why does the company feel this work is important?

General RV recognizes it is our responsibility to support the communities where we live, work and play. We are guided by our community-focused values that push us to be good neighbors in every city across our nationwide network. We are dedicated to doing our part to help create lasting and sustainable change in all of our communities. RVP

RV PRO would like to highlight the philanthropic efforts of industry companies and dealerships. Please send us 500 words about your company's volunteer work and programs for a chance to be featured in future issues! Email Managing Editor Jordan Benschop: jbenschop@cahabamedia.com.

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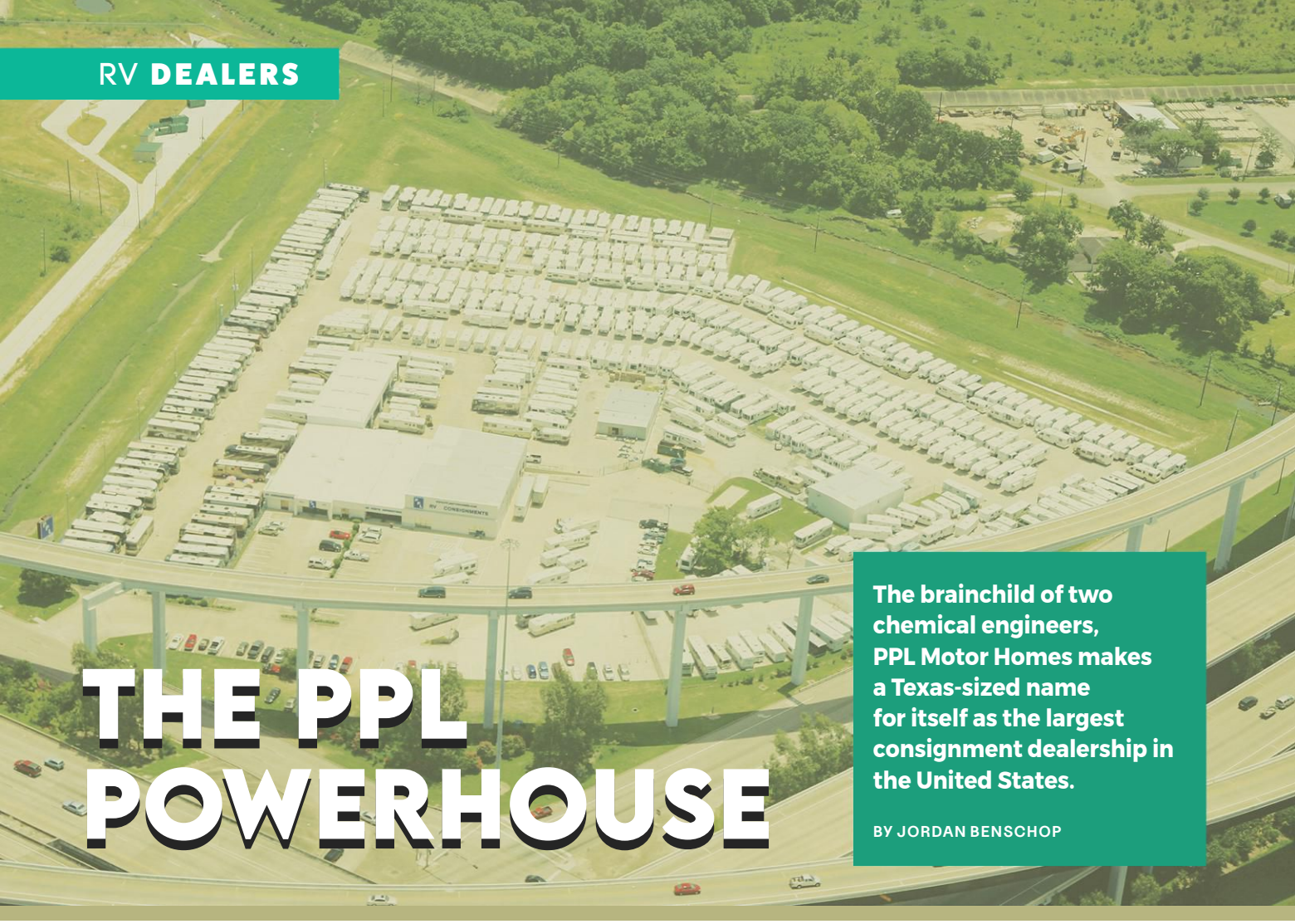
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THE PPL POWERHOUSE

The brainchild of two chemical engineers, PPL Motor Homes makes a Texas-sized name for itself as the largest consignment dealership in the United States.

BY JORDAN BENSCHOP

At summer's end in 1972, two young petrochemical engineers found themselves in the business of "matchmaking" – between RV owners and potential renters, that is. More than five decades later, what eventually became PPL Motor Homes has made a Texas-sized name for itself as a leader in RV consignment sales.

"Within six months of opening the rental portion of PPL, RV owners partnered with the dealership started wanting to sell their RVs," says Juan Tejeda, CEO of PPL Motor Homes.

That's when the business's DBA changed from PPL Leasing to PPL Listing, with a lineup of RV owners looking to permanently offer their rigs to a booming market. Founders Ron Rambin and Ed Sebesta broke ground on their first real sales lot nearly 14 years later, on South Rice Road in Houston – and still, that was just the beginning.

"This was in 1986. Prior to that, PPL



The PPL team at its El Reno, Oklahoma, grand opening in 2023



PPL's New Braunfels, Texas, location

employees were working at offices and in their vehicles. RVs were being appraised at owners' homes, and buyers who were interested were able to view the RVs at nearby storage facilities," Tejeda says. "We like to say there's some parallels to being the Airbnb of RVs, before it was cool."

The dealership didn't stop at rentals and sales, either – at one point, it became the largest RV insurance broker in Texas, a segment still present on a smaller scale in today's business. However, being the No. 1 consignment dealer in the United States is the main game, Tejeda says, bolstered by Texas currently being the No. 1 RV registration state in the country.

"Hence, PPL attracts sellers and buyers at a high level. PPL's walk-in traffic and online leads are statistically the highest in the country amongst all RV dealers in the industry," he says. "Sellers get more for their RV by selling through us than they can get through any other method."

Being a leader in pricing and intuitively knowing the worth of each unit is a core PPL practice that won't ever change, he adds – along with the company's mission to "help RV enthusiasts exit, enter and enjoy the RV lifestyle."

EYES ON EXPANSION

While the dealership only began its expansion plans in 2022, opening its first Florida location in Summerfield (currently the No. 3 state for RV registrations), Tejeda says PPL customers will travel to its shops from all over the country.

"Our first customer in Florida was from out of state, and they traveled to come and buy an RV from us. It's pretty incredible to see how much out-of-state business we do as a company. There are people who will come and list their RVs with us from all over, as well. What differentiates us is our ability to take care of those two types of customers.

"It's not easy, right? We typically deal with a buyer and seller on every transaction – very atypical to traditional dealers," Tejeda says. "That's a pretty strong value proposition when we have customers who say, 'I just got a trading price for this RV.'"



(From left): CEO Juan Tejeda, founders Ed Sebesta and Ron Rambin, Diana LeBlanc-Link (past president)

It's a simple business model, he adds, and PPL has optimism even as the market determines what an RV sells for based on traffic, condition and pricing.

"We have that down to an art and a science, and we have a lot of good resources, tools and data to support our decisions on what we do."



The dealership continues to see more listings and leads year-over-year – something it doesn't see slowing down anytime soon. PPL's total sales are up 8% compared to 2022, while Tejeda has heard some dealerships are seeing drastic drops.

PPL's brand resonates across the U.S. because of the "tremendous value" offered to both buyers and sellers, Tejeda says, but the dealership also prides itself on a strong service department. The company has two service buildings at its Oklahoma site, and with improved infrastructure, all its locations can service 10-plus units at a given time.

From a finance perspective, PPL also has one of the best lender portfolios in the country, he says.

"Whether it's having a bank that offers financing to full-timers – that's something we didn't necessarily have before but do now, so it allows us to be able to make these deals happen."

The dealership is also known for being one of the largest RV parts and accessories retailers in the country, having done hundreds of millions of dollars in parts revenue throughout the years.

That success can be attributed to a culmination of the dealership's online presence and focus on brand-building and resourcefulness. With a website established in the late '90s, PPL has garnered a healthy flow of organic traffic.

"When you start discussing year-over-year growth, overall appeal and how we rank in keywords across our respective markets, we're pretty close to the top. That's just a testament to not only SEO, but the partnerships that we have and what we've been able to do as a company through the years," Tejeda says.

"We've really evolved from a lot of traditional marketing to digital marketing and expanded our scope. It's our aspiration to continue to evolve and find ways to be optimal in our marketing strategy."

While experimentation is key to that evolution, PPL keeps an eye on practicality and a set budget that allows it to explore new and innovative ways to attract and retain customers. That also means knowing what areas and demographics are ripe for successful expansion.

"What we've experienced in Florida specifically is we're right by a community called The Villages, which is one of the largest retirement communities in the United States," Tejeda says. "There's a lot of individuals who still love to travel there, so they're a strong part of our customer demographics. What we see a lot in Florida, too, are snowbirds – people love traveling away from the cold in the North and they love going to Florida."

"WE HAVE GREAT TENURE, AND IT'S A TESTAMENT TO THE FOUNDATION WE HAVE AS A COMPANY, WITH A STRONG CULTURE THAT CARES FOR OUR EMPLOYEES."

PPL's Florida site is also near significant campgrounds, he adds, attracting people who either want to upgrade or exit RVing completely. The dealership's main consumers are typically more established or retired, leading to larger motorhomes and fifth wheels with higher price tags – and a higher average of phone-users compared to online.



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"But in Texas, we experience selling a lot of towable RVs, so it's a little different – that's been our observation in the last year.

"Young families that have entered the lifestyle is exciting to see," Tejeda says. "We've seen younger generations especially through the COVID years, so we have more people that will come for parts and service at our locations."

PPL is looking to expand across the South, from Florida to the Southwest – and it all started at dealership's flagship location in Houston, purchased in 1993 and sitting on 15 acres off the Southwest Freeway. The site has consistently ranked No. 5 for "connections" out of 1,750-plus RV dealerships by RVTrader, Tejeda says, often seen at the top of the website's rankings. PPL's four additional locations – in Texas's New Braunfels and Cleburne, along with Florida and a recent add in El Reno, Oklahoma – are also doing very well, he says, and mark the start of "strong expansion plans" for the near future.

"We're currently looking to add multiple locations in 2024 and beyond," he says.

A 'CULTURE OF CARE'

Outside of offering every segment its very best – from parts and service to consignments, sales and financing – PPL focuses on creating a strong company culture with 200 to 300 staffers on hand.

"We're in a retail-focused environment, but we believe that family is important and continue to offer our employees time off on key holidays," Tejeda says. "PPL's hours of operation are very family friendly. We close at 4 p.m. on Saturday and are closed every Sunday."

One of Tejeda's personal practices is emailing the entire company every morning with words of encouragement – something he's done since he joined PPL on Feb. 22, 2021.

"We have strong alignment, great meetings and overall structure that connects with our staff and their goals. Their success is equally important as ours."

The dealership established a "Fun Committee" that engages its employees across the company, from customer appreciation events to give-back initiatives. PPL participates in multiple state, local and industry-related nonprofit organizations, soliciting feedback from employees to choose charities and causes the dealership supports in the community.

"I'm most proud of PPL's longevity of giving back. Cuddles for Kids, Hope for Three and the Texas RV Association (TRVA) are organizations we have given back to for well over a decade," Tejeda says. Hope for Three is a preeminent autism advocacy group in the greater Houston area.

Additionally, PPL supports the Lupus Foundation of America, the Will Smith Foundation, local Chambers of Commerce and numerous industry organizations such as the Florida RV Trade Association (FRVTA), Oklahoma RV Association, RV Industry Association (RVIA) and RV Dealers Association (RVDA).

"PPL has a strong 'Culture of Care.' We aspire to consistently make a positive difference with our employees, customers, community and the RV industry," he says. "We want the industry to do well. So, we're pretty strong champions of supporting the associations, especially when it comes to government relations and how it affects our industry and totality.

"We're just super excited about what we're building at PPL," he says. "We have great tenure, and it's a testament to the foundation we have as a company, with a strong culture that cares for our employees, customers and community." RVP

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TRANSFORMING THE SINGLE-AXLE OVERLAND *& More*



Ember RV creates customizable floorplans with its **EmberTrack system,** popular in its Overland Series.

BY DARIAN ARMER

When Chris Barth joined forces with Ashley Bontrager Lehman, Steve Delagrange and Ernie Miller to build the foundation for a better RV company, the first step for Ember Recreational Vehicles was to create a product that would take their goals to "another universe." Enter the single-axle Overland.

"We wanted to address the new buyers out there who are camping in a more nontraditional and unconventional way. They don't want to be around other people as much. They're experiencing wanderlust. They're camping in more rustic spaces and off-grid. So, we're focusing on solar and off-grid capabilities," says Barth, Ember co-founder, vice president and chief operating officer. "I was very interested in the overland space, which was a growing interest in the U.S. People want the great American road trip with more of an emphasis on the journey than the destination. It's not just about being there anymore."

Off-roading and overlanding are growing in popularity and emerging in part because of Jeep culture. People are integrating more of their outdoor





lifestyle into their everyday life.

"The outdoor industry is huge in the U.S. We assessed that and thought, what if our new post-pandemic customer says, 'I don't want a campground. I want to be able to go wherever I want, however I want, and no one is taking my vacation away,'" Barth says.

In creating their Overland Series, Ember looked at the Australian RV market, where almost all caravans are built for off-roading. Barth says they specifically looked at their suspension systems and then partnered with CURT to create a brand-new independent suspension system, laying the foundation for the Overland Series.

A FOCUS ON OPTIMUM QUALITY

Ember began by creating a smaller, single-axle RV based on the idea that they wanted to build a higher quality coach.

"We focus on designing and building quality into our RVs, not inspecting quality in. Better, higher quality materials and smarter, more intentional designs at the front end mean less failed inspections and post-production issues," Barth says. "This is a space not currently catered to by traditional RV manufacturers."

The Overland Series RV doesn't have a typical axle going all the way across. The independent suspension has heavy-duty coil springs with dual shock absorbers on each wheel and allows for better ground clearance.

"It's just not something that's typical in the conventional RV space," he says.

"We launched this new type of suspension with CURT and used up all their production of that in the initial run. Multiple other manufacturers are now looking at and using the new system. It really makes for a unique ride and something that's very different than what is typically done in single axles. With this system we gain an additional 6 to 8 inches and the suspension absorbs the noise, not your trailer, so there's not as much feedback in the tow vehicle."

Barth says they began showing their Overland product at shows in January 2021 and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive since then.

"The first models were all single axle and then tandem axle came in the summertime. Single axle is what we have most of out in the marketplace," he says. "We've been asked to build bigger and different models since then. We've really had fantastic feedback from customers about their wants and needs."

A TRANSFORMER FOR ALL CUSTOMER TYPES

In response to customer feedback, Barth says they developed a modularized design on their floorplans: EmberTrack (patent pending). The EmberTrack allows the owner to completely reconfigure areas of their RV depending on how they want to use it.

"We have 10 different floorplans in the Overland Series. We are matching up with very specific sets of customers. We see a whole lot of hybrid use now in our space. Maybe grandparents buy our coaches with a back end that's totally reconfigurable. One trip it's just them and they have gear in there. Next weekend, next trip, they're bringing the grandkids so they reconfigure that storage space to turn it into a bunkroom."

EmberTrack allows for traditional bunk beds at one point, then expandable, reconfigurable panels allow it to become a storage space for kayaks and bikes or it can become a desk area or shelving at different heights. The camper can be many different floorplans at once.

Barth says they have at least 2,000 customers using Ember RVs currently, and that number is still growing.

"The EmberTrack system has been a huge, huge deal. We're also known for using composite materials. The floor, sidewalls and rooftop are made of composite materials. We're not using wood on that outer structure. We use a specialty flooring material and use Azdel, a composite panel, on the inner and outer wall, which protects the coach from rot, mold or mildew and makes them lighter weight."

Barth says they build their coaches using European windows imported from the Netherlands. They're dual-pane acrylic and have an integrated shade and screen that open super wide. Barth says the windows are more thermally insulated and better than a dual-pane glass window.

"It makes them aesthetically pleasing, but it also makes them more expensive. But that's what makes the difference in quality. Some things we're known for are a little bit different," Barth says. "We are the first users of the specialty wheel lock, TreadLock (also patent pending). TreadLock can lock down the wheel so it doesn't move backward or forward similar to a wheel chock. Then we isolate the side-to-side movements by using specialty QuickDrop stabilizers on all four corners."



The MSRP for the Overland Series RVs are between $50,000 and $67,000.

Barth says some holdups people may have about purchasing a single-axle unit is that they worry about extra sway and weight distribution, and suspension setup or tire wear.

Barth says there are effective aftermarket ways to combat sway control with weight-distribution hitches and sway bars. Ember addressed the fear of suspension and tire wear by building an upgraded suspension and upgraded tires with a standard tire pressure monitoring system (TPMS).

"We use Goodyear Wrangler Tires you would find on a truck. These are brand-name, off-road tires. So those concerns people have, we've already answered those," Barth says. "When you tow one of our coaches, you see that they handle differently. Our delivery drivers will say, 'Whoa! This is really different. Like driving on a cloud.' Trailers they've hauled in the past have different ride attributes."

THE FUTURE OF THE EMBER UNIVERSE

Ember has over 100 dealership locations across North America. Barth says it's a blend of big, regional dealers and smaller mom-and-pop shops.

"We love to have that blend. We make sure we have dealers known for their service that have many service bays available. We're still expanding further into Canada and around the country. Initially, we didn't want to expand too quickly, and we wanted to hit major markets, so we tried to find the right dealership partners," he says.

Rather than a customer service department, Barth says Ember has an Ownership Experience team.

"The goal was to make it so we have support for dealers before, during and after the sale. There is usually sales support, marketing support and lots of before-sale talk, but then some manufacturers don't carry it through after. We have tools where dealers and customers can work with us and support them really well through the Ownership Experience group," he says.

Ember RV offers the 123 Warranty, because getting warranty help with Ember is "Easy as 1-2-3," Barth says. During the first year of ownership, an owner can do a one-time transfer of the warranty. The two stands for the two-year limited warranty, and the three stands for a three-year limited structural warranty to support the build of each Ember unit.

"After we debuted the Overland series in 2021, we looked at more discussions about where we were heading and the clientele we tried to serve in the Overland Series. We were like, 'This is our hiking boot. What if we wanted to build a really fantastic running shoe. An over-the-road experience and a beautiful, luxury experience,'" Barth says.

Ember RV's Touring edition debuted in the fall of 2022. Then, in the fall of 2023, the company debuted the E-Series. Barth says the E-Series was in response to customers who loved what Ember did, loved off-grid and also loved the Touring, but asked for something at a little bit more affordable price point. The "E" in E-Series stands for "Essential."

"We want to offer something at all different price points and in all types of use cases," Barth says.

That means that Ember is already looking to the next product.

"People began asking about a toy hauler. We asked, 'Well, what are you going to bring along?' The most common response was active-type lifestyle equipment like mountain bikes, kayaks – enough for the whole family – or even grill equipment. It's not just motorcycles or side by sides," Barth says. "We decided to create a gear hauler. A gear hauler is like having a garage. Featuring the EmberTrack system throughout the interior allows the space to be convertible from sleeping space to cargo and equipment storage. Putting a ramp on the back was logical to easily load and unload. I'm a huge fan of modular design because of the expandability and flexibility we can give our customers."

With this all in mind, next up for Ember RV is the 240TKR, which features a twin bed setup in the front that can be converted to a king bed.

"Traditional, luxury and adventure trailers are the three segments we're in right now. Where we are headed for the future is designing more floorplans and products so our customers can have great flexibility and get more bang for their buck. We're trying to make sure we're building these three lines of travel trailers really, really well."

Ember may have been born out of the pandemic, but it is also the culmination of years of industry knowledge coming together to create a different type of RV.

"Our team worked together previously," Barth says about Ashley Bontrager Lehman, Ember founder, president and CEO, and also Miller and Delagrange. "We watched the pandemic make customers, dealers and manufacturers do unexpected things. The customer base changed significantly, and their needs evolved. People began using RVs in different spaces and in different ways.

"We all bonded around the idea of wanting to build a better RV in response to how we had seen RVs previously built. Sometimes the way an RV is built is guided by what's best for the customer, but more frequently by how inexpensively it can be produced," Barth says. "We decided we could use better materials and do a better design. All our talks about how to build a better RV shifted into how to build a better RV company. We wanted to make sure we were putting the right people in the right seats to make sure

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Eclipse RV: Committed to Innovation & Quality



Eclipse Director of Sales Dewey Ulbright

Eclipse RV's **Milan travel trailers** uphold the company's 20-year tradition of durability.

BY RONNIE WENDT

In the RV world, Eclipse RV is a name that stands as a testament to innovation and adaptability.

Dallen and Joanne Trealoff founded the Riverside, California, company in 2003 to change the way people experience the outdoors. Their vision was to build RVs that broke away from the conventional mold, offering something fresh and exciting to the market.

Their journey began with a focus on toy haulers, with their flagship brand, Attitude, soon gaining immense popularity in the Southwest. Eclipse carved a niche for itself to compete against RV industry giants.

Eclipse quickly expanded its product line, introducing Stellar and Iconic toy haulers to meet the growing demand for these coaches, says Dewey Ulbright, director of sales.

In 2008, the economic downturn forced many manufacturers and dealerships out of business. Eclipse RV, known for its commitment to quality and innovation, rose to the occasion introducing smaller, lightweight travel trailers. Eclipse RV continued to build the Milans until 2015. Thereafter, the overwhelming demand for toy haulers took priority.

As the 2022 market shifted, Eclipse RV decided to reintroduce the Milan, which offers 7-foot-wide single-axles. The decision to go with single axles wasn't without skepticism, Ulbright recalls. "Even consumers had concerns about their performance, safety and towing capabilities," he says.





Eclipse President Joanne Trealoff

Eclipse's single-axle travel trailers built to toy-hauler standards, with an all-aluminum laminated wall system, changed perceptions quickly.

These single-axle trailers were a perfect fit for the changing RV market as people sought more affordable options, coupled with the need for fuel-efficient tow vehicles. Eclipse's Milan Series appeals to budget-conscious, first-time buyers and adventure-seeking families with its reduced wind resistance and compact design, Ulbright says.

As an industry leader, Eclipse has been able to pivot production toward affordable and efficient travel trailers when the world needed them the most, Ulbright recalls. The company's ability to meet needs through revolution and product is unchanged today.

"We are not sitting on our haunches waiting for Brand X to do something we can copy, we are out there trying to figure out how our RVs can look different, feel different and be different," he says. "There are a lot of cookie-cutter operations out there. We are not one of them. When we see a need for a change, we make that running change on the production line immediately."

THE MILAN TODAY

Today, Eclipse RV offers two single-axle trailer models, but Ulbright says a third model will be added soon.

He explains the company's research revealed most customers in the market for a single-axle trailer are couples with children, who have smaller SUVs and do not want to RV full time. "These customers don't want to tow a monster fifth wheel around, they just want something small to get out to local parks, or to take a short statewide or multi-state trip," he says.

The company's 7-foot-wide, 20-foot-long 16MBH Milan with a dry weight of 3,700 pounds, a 1,300-pound cargo capacity and a bunkhouse floorplan meets these customer's needs. Another option for them is the 20BHS Milan, which is a single-axle trailer with a single slideout that houses a U-shaped dinette. This unit has two larger bunks in the back, with a queen bed up front and a 4,600-pound dry weight.

Another customer category is couples who want something smaller for weekend or week-long getaways. That's where the third single-axle model will fit. "It will be a couple's trailer and will go into production in early 2024," Ulbright says.

All of these customers increasingly seek off-grid camping options, he adds. "We now offer an off-grid package with 200-watt solar panels, 1,500-watt inverter systems, and an optional lithium battery package," he says. "This change allows customers to go off-grid and not worry about their power needs."

QUALITY EVIDENT FROM THE OUTSIDE

At a glance, the Milan's differences are evident. Eclipse RV has woven a tapestry of innovation into the fabric of this travel trailer. Its strong, aluminum frame and laminated wall construction is both sturdy and lightweight. Ulbright explains, "We put in larger windows to ensure people do not feel cramped inside and added higher-end graphics on the coach, so it looks as nice as it functions."



The travel trailer's durability is enhanced by additional features such as a PVC roof with a 15-year warranty. The roof doesn't require special cleaners or conditioners like old-style EPDM rubber roofs. "It's not maintenance-free, but it's definitely a roof that can hold up to more punishment from the elements," he says.

The RV features 1-inch-thick insulated baggage and compartment doors, compared to the 1/2-inch industry standard, and a continuous hinge system that will hold up to regular use. "These features provide a little more peace of mind for customers that the doors are going to open and close many times," he says.

Milan travel trailers use Gladiator wheels and tires, just like the company's toy haulers. "They are a tougher, more expensive tire," Ulbright says. "We also overbuilt our suspensions using what's called a wet bolt, heavy-duty, off-road suspension. Each shackle bolt has a grease zerk fitting in it, so they do not wear out as fast in dirty and sandy environments."

The exterior also offers hookups for satellite systems, as well as outside showers and an optional power tongue jack, he adds.

QUALITY THROUGHOUT THE COACH

Joanne Trealoff, president of Eclipse, designs every interior, keeping in mind the customer's need for high-end function, comfort and design, according to Ulbright.

"This means you'll see higher quality faucets, cabinets, cabinet door pulls, fixtures and more," he says. "We don't buy cookie-cutter furniture. We have a custom manufacturer build our furniture. We also offer solid surface countertops and foot-flush porcelain toilets."

All of these features combine into a classy, modern look and a design that flows. "We also look beyond what looks good," he says. "We test it out to make sure it will last. We take the extra steps to make sure it will work before we use it."

All drawers and bed platforms are made out of marine-grade, treated plywood as opposed to OSB (oriented strand board) because, according to Ulbright, "the benefit here is that it holds up, it won't come apart during daily use."

The coach's GE HVAC systems have a cold-air return system, much like a home HVAC system. "This means when the air conditioner kicks on and it's 100-plus degrees outside, condensation will not build up in your roof area, causing mold and mildew to grow," he says. "We use GE because they have an excellent, lightweight air conditioner that takes up less space on the roof. These 13,500-BTU air conditioners can also run on a 2,200-watt portable suitcase generator, when many other manufacturer's air conditioners cannot," Ulbright says.

Eclipse's appliances are top end, beginning with 12-volt, 10-cubic-foot refrigerators. "We still offer a gas-electric refrigerator for customers who want them, yet the benefit of a 12-volt refrigerator is that it's much larger and doesn't need ventilation out of the coach, so it eliminates the need for roof and wall vents."

Consumers can choose between a three-burner cooktop with a gas oven below or a two-burner cooktop with no oven. "All coaches still offer a microwave, with larger coaches offering a larger microwave," he says.

A 6-gallon, tank-style water heater comes standard. However, Eclipse RV also offers an on-demand tankless water heater as an option on many floorplans.

The company offers options to the customer who would like to go off grid, as well – solar power and inverter, power jacks, heated enclosed tanks and upgrades on TVs.

FUTURE PLANS

In 2021, Dallen Trealoff passed away; Joanne has continued to live the dream they built together. The company keeps the focus on people: People build the RVs, people sell them, and people use them – the company says it's all about people creating memories while enjoying their adventures. Eclipse RV continues to honor and live by the quote Dallen thrived on: "Don't tell me what I can't do until I've done it." RVP

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CHARGING AHEAD



The impact of the lithium iron phosphate battery and a look forward to the rest of 2024.

BY AVANTI LALWANI, BRITER PRODUCTS

While a 2016 article in The Economist may have been overly enthusiastic that the lithium battery would be the "Technology of Our Time," their position has proven accurate and prescient. The article concluded that lithium battery technology had the potential of having a global impact in a very short time.

Astonishingly, that is exactly what we have all experienced within the RV industry. Projected to grow at 33% annually until 2030, lithium-based batteries have changed our world. Automotive, consumer electronics, solar and electrical storage systems have all been transformed by lithium batteries and their related chemistries. Reliance on lithium batteries forms the basis for our ability to access resources, stay mobile and obtain support and communications.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in the 1990s, lithium batteries enabled consumer electronics to run longer between charges. Around 10 years ago, RV manufacturers and RVers realized that lithium batteries – specifically those of lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO4) chemistry – could provide the "house" power needed during camping. Developments in charging and discharging, safety, depth of discharge, weight and low-resistance fast-charging made the LiFePO4 format uniquely suited for RVing.

For RVers, there was a need for an alternative power source beyond the use of the generator if shore power was unavailable. Just 10 years ago, the idea of running an RVer's residential fridge for the weekend on shore power was unreachable. Now, it's a reality. Manufacturers and RVers can optimize their coaches' battery banks to run refrigerators, air conditioners and more – all free from shore power and generators. As a testament to LiFePO4 technology, not only are RVers demanding more of their onboard battery systems, but so are legislators, RV manufacturers, equipment designers, the automotive industry and the electrochemical research community. Each of these independent and influential market shapers recognize that the lithium battery and its different variations hold the key to some of the most complex issues of our time.

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, these issues are already being addressed. The Federal Consortium for Advanced Batteries (FCAB), funded through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), has allocated funds for establishing and securing a resilient domestic supply chain for lithium batteries. Establishing a commitment to meet current battery research challenges, and developing a manufacturing base that meets the needs of electric vehicle and electrical grid storage markets, the FCAB has proven impactful and a friend to the RV community. In the National Blueprint for Lithium Batteries 2021–2030, an end-to-end plan has been set that includes provisions for lithium-battery research, recycling, incentivizing STEM academics and safety programs. As of August 2023, there are 30 battery plants either planned or under construction in the U.S. that have had support via grants or tax incentives from the IRA.

Lithium technology will play a key role regarding newly enacted environmental standards. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) enacted mandates to drastically reduce air pollution. Among those are the Small Off-Road Engines (SORE) Standards set to take effect in 2024. This legislation signals confidence in technological projections for both lithium battery and alternative energy formats – it requires that generators emit 40% to 90% less emissions by 2024 and zero emissions by 2028.

Manufacturers of equipment included in this legislation will offer a new line of generators for the California market. Six other states are considering following California's precedent. For the end consumer, the state of California is offering incentives to owners of SOREs to ease the transition, and the IRA includes incentives for solar generator installations



(which are often lithium-based).

In an unexpected change, the automotive industry has also set its sights on LiFePO4. Initially invested in lithium cobalt chemistries due to its high energy density, 2023 saw 14 out of 15 major auto manufacturers decide in favor of lithium-iron phosphate batteries for automotive use. IHS Markit estimates that globally more than 98% of lithium material will be allocated to automotive applications. The remaining 2% is mostly for consumer electronics and energy storage. The significance and impact of this 2023 development cannot be overstated; electric vehicle (EV) manufacturers such as Tesla, Ford and BMW have announced the migration from cobalt-based EV batteries to LiFePO4 batteries.

Already the de facto standard battery type for RVs for years, the EV market is now switching to LiFePO4 chemistry because of its energy density characteristics. The relative safety, reliability and cost meets or exceeds the lithium cobalt chemistries' characteristics. This development is expected to fuel an even greater concentration of research and development resources for next-generation lithium iron phosphate batteries. It is expected that LiFePO4 will make gradual improvements in energy density, safety and cost over the next two to three years. The batteries available now up until 2025 are considered first-generation batteries.

Though we are still amid the first generation of lithium iron phosphate batteries, early adopters in the RV community have started to go beyond the 12-volt format for lithium batteries and are now installing 24-volt and 48-volt systems. We expect cases and applications to increase over time and become customized, as power requirements on the battery systems reduce the necessity of shore power hookups and on-board generators and safety features become more efficiently responsive.

INTO THE FUTURE

Upcoming developments in LiFePO4 batteries will focus on 1) improved specific energy and energy density, 2) longer lifetime, 3) improved safety/less flammability, 4) faster recharge rates and 5) reduced LCOE (levelized cost of electricity).

These five key LiFePO4 batteries performance characteristics were the initial differentiators between lead acid-based batteries and lithium-based batteries, and are based on the complex chemistries of materials and their interactions in the batteries.

Areas of research that are showing great promise for the future are the development of anode and cathode materials, electrolytes, separators and current collectors. (Anode materials, typically graphite, are where lithium ions are stored when the batteries are charged.)

The choice of cathode significantly impacts specific energy. Research into more efficient cathode materials can increase energy density. Lithium nickel manganese cobalt (Li-NMC) batteries have a higher density than LiFePO4 batteries; however, they are also more volatile.

Research into electrolyte chemistry is critical for lightening of the battery weight and is crucial for battery-cell safety, cycle life, power capability and reversibly accessing stored battery charge. As lithium metal batteries begin a new generation of on-board power, researchers are focusing on new electrolytes, which will allow more efficient metal cycling.

Research and development of battery management systems and battery informatics play pivotal roles in assessing the state-of-health of the batteries and are an important part of its safety system. To aid in the development of battery data sets and create a repository of research globally, the Global Battery Alliance is charged to help create a sustainable battery value chain and data repository.

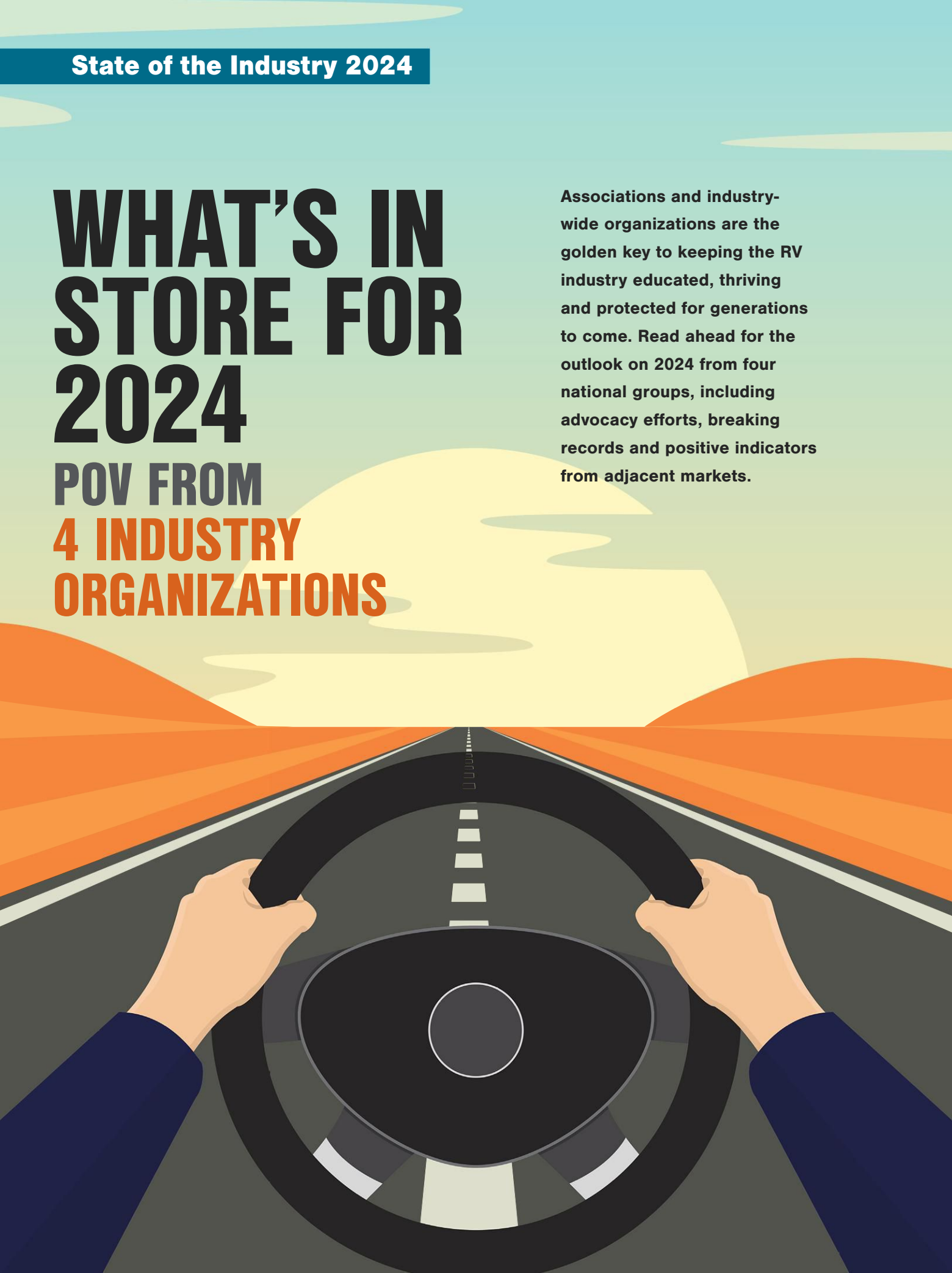
LiFePO4 batteries have been used in RVs for years. With increasing demands on this evolving technology, 2024 and beyond will see unmatched levels of government funding. The size of the automotive market will have major impacts on lithium batteries, as related research will have cross benefits to RVs. Governmental agencies and communities will require cleaner energy sources. Also, RV manufacturers and RVers will be leading the way shaping lithium batteries in 2024. RVP

Avanti Lalwani is CEO of Briter Products, a South Bend, Indiana, manufacturer and installer of custom RV solar systems and lithium batteries, and the 2023 winner of the "World's Greatest Battery" award.

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2024

POV FROM 4 INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS

Associations and industry-wide organizations are the golden key to keeping the RV industry educated, thriving and protected for generations to come. Read ahead for the outlook on 2024 from four national groups, including advocacy efforts, breaking records and positive indicators from adjacent markets.





RVIA: ADVOCATING FOR CAMPGROUND IMPROVEMENTS & MORE

An optimistic look forward for 2024.

CRAIG KIRBY, PRESIDENT & CEO
RV INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

As we look to 2024, I can't help but feel optimistic about the direction of our industry. Interest in the outdoors and RVing has exploded over the last few years; the median age of new RV buyers has dropped to only 32 years old; these buyers are more diverse than ever before; and all are enjoying the health benefits of recreating in nature. Our industry also continues to be an economic powerhouse with the latest numbers from the Bureau of Economic Analysis showing that RVing is the No. 1 contributor to the conventional outdoor recreation economy for two years running. To top it off, there is growing consensus that the recent economic headwinds are beginning to subside.

The RV industry has stepped up to meet the needs of new buyers with innovative products to fit every lifestyle and every budget. Even when faced with challenging economic conditions, RVing provides an affordable way for families and friends to experience the great outdoors and create lasting memories and connections with loved ones. This fact was confirmed by the 2023 Vacation Cost Comparison Study conducted by the CBRE Hotels Advisory Group that found RV vacations are up to 60% less expensive than other comparable vacations. This year, Go RVing will continue to weave in the message of affordability throughout our earned media efforts and paid marketing campaign.

While there is much to be optimistic about, we must continue to be vigilant about delivering a first-class experience for RVers. To that end, the RV Industry Association's Government Affairs Advocacy Team has been pushing hard on our federal policy agenda – with a significant focus on critical issues like campground modernization and expansion, as well as addressing tax and trade issues impacting companies in our industry. Our relationship with the campground industry has never been stronger, and the newly formed RV Campground Coalition will continue the association's work to unify the entire industry around the importance of campgrounds to the current and future health of RV camping.

On the service side, the industry's investment in the RV Technical Institute is paying dividends. Over the past two years, the institute has recruited over 2,200 new RV techs into the field and there are currently 15,000 individuals enrolled in some type of technician training. Even more impressive, there are 5,000 newly certified technicians – the largest number of certified techs in the RV industry's history and over 800 RV dealerships have at least one certified RV technician on staff. Filling the funnel with more highly trained technicians is an incredibly important facet of our continued efforts to improve repair event cycle time (RECT) and enhance the customer experience.

Our Standards Department and its team of inspectors continue to be an extremely valued member benefit, maintaining our industry's self-regulation and promoting the enhancement of safety by monitoring adherence to the standards adopted by the board of directors for the construction of RVs and park model RVs. This year we are excited to expand the standards training offered to our members, further improving understanding and compliance with changing standards.

Lastly, this year the RV Industry Association will celebrate 50 years of serving the RV industry and the companies and people that build the products that create fun and everlasting memories for millions of people every year. Our past success has come from the entire industry uniting and working together to overcome obstacles – and our future successes will as well. From self-regulation, sustainability and consumer marketing to industry training and advocacy, we're stronger together than apart. RVP

RVDA: SIGNS OF ENCOURAGEMENT



Buoyed by projected camping activity.

BY PHIL INGRASSIA, PRESIDENT
RV DEALERS ASSOCIATION

The RV industry spent much of the last 12 months in a three-way balancing act involving manufacturer production levels, dealer inventory issues and retail demand. The RV market faced some challenging economic headwinds including high interest rates, inflation and volatile consumer sentiment.

The industry will be watching first quarter RV retail show demand closely to gauge how consumers are feeling about their economic prospects as 2024 unfolds. RV dealers and lenders continue to work together to provide as many people as possible with affordable financing options so they can make that first or repeat purchase.

As I write this, the RV industry is expected to experience something of a rebound in 2024, with wholesale shipments projected to rise 20% to 25% over the projected range of 287,000 to 307,000 units delivered to dealers in 2023. RV retail registration is pegged at about 350,000 units.

Camping Activity on the Rise

Despite rising interest rates and inflation, consumer interest in RV travel remains high. Kampgrounds of America (KOA) reports that more than half of active campers have already booked a trip in 2024. Many people work remotely and have more flexibility in their schedules, so the length of stay is also increasing.

For vacationers, RV travel and camping continue to be ideal ways to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life and reconnect with nature. It is also a comparatively affordable way to travel, which is appealing during inflationary times. Through Go RVing, the industry is reaching out to prospective RV owners with increasingly sophisticated messaging designed to drive all ages of customers to RV dealerships.

These new RV owners need places to go, and thanks to RVDA and RVIA's leadership role in the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, the industry is leading the charge for more investment in the nation's public campground and recreation infrastructure.

Service Demand Expected to Remain High

Dealers, manufacturers and suppliers continue working on ways to provide customers with a more hassle-free experience through the repair event cycle time (RECT) initiative, which is focused on improving parts identification and warranty processes to improve service after the sale. Dealers across the county are adding service capacity through facility expansion and investment in technician training through the RV Technical Institute (RVTI).

At the same time, the Mike Molino RV Learning Center is also working hard to provide accessible and affordable educational opportunities for front-line fixed operations employees through certification programs and online training for service and parts management personnel.

Regulatory Issues

So, while industry initiatives to improve RECT are underway, RVDA continues to focus on protecting dealers from outside forces that could negatively impact the business. These include the proposed Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) CARS Rule (combating auto retail scams) that would significantly affect how dealers market RVs and sell voluntary protection products like service contracts. RVDA is also working with our partners at RVIA to restore full deductibility for travel trailer floorplan interest for dealers with more than $25 million in annual revenue. And, RVDA provides support for several states that are interested in RV specific legislation that gives dealers and manufacturers more consistency under state motor vehicle franchise laws.

An Eye on the Long-Term

RV travel remains a great way to see the country, experience the outdoors, and have fun with friends and family. Focusing on the affordability and flexibility of motorhomes, travel trailers and truck campers has proved to be a winning and long-term formula for success. As the industry and nation navigate uncertain times, it can be valuable to focus on the foundational appeal of RV travel that millions of Americans enjoy. RVP

RVTI: CONTINUING TO BREAK TRAINING RECORDS



Ensuring a better future for the RV industry by providing more skilled technicians.

BY CURTIS HEMMELER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RV TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

In just five short years since its inception, the RV Technical Institute's technician training program has quickly become recognized as the RV industry's gold standard. By leveraging decades of industry experience and partnering with the top RV manufacturer and supplier leaders in the field, we have developed the most up-to-date and influential RV technician training program ever built.

In a word, the RV Technical Institute (RVTI) is about the future. With millions of new RV buyers over the last few years and millions more planning a purchase, there's more demand and opportunity for skilled RV technicians than ever before.

To keep RVers happy and on the road, RVTI launched a significant tech recruitment effort in 2022. We partnered with the School Counselors Association to attend events across the country with the goal of educating high school counselors about the RV industry and the current demand for technicians. While we continued interfacing with counselors at events, our efforts have evolved as we focus on implementing our curriculum into high schools – something we did successfully in three states during 2023. RVTI staff are training teachers to become certified RV technician instructors and teach the program to their students. As a result, interested high school students are now able to graduate as a certified Level 1 RV technician.

RVTI is also stepping up our advertising and marketing efforts to attract career changers and job seekers to the RV industry. In 2023, our digital and social ads delivered over 20 million impressions and over 10,000 leads, generating increased awareness about the RV industry, our gold standard training program, and employment opportunities that come with training. Throughout the past year, over 1,000 technicians who were new to the RV industry enrolled in the institute's programs and over 800 dealerships now have at least one certified RV technician on staff.

2023 also marked new highs with 15,000 individuals enrolled in some type of training and 5,000 newly certified technicians – the largest number of certified techs in the RV industry's history.

A significant area of opportunity on the recruitment front is attracting more women into the RV technician field. That's why we have a recruitment campaign specifically targeting women who are interested in becoming RV techs. Additionally, after a successful pilot class in 2022, the RV Women's Alliance (RVWA) and RVTI took their All-Female Technical Class nationwide in 2023. Six classes were offered across the United States, including classes in Texas, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Florida and Indiana. More all-female classes will be offered this year through the partnership with the RVWA.

Our multipronged approach to recruitment has been very successful, allowing RVTI to reach people from outside our industry who can be trained to fill RV technician jobs now, and people who will fill the pipeline with the RV technicians of the future.

For those technicians who are already in the industry seeking continuing education, RVTI launched the highly anticipated Level 3 training in 2023. Partnering with industry suppliers, Level 3 training in electrical, chassis, electronics, appliances and slideouts helps current techs increase their skills and expertise on specific RV systems and components, focused on advanced diagnostics, troubleshooting and repair. New Level 3 classes are constantly being added to the approved curriculum, and we will also be hosting Level 3 specialty clinics for all five specialties in 2024, allowing technicians an easy way to attain Level 4 Master Technician Certification.

There's a saying that the best way to predict the future is to create it. If that's the case, then the RV Technical Institute is well positioned to help deliver outstanding customer service and a better RVing experience for millions of RVers in the future. RVP



RVWA: CONTINUED GROWTH FOR WOMEN

Networking and education in store.

BY SUSAN CARPENTER, PRESIDENT
RV WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

In just five short years, the RV Women's Alliance (RVWA) has accomplished more than we thought possible. When a group of like-minded women – and men – came together to launch this organization, our goal was to make the RV industry a place where women thrive. With a focus on providing opportunities to elevate educate and promote women, we are thrilled to see the progress we have made. Since 2019, we've grown from 200 attendees at our kickoff event to nearly 2,700 members now participating in networking, education, community service and career development activities.

Providing impactful education and networking opportunities is the cornerstone of all RVWA activities, none of which have as much of an impact as the Educational Symposium. For the past two years, the fall event has left an indelible mark on all those who were fortunate enough to attend. The resounding success and positive feedback from attendees have set the bar high for future events and our volunteer leaders are already working to improve the event even more in 2024.

Additionally, our Summer Discussion Series, covering topics like sales, negotiation leadership and employee development, has become a platform for continuous learning for our members. This series, along with educational workshops, will continue



in 2024 with even more opportunities for women in our industry to develop additional skills.

Our members come from every part of the RV industry – from the campground to the corner office. From industry veterans to those hunting for their first role, we learn and grow from one another. Our commitment to mentorship has thrived with the pilot program launched in 2022. The number of mentorship partners continues to grow, and we will be expand this year.

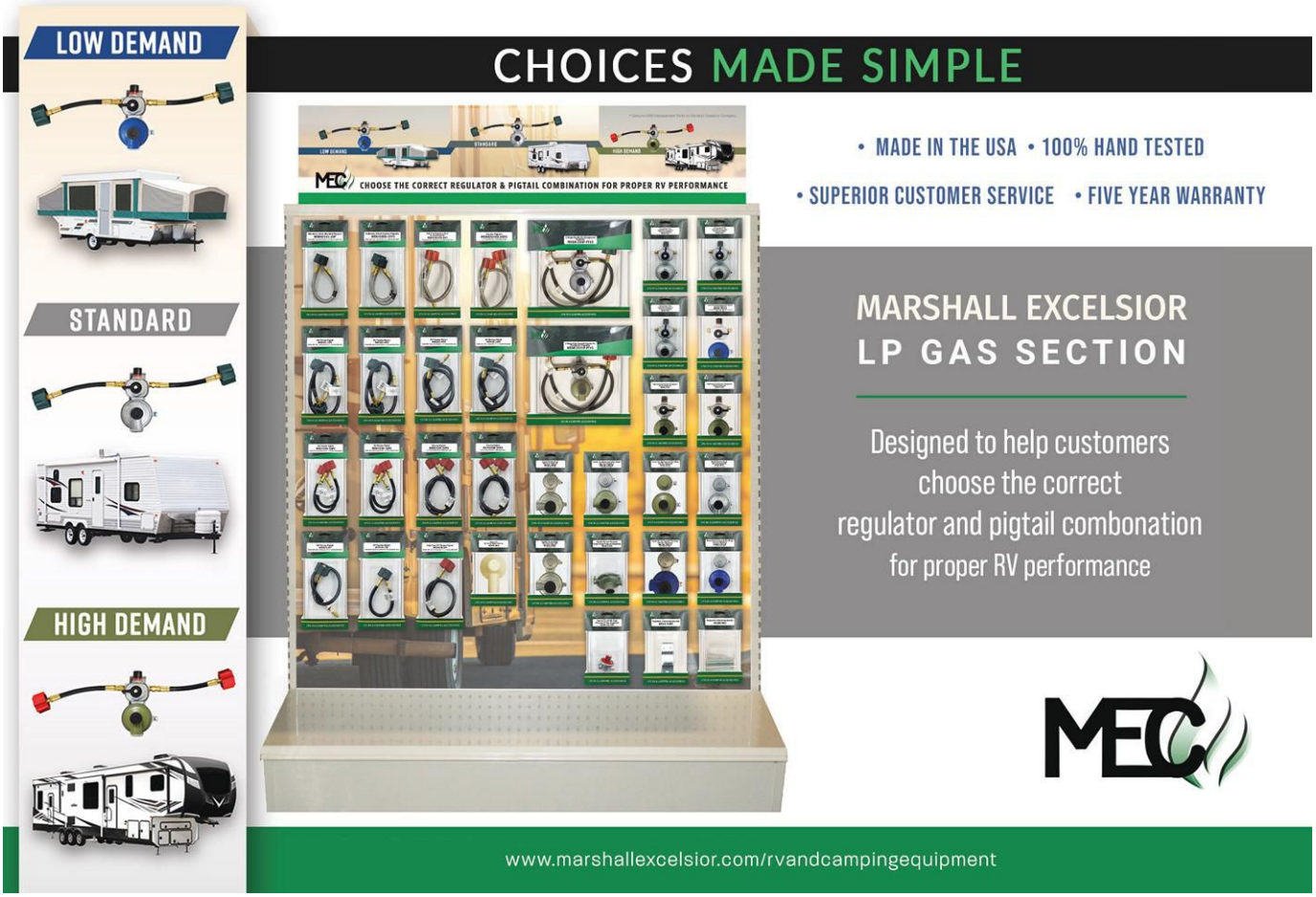
In 2023, our focus on empowering women in technical roles within the RV industry has yielded inspiring results. Through six tech classes held in different locations, we've witnessed a significant increase in female technicians and an even greater increase in women taking training courses at the RVTI, rising from 5% to an impressive 37% for in-person classes. In 2024, we will continue our partnership with RVTI and offer even more all-female classes this year.

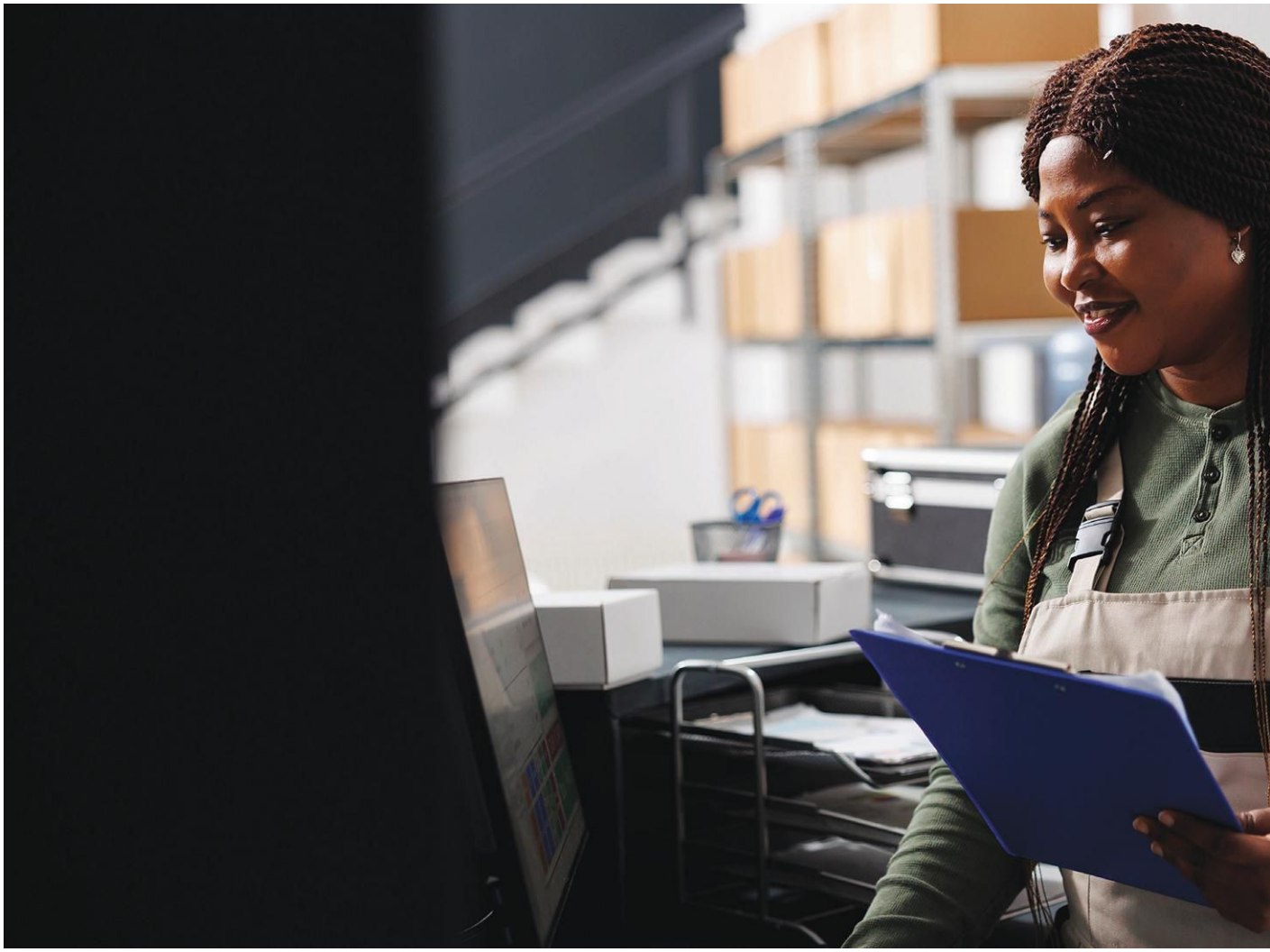
Our annual campout, a hallmark event, has brought together a community of 120 people per day. It not only fostered camaraderie but also provided a platform for engaging activities, including interactions with local girl scout troops, a Cinco De Mayo celebration and a Kentucky Derby Day. These events showcase the positive spirit and connections within the RVWA.

Looking ahead, the overwhelming demand from our community has inspired us to announce another RV Build Project that will kick off this year. This exciting venture will further engage our members and contribute to the growth and visibility of women in the RV industry.

Lastly, we have some exciting changes to our leadership team in 2024 with THOR Industries' Denise Chariya transitioning from chair-elect into the chair role, and Susan Carpenter transitioning from the dual role of president and chair to the role of president. We also recently welcomed Patricia Carrera as the new managing director. Rounding out our executive committee is Thetford's Tracy Anglemeyer as chair-elect, Valley Screen's Karen Barrnett as treasurer and NTP-STAG's Jennet Lewis as secretary.

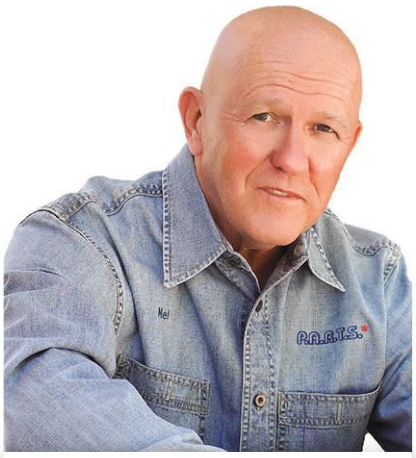
Thanks to the continued financial support from our partners and donors, we can maintain a complimentary membership experience, allowing women from the industry easy access to educational and networking opportunities to improve their careers. RVP



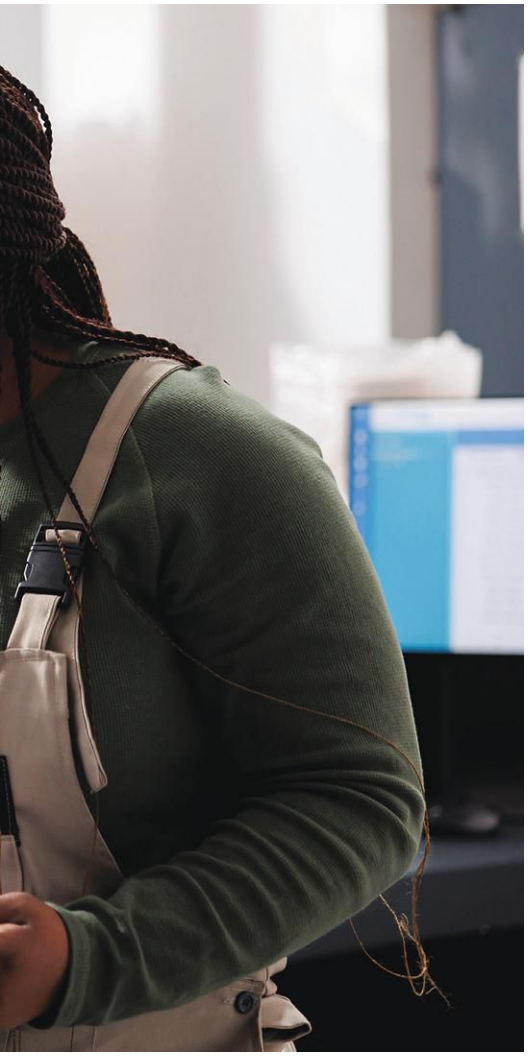


The Times They Are A-Challenging

Efficient methods to ensure your parts and accessories inventory tracking is accurate.



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.



To improvise on a verse from a Bob Dylan song, "the times they are a-challenging." For many businesses, these times are challenging from both an economic and a staffing aspect. Economically, it is important for businesses to efficiently manage their parts and accessories inventories so just enough of the right stuff is available for sale and none of the unnecessary goods are on hand. From the standpoint of staffing levels, "help wanted" signs are prevalent, which indicates that businesses might not have enough personnel to process the varied tasks that are required to operate effectively.

Perhaps you are asking how these challenges might impact your efforts to achieve an accurate inventory – and why an accurate inventory is important to your efforts to operate a profitable inventory? Read on to learn some answers to these questions.

WHY is an accurate parts and accessories inventory important to your profitable operations?

One reason is that an accurate inventory could optimize the efficiency of your transactions. If your parts associates can confidently quote a price and the availability for a requested item without having to physically confirm that the item exists in the requested quantity, and in the bin location that is recorded in the computer database, then the transaction processing time is reduced. If the transaction processing time can be reduced, then the opportunity to increase the quantity of transactions that can be processed by your parts associates increases. If the quantity of transactions that can be processed increases, then perhaps you can operate with your current staff and you won't have to recruit and hire additional personnel. Therefore, if you minimize or eliminate the need for additional staff, then the recruitment and training costs related to the hiring process are reduced or eliminated.

A related benefit to increased inventory accuracy is the opportunity to improve your customer service. This can be done for your internal customers who are the service technicians and the RV sales associates who act as proxies for your external customers – the owners and renters of the RVs. If you can improve your customer service, then the opportunity exists to increase your customer base. And, by increasing your customer base, you could experience additional profits because you are operating more efficiently.

HOW can you achieve a greater percentage of inventory accuracy?

I suggest that you consider implementing perpetual cycle counts of your parts and accessories inventory. These perpetual cycle counts could be based on the velocity of movement of the parts and accessories. Those goods that have the highest volume of sales would be cycle counted most frequently; the slow-moving inventory items would be counted less frequently. To achieve these perpetual counts as efficiently as possible, I also suggest incorporating these cycle counts with other processes that are routinely performed.

One example of this 2-for-1 approach to cycle counting would be the stock order perpetual. Assuming that some of your parts and accessories

> "IF THE QUANTITY OF TRANSACTIONS THAT CAN BE PROCESSED INCREASES, THEN PERHAPS YOU CAN OPERATE WITH YOUR CURRENT STAFF."

items are replenished on a recurring basis, I suggest that you count 10% to 20% of the stocked items on each replenishment order. Since these items are those that are frequently requested, you would be cycle counting many of your high sales velocity goods often.

The price and availability perpetual could verify the on-hand quantity of both the high-velocity and the slow-moving items. When a parts associate processes a transaction for any item with a computer-reported on-hand quantity of less than five, she could count the actual quantity when she retrieves the requested item. My experience within the parts industry is that most parts associates are already doing this quantity check as part of their retrieval routine. You merely have to include a process for the parts associates to report any apparent count discrepancy to the parts manager so that each discrepancy can be researched, verified and adjusted if needed.

For slow-moving inventory, I suggest **the phase-out perpetual.** This process would require generating a report of items with no demand in a specified period and with zero on-hand reported quantity. This period of inactivity could be as short as 12 months but could be for longer. The period that you use would be determined by the percentage of slow-moving inventory in your system. The larger the percentage of slow-moving inventory, the greater the number of months of inactivity that could be used. After generating the inactivity report, you assign one or more parts associates the task of verifying the actual quantity of each of the items listed in the report and reporting the findings to the parts manager for adjustment if the actual on-hand count is positive and elimination if the verified count is zero. This perpetual could be performed when the parts associates are not assisting customers because these goods are not active.

WHO should process these efficient perpetual inventories?

Depending on the type of perpetual cycle count, it could be any of the parts personnel. In the case of the three perpetuals mentioned, these positions could be:

Stock order perpetual: parts manager or anyone who would be involved in the generation and transmission of a stock replenishment order.

Price and availability perpetual: would normally be processed by parts associates as part of their sales transactions.

Phase-out perpetual: could be assigned to any parts sales associates, to the shipping/receiving agent, or to any administrative person who has time available to assist in the inventory accuracy routines.

WHAT are you waiting for?

As noted in the first paragraph of this column, the times they are a-challenging. You could lament those challenges and do nothing because you are comfortable with the performance of your parts and accessories inventories. Or, you could decide that you want to improve that performance in order to meet those challenges of staffing levels and customer service.

To quote the native Oklahoman Will Rogers: "Even if you're on the right track, you'll still get run over if you just sit there."

Are you up for the challenge? RVP

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THE MAKE-OR-BREAK MOMENT WITH CUSTOMERS

Many RV dealerships in the United States have at least a general sales process they like their staff to follow when working with customers to help them sell more RVs. There are also a few who are highly committed to this process, who heavily train and practice on specific, sequential steps their sales staff must take with customers to increase the odds of success.

There are dealerships who have 10-14 written questions that must be asked to get the information they need to help a customer find the right product for them. A few have a step-by-step checklist they use, so sales staff are all following the same basic process. Others use a series of sequential "word tracks" that theoretically makes sense but doesn't always work due to a lack of commitment by sales staff to practice them enough to not sound rehearsed or robotic.

In talking to and/or coaching salespeople across the country, there is one thing that appears to be missing



Thomas Morin is an author and owner of Unlock Your Career Coaching, a North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, company that coaches salespeople in all industries on how to build the rapport and trust that customers must feel to be comfortable buying. For more information, visit unlockyourcareercoaching.com.

from every sales process, training or general sales guidance that is out there: steps that establish rapport and trust with their customers. What often gets overlooked is the value that should be placed on helping customers feel comfortable first, before any other part of the process begins.

Too many dealerships miss the fact that most customers walk in a dealership with anxiety even before any salesperson interacts with them. Customers today are circling the wagons around their bank accounts, having a hard time making ends meet with soaring interest rates, high prices of food and fuel, and less savings than recent years, all resulting in less discretionary income than in the past. The instability in healthy living caused by COVID, the constant debate over vaccines, the environment and the crazy nature of politics are other things that cause customers to feel less comfortable and stable in recent years. Most of us have noticed that, in general, more people than ever are intolerant of each other and perceive anyone who doesn't think like them as the enemy.

All of this has contributed to negative impacts on discretionary businesses who sell things like cars and RVs, leading salespeople to be even more aggressive to try to get a sale. This tends to make the average customer much more defensive and raises their antennas to watch out for salespeople who might not have their interests in mind. It also raises customer anxiety about the salesperson.

There seems to be a huge gap (that most dealerships miss) in the first few critical 7-10 minutes of customer interactions, when salespeople need to take more interpersonal steps to ease nervousness and help them feel comfortable before jumping into product discussions and sales procedures. Few dealerships actually understand and realize that achieving customer comfort is the first step toward the rapport and trust customers MUST have (with the salesperson) before they take out their credit card in these uneasy economic times.

The failure rate of salespeople (not just in the RV industry, but in all industries) is very high, yet no one seems to be able to figure out that long before customers were customers, they were people. For most, trust isn't automatic and doesn't come easily. So many times I have seen salespeople who are highly qualified with extensive product knowledge, work for 3-5 hours with a customer finding the perfect RV, only to have them leave at the end and say they "want to go home and think about it." Why? It's because they weren't sure they trusted the salesperson.

There is typically little or no company training on the steps and skills needed to build a rapport with customers in the first 7-10 minutes.

In addition, companies all too often gauge the quality of their salespeople's interpersonal skills only in the job interview to determine if they have the chops work with customers – and then it stops right there.

So, what do we do about this? With a lack of company emphasis and training, salespeople must take it upon themselves to hone their rapport-building skills in the initial stages of customer interactions. Here are some steps that can be taken immediately that can help right now.

Be a Person Before a Salesperson

Set your strong goal to sell something aside for a few minutes. Customers will have their antennas up looking for the over-aggressive salesperson to scare them away, and that's just what will happen if you skip trust-building steps. Greet them exactly like you would meeting someone on the way to becoming a new friend. Be genuine, curious and truly happy to see them, and show it.



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Slow Customers Down

In the first few minutes, customers are anxious to bust through the back door and "just go out and look" at everything in the lot. For most, that's just 'cover' because they are afraid of who you might be. They really do want to get to know you, so they can decide if they can trust you before they decide to buy from you. They just won't admit it – yet. Also, though customers do more research than ever before they visit a dealership, they do realize that they need you to help them make the best decision on an RV.

Stop Talking & Listen

I have always felt that contrary to popular belief, introverts often make the best salespeople, because extroverts talk way too much. They tend to yak-yak-yak their way right out of a sale. They tend spend more time talking than listening and don't find out important information they need from the customer to proceed in a way to best help them.

Be an Active Listener

It's one thing to listen, yet another to build rapport from listening. Build open communications by asking follow-up questions based only on what customers just said. This allows them to expand their thinking and feel more comfortable talking and the more they talk, the more information you get – not just product-based, but information about how they prefer you to approach them, demonstrate product to them and generally work with them. Making short notes about important facts will also help, especially with follow up questions later.

Ask Customers How You Can Work With Them

All customers have a preferred way they want salespeople to work with them, and they typically like salespeople who are like them. If you can't figure out your customer's type and make adjustments in your approach to accommodate that, ask them how they prefer you to work with them. Nearly all of them have had a bad experience with a salesperson before and at least will know what they don't want, and won't be shy about telling you that.

Answer Every Question Immediately

If a customer asks any question in the first few minutes that you can't answer (no matter how small), stop and get the answer immediately. This builds a sense of urgency that they perceive as respect for them and also in your follow-through, which is the single best trust building power tool you can have. Having great follow-through is the quickest way to earn (but also lose) a customer's rapport and trust.

Too many salespeople don't have the confidence to say "I don't know" if they really don't know the answer to a customer question. I have had customers say they bought from me precisely because when I didn't know an answer to the question, I didn't make one up, but I immediately found a resource who could answer it for them.

Being able to get your customer an answer or get the answer to every one of their questions builds credibility that leads to trust. Once that is in place, everything you say after that will be taken more seriously because they trust you.

In conclusion, once these things are in place, only then can you proceed to try to find them the right product that matches what they want, how they will use it and their budget. Taking the 7-10 minutes to establish these things in the early stages of the first meeting will be time well spent that goes a long way toward the comfort, rapport and trust they must have to buy from you 2-4 hours later.

Even if they don't buy that day, "no" doesn't always mean no...it means "not right now" and they will come back to you rather than going to your competitor, because they trust you. RVP





Motivating Staff TO KEEP THINGS TIDY

Why maintaining a clean, neat showroom and parts store is essential to keeping customers shopping.



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.



A new year calls for a fresh, new feeling in your store. Imagine spring cleaning – but in February.

The entire energy of your showroom and parts store changes when you move things around and clean at the same time. Customers are unconsciously aware of energy shifts and are more attracted to merchandise that has been moved to a new spot.

Years ago, I spoke at the Atlanta Gift Show on visual merchandising and mentioned how moving product creates sales. A woman in the audience raised her hand and said, "Every morning I walk into my store and move one thing, and every day that one thing sells!" I joked that the next day everyone would be walking into their stores and moving 15 things to see if it worked. It got a laugh, but I'll always wonder if people tried it. I know I would!

I worked for a boutique years ago and when we put merchandise on a rolling rack to move to another location, that was the first thing customers would be drawn to. It became a joke – if something wasn't selling, move it and it'll sell immediately.

Motivating Sales Staff

Does your sales staff move and clean the shelved products when they're not with a customer? Or are they staring intently at their phones solving the world's problems or checking out cat videos?

Rarely will a salesperson volunteer to clean, straighten and reset merchandise unless asked to, unless you have an amazingly motivated person working for you. If so, congratulations! If not, the beginning of the year is a great time to initiate new programs.

Consider holding a staff meeting and introduce the new program. Each person who works on the selling floor (and perhaps those who work behind the scenes, if they are not constantly busy) gets an area of the selling floor that they are responsible for. Ideally, these areas are as equal as possible in the quantity of products.

Their job is to make sure their area is clean, well-stocked, all labels are facing to the front, items are pulled to the front of the shelves, lines of merchandise are straight and the endcaps are fully stocked, neat and clean. If this is done in between customers, it really doesn't take that long.

One person can be responsible for the showroom. Remove all shipping and/or empty boxes, make sure desks are neat (this is not going to be a popular part of the program), align brochures, straighten up anything that looks messy. If tables and chairs are misaligned, move them back into place. The showroom maintenance should not take long, and little changes can make a huge difference in customers' eyes.

Introducing this new maintenance program could be challenging – and I'm being polite with my language. When introducing it, ask your employees to vote on whether they get one area that is "theirs" to maintain for as long as they

Selling Floor Duties

For sales associates when not with a customer:

- Turn all labels to face the same direction
- Pull merchandise forward on shelves in a straight line
- Dust the tops of the products first, then the shelf
- Straighten crooked merchandise
- Make sure the space between products is even
- Check inventory daily for filling in and/or reordering
- Endcaps should be attractive, full and clean
- Make sure the correct item/price sign is aligned above or below the product
- Keep the area on/behind/around the checkout area clean and neat
- Remove broken or beat-up signage
- Keep desktops neat, desks aligned and chairs pushed in when not in use

For a maintenance worker:

- Bathrooms are cleaned daily
- Vacuum/sweep the floors daily
- Wash the floors once a week
- Dust any fake plants at least once a month
- Make sure all the lightbulbs are working
- Clean the walk-off mats as needed
- Clean the windows (unless a separate company does that)

are working or if they'd prefer to get a new area every two weeks, every month or every other month. When given a choice, even of something they have no desire to do, the act of choosing helps people feel like they have some say in a new directive.

If you have never asked your staff to help with the merchandise maintenance, it may annoy them. But you have to start sometime, and keeping your store looking neat, clean and fresh will make your customers feel more comfortable shopping. The more they shop, the more people keep their jobs.

If you already have a person hired to take care of this daily, you're all set. If not, chances are good that your store isn't looking as fresh as it should.

If you are sure that your staff will rebel at the idea of cleaning and straightening up the merchandise, you may consider hiring a part-time merchandiser who can take care of each area on a rotating basis. Ideally, this person should come in at least three times a week.

Create Opportunities for Cross-Merchandising

Cross-merchandising is an excellent way to introduce new products to your customers. Once again, at a staff meeting, ask your salespeople how they create multiple sales. What products do they recommend their customers purchase together? If you have space in your aisles, or on an endcap, have each person who has offered a good suggestion create a cross-merchandising display. This could be mixing a group of products together that solve a specific problem. Develop a bundle of problem-solving products and consider offering them at a slightly discounted price when bought together.

To make this extra work more palatable to your staff, consider making it a competition. Track the sales of each cross-merchandised display and after a month, give a prize to the winner whose display sold the most. Prizes of value include time off, a better parking spot, money or something that is specific to that person.

A huge drugstore/gift shop in Sisters, Oregon, had this program in place. Each sales associate had their own area to maintain. The sales from each of their areas were tallied daily, and a winner was declared at the end of each month. The competition was friendly-fierce, and the entire store looked great as a result.

Over the years I have written visual standards guides for huge corporations as well as individually owned stores and small chains of stores. From American Express Travel Related Services, United Rentals, The BPAA (bowling), Singer, Saks Fifth Avenue and many other corporations to Alamar Uniforms (three stores), these guides have allowed management to train their staff to keep their standards high.

Maintenance is always covered first. It involves everything you see as you walk up to, in to, and through a store. While your staff isn't going to replace lightbulbs on your outdoor sign, mop the floors or clean the façade and windows, they will notice if management doesn't take care of what you own or manage. If you fail to hire people to take care of major things, you are exhibiting your lack of care for your facility. If you don't care about how your store looks, why should they?

Maintenance starts with the top and influences everyone who works there. If you are proud of your place, you encourage others to feel that way as well.

This "pride of place" influences your customers. Your RVs are private homes. Your store should be as neat and clean as your customer's homes – or perhaps more so. (The word "aspirational" comes to mind.) When people shop in an environment they respect, that creates equal respect for the products and expertise of the people working there. RVP





HOW TO AVOID BURNOUT IN THE NEW YEAR

7 steps to find your way back to healthy well-being & a productive work life.



Aaron Montgomery, certified by Jack Canfield as a Success Principles Trainer, has nearly three decades of experience in small business support. He is the co-founder and CEO of Our Success Group, which helps businesses with goal setting, business planning and customer-focused marketing. He is the co-founder of the Radical Goal-Getters Mastermind Experience and co-host of the podcast 2 Regular Guys. Montgomery is also the author of "The FUNdamentals of Business Success," which can be found on Amazon.

As we embark on the new year, some of us out there may have some doubts. The challenges that 2023 threw at us may have been daunting. But what I have learned is while the challenges may seem like they are coming from outside influences, they often stem from internal struggles. Fear, shame and regret are the real villains, and they are not mere

emotions; they are barriers to action, innovation and growth. If you are feeling some burnout, I want to provide some improved internal dialogue to move us past burnout to growth.

The reason focusing on burnout is so important is because it is crucial to growth. We can't just pause and recharge and then go at it again with the same mindset. Think about a parked car. No matter how long it sits there parked, it won't change the fact that you cannot steer that car. It has to be in motion to change its direction. Brushing burnout under the rug can lead to a fear of failure that has the potential to paralyze you. But that fear is a good sign because it also means there's something valuable at stake.

Each "what if" left behind opens the path to a "what's next" or a new opportunity waiting to be seized. We must start by defining burnout. Burnout is a feeling of overwhelming stress and exhaustion. You may feel emotionally drained and unable to meet the constant demands of your business. This often results from long hours, the stress of managing multiple roles, financial pressures and the high expectations we set for ourselves.

The first step is to spot the signs of burnout – those subtle and not-so-subtle signals that something needs to change. Chronic fatigue that lingers, a growing detachment from your reason – or your "why" – or continually questioning why you even keep going. Irritability and a sense of ineffectiveness are a few other red flags. You might also be feeling a more pessimistic outlook and become more critical or cynical.

Extended burnout can also lead to forgetfulness and an inability to concentrate. You might feel trapped by your job or business rather than empowered by it. If you are feeling the effects of burnout or even extended burnout, it might even feel like your typical mode of operating. The great news is that you have a choice to switch some things up. As challenging as it might feel, it can be as simple as choosing to think differently.

> "PAUSE TO ENSURE YOUR ACTIONS ALIGN WITH YOUR VALUES AND GOALS."

You have to take the first step, and you can do so by recognizing burnout's signals. Below are seven strategies that can guide you back to well-being and productivity. It's not just about shutting down and recharging – that's only temporary. Try these steps instead.

1. Pause & Reflect

Start simply. At first glance, this might look like recharging, but it is quite different. It is a choice to take a pause to reflect and gain clarity. Sometimes burnout can be caused by being out of alignment with your priorities and being pulled in too many directions. Pause to ensure your actions align with your values and goals.

2. Clear the Decks

Take deliberate action to remove all the clutter surrounding you. This includes tasks and obligations that aren't serving your core objectives. Often, we find ourselves overwhelmed because we're trying to juggle too many things. By stripping away the nonessentials and focusing on what matters, we allow the lesser tasks to naturally fall away.

This isn't about doing less for the sake of it; it's about creating the mental and physical space to reorganize and work in a meaningful way. Dedicate this reclaimed time to reorganize and recommit to the work that genuinely drives progress. It's a strategy not just for efficiency but for sanity – allowing us to breathe, recalibrate and move forward with purpose.

3. Reprioritize

We don't have a time management problem; it's about priority management. We need to take full responsibility for our story and our outcomes, and ask, "What is truly important?" It's not just about urgent tasks, but what genuinely moves us forward. Prioritizing is about having a standard that helps us decide what's crucial and what's not. Without it, we're just reacting to everything thrown our way and everyone else's priorities. We've got to say no to the nonessential to recalibrate from burnout.

4. Physical Wellness

When we discuss burnout, we can't ignore the physical side of things. Mental stress and physical health are two sides of the same coin, and neglecting either can throw us off balance. Self-care is key, and it's got to be scheduled and made a priority. Whether it's yoga, meditation or just a walk, it's about making time for it. It's about getting your physical self in line with your intentions for your success.

5. Reconnect With Your Passion

"Why am I doing what I do? What's the real drive behind my business or job?" It's easy to say it's all for the money, but let's be real – there are simpler ways to make a buck. No, you chose this path for a reason – a reason that's yours alone. Maybe it's the creativity, the support you give and get, the joy of learning or the thrill of creating. Whatever it is, it's your unique passion. Our reasons for pushing forward need to outweigh our excuses for holding back. Once you tap into that, you hit a state of flow and everything changes. You're no longer working; you're creating, enjoying and

living your passion. That's the magic of finding your reason. It's not just about being successful; it's about being successful for your reasons.

6. Delegate & Outsource

Many small business owners are too hands-on sometimes. It's that entrepreneurial spirit! We want everything perfect, under our control. But we can't do it all, nor should we. Delegating isn't a sign of weakness; it's a savvy business move. If you're a solo act, you might think, "Who do I delegate to?" This is where outsourcing shines.

It's not just about cutting costs; it's about investing in your business so you can focus on what you're genuinely great at. Virtual assistants are a game-changer, giving you the freedom to focus on your genius zone. Do not get stuck on the immediate costs – it's the return on investment that counts. Every minute you spend on tasks outside your expertise is a potential dollar lost. Shift your mindset.

7. Find Balance & Support

Finding balance is an art and we often miss the mark about what true balance is. It's not about dividing your day into perfect thirds. Balance is about adapting to seasons and cycles, and understanding when to dive deep into work and when to step back for family and self-care. We must look at the cycles and make incremental adjustments to have balance.

Say you're too wrapped up in work – don't just drop everything; start by scheduling intentional family time. Find strategies that don't involve going cold turkey on aspects of your life, but rather, introduce changes that balance out over time.

The best way to accomplish this is to find some support. You have probably heard me say this, but success is a team sport. Whether it's peers, mentors or mastermind groups, finding support is about taking the step to ask. It's OK to have a moment of feeling overwhelmed, but it's what you do next that counts. A support network like a mastermind group can be the difference between success and deeper overwhelm. Change doesn't happen overnight. It is the incremental steps taken consistently that lead to dramatic shifts over time.

Recognizing burnout and its signs is crucial to sustained success. It can and will get the best of us, so having the tools to navigate it is something we want to keep at the ready. By following these steps, you can get back on track quickly. The opposite of burnout is growth, innovation and fulfillment. The power to change your story and overcome burnout is something you can choose, and the strategies are simple. The difficulty lies in faithfully implementing them. RVP





SANITATION & FRESHWATER



FURNACE & WATER HEATER

Aqua-Hot, an Airxcel brand, Frederick, Colorado, offers its Gen1 furnace and water heater in one designed to save space and weight in an RV with diesel, gasoline or propane models that all come standard with an electric heating element. Rated for operation up to 15,000 feet above sea level. The air heater features up to four heating fan speeds, 10 air circulation fan speeds and an automated timer with air delivered through four outlets. Uses RV-C Open-Source intelligence for integration into the RV's multiplex system.

aquahot.com

DUAL WATER TANK SELECTOR

Anderson Brass Company, Hartsville, South Carolina, presents its Actuated Dual Water Tank Selector. Dual water tanks are a popular addition to RVs, but managing their water supply can be a hassle. Electric valve actuators are the perfect solution, allowing for easy control. The company's EA Series features 90-degree turn valves with 12-24 VDC power supply, a 3-wire control mechanism, an IP54 enclosure for protection from water and dust, and side selector lever for easy auto/manual override selection. The actuated dual water tank selector is a must-have for a convenient camping experience.

andersonbrass.com





KITCHEN & BATHROOM CLEANER

Bio-Kleen Products, Kalamazoo, Michigan, presents Dish Kleen & Shower Magic, coming soon. Dish Kleen and Shower Magic are here to keep your RV kitchen and bathroom sparkling clean. Shower Magic contains wintergreen essence, a natural antibacterial and will clean toilets, tubs, showers and sinks. Safe on all plastics and compatible with Kleen Waste holding tank system. Dish Kleen utilizes natural orange extract to cut through grease and buildup with a simple spray-on or soak formula. Rinses freely and gentle on hands.

biokleen.com



WASTE TRANSPORTATION TOTE

Camco, Greensboro, North Carolina, offers its Rhino Tote Tank. Rhino Tote Tanks are the ultimate solution for hassle-free waste transportation. Effortlessly wheel them like a wagon or tow them behind an e-bike, golf cart or truck. No more breaking camp to empty the tanks. These ready-to-use, complete kits are perfect for boondocking or for when you're parked too far away for the RV sewer hose to reach. And when you're on the move, these tanks conveniently mount to your RV ladder, saving space and maximizing efficiency.

camcodealer.com



RV ODOR ABATE

Cheltec, Sarasota, Florida, offers its Camp Champ RV Odor Abate. The dual action of RV Odor Abate immediately converts odorous gases into microscopic particles and balances wastewater pH to help the naturally occurring microbes decompose waste without causing odor. Formulated with Stabitrol, RV Odor Abate remains 100% soluble and stable in wastewater tanks. Available in 32 1-ounce black water treatments or 64 0.5-ounce gray water treatments per 32-ounce bottle.

campchamprv.com



CLEANING & DEODORIZING PRODUCTS

Century Chemical, Elkhart, Indiana, said it has RVers "Covered Anytime, Anywhere." Don't let unpleasant odors spoil your camping experience. Whether you are camping in an RV, yurt, wagon, maintaining a fresh and clean environment is essential for an enjoyable camping experience. The company's products provide comfort anywhere, anytime, all year long, making it possible for you to experience the great outdoors every day. Additionally, Century Heat Transfer Fluid is an excellent choice for use in RV floor heating systems, solar, hydronic and HVAC units.

centurychemical.com



MINI RV WATER FILTER

Clearsource, Rancho Santa Margarita, California, presents its Clearsource Ultra Mini. The Clearsource Ultra Mini uses three-stage filtering and NASA-developed technology to remove or reduce bacteria, cysts and viruses. The company's 5-micron first-stage filter removes or reduces rust and sediment. The second-stage 0.5-micron coconut shell carbon block filter improves taste and smell while removing chemicals and other contaminants. The third stage VirusGuard filter removes or reduces bacteria like E. coli, cysts like Giardia and viruses. No other RV water filter on the market provides anything close to that level of protection.

clearsourcerv.com



WET BATH/SHOWER FLIP SINK

Duo Form Plastics, Edwardsburg, Michigan, offers its Duo Flip Sink. The Duo Flip Sink is a great addition to any wet bath/shower application and saves space by eliminating the need for a vanity. Duo Sinks are engineered with heavy-gauge ABS, which is both strong and lightweight.

duoformplastics.com



SHOWER MODULAR SURROUND KIT

Icon Technologies Limited, Winkler, Manitoba, Canada, presents its Rectangular Shower – Modular Surround Kit intended for installation around a shower pan. Includes one shelf corner, one faucet corner and three 27-inch by 72-inch trimmable panels. The corners are designed with adjoining flanges to accept the trimmed panels. Panels include adhesive tape to aid in installation. The corners have a 10-inch installed width. The flanges are 3/4 inches deep, making the effective max width/depth for install 45 1/2-inch by 36 1/4-inch. Pictured shower pan not included.

icondirect.com



WATER PUMPS

InVision, an Airxcel brand, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Water Pumps. InVision introduces water pumps for the RV lifestyle – the Aqua Pump (3 gallons per minute) and Aqua Max Pump (3.5 gallons per minute). The Aqua Pump and Aqua Max Pump have self-priming features and built-in sensors to start and stop automatically with the ability to run dry without causing damage. InVision water pumps have the highest flow rates and longest warranty in the industry. Make sure water is always available at the twist of a knob with InVision water pumps.

campaigns.airxcel.com/invision-kitchen-appliances



CLEANING PRODUCTS

Lippert, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its Lippert Cleaning Products. Keeping your boat or RV clean is easy with Lippert's lineup of premium cleaning products. From washing and waxing your exterior to cleaning and conditioning your interior upholstery, we have the products you need to keep your watercraft or rig looking great.

lippert.com



PORTABLE WATER DEIONIZER

On-The-Go Portable Water Softener and Deionizers, Bloomington, Indiana, presents its Mixed Bed Deionizer-BypassHead. The On-The-Go Portable Water Deionizer uses ion exchange technology to remove all solids from the water source resulting in mineral-free water that leaves no spotting after rinsing. This unit produces around 450 gallons at 250 ppm and measures 9 inches in diameter by 22 inches in height. The bypass head allows you to easily change between deionized and nondeionized water with the switch of two knobs. You can bypass the deionizer when spot-free water is not required to extend the resin life.

portablewaterdi.com



MULTI-USE SANITIZER

Pure Defense, Camarillo, California, offers its Multi-Use Sanitzer. Pure Defense Multi-Use Sanitizer utilizes pure, high-grade isopropyl alcohol along with moisturizing aloe vera. for use on RV/marine/car interiors. Safe to use on plastic, vinyl, leather and metal surfaces. Fast drying and nonsticky. Cleans and conditions, removes dirt and grime and helps avoid the spread of germs. Also works for hands. An all-around, multi-surface sanitizer product. Available in 16 ounces and gallon sizes.

puredefenseproducts.com



HOSE/CORD CADDY

Stromberg Carlson, Traverse City, Michigan, presents its HC-75 Hose/Cord Caddy. The Stromberg HC-75 Hose/Cord Caddy solves the twisted and tangled hose storage problem. Each hose end unwinds while the bulk of the hose remains neat and tidy in the caddy. It holds up to 75 feet of water hose or 50 feet of 30-amp cord. The stackable Hose/Cord Caddy measures 17 inches wide and 6.5 inches tall. Hose accessories can be conveniently stored in the center well. Made in the USA.

strombergcarlson.com



TANKLESS WATER HEATERS

Suburban, an Airxcel brand, Dayton, Tennessee, offers its ST Tankless Water Heaters. Comfort and efficiency on the road with Suburban's ST Series Tankless Water Heaters. ST water heaters come in 42,000 BTU (ST42) and 60,000 BTU (ST60) models, each equipped with an array of safety features including flame out protection, scald protection, automatic fan monitoring, active freeze protection, pressure release safety valves and voltage protection. ST Tankless Water Heaters only engage burners when hot water is needed to conserve energy when not in use.

suburbanrv.com



BLACK & GREY TANK DEODORIZER

TankTechsRx, Phoenix, Arizona, presents its TankTechsRx. TankTechsRx is a specialized formula of over 70 live probiotics that use quorum sensing technology to enlist neutral microbes already living in your RV's black and grey tanks to go to work exchanging smelly methane and ammonia for H_2O and carbon dioxide. Leverage the astounding science of autoinducers to crank the carbon cycle to full-blast and turn your tank into a probiotic factory that gets rid of odors and sludge while returning wastewater back to nature with a head start.

justscience.com



FRESHWATER TANK SANITIZER

Thetford, Ann Arbor, Michigan, offers its Thetford Fresh Water Tank Sanitizer, EPA-registered for cleaning and sanitizing RV and marine freshwater holding tanks. Designed specifically for the nonporous surfaces in freshwater holding tanks, this sanitizer works effectively with hard water and will not leave grit or soap scum. Sold as an easy-to-use two-part system, the first step cleans the tank and the second step sanitizes. Recommended for use during all de-winterizing routines.

thetford.com

HOLDING TANK TREATMENT

Walex Products Company, Wilmington, North Carolina, offers its Porta-Pak Clean Linen Holding Tank Treatment. Walex is known for eye-catching packaging but, more importantly, for manufacturing industry-leading, premium holding tank treatments. Porta-Pak Clean Linen was one of two new premium holding tank fragrances added to Walex's world-class line of sanitation products. Porta-Pak Clean Linen has been spotted on the shelves at many top dealerships worldwide. Customers have spoken and are very pleased with the new fragrance and performance. Contact your RV distributor to purchase Walex premium holding tank treatments.

walex.com





SOLAR-POWERED PLUMBING VENT FAN

Ultra-Fab Products, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Solar Powered Plumbing Vent Fan. Eliminate the stink from the black tank. Don't let that smell escape through a broken seal or toilet opening. Ultra-Fab's powerful plumbing vent fan doesn't rely on the odors and gases in the black tank to make its way up through the plumbing vent pipe naturally, but it pulls those gases up through the pipe, taking away practically all chances of smelling those odors. No wiring needed. As easy as replacing any vent. Purchase six, get a free displayer.

ultra-fab.com

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Pit Stop



CONSUMER CONFIDENCE INDEX

The Conference Board **Consumer Confidence Index increased in December** to 110.7, up from a downwardly revised 101 in November 2023. Additionally, the Present Situation Index – based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor conditions – rose to 148.5 from 136.5 in November.

RV VACATIONS *COST LESS*

RV vacations cost much less than other types of travel, even when factoring in gas prices and RV ownership costs – including an **average savings of up to 60% for four travelers** and 46% for two travelers. Here's a few scenarios:

- Four people traveling from Dallas to the Grand Canyon on a 14-day vacation would cost nearly $8,801 for flights, car rental and hotel stays. The same trip in a Class C motorhome would cost $5,627 – a 37% savings.
- Without airfare, a family of four on a 7-day road trip from Atlanta to Orlando would spend $3,216 with hotel/motel stays. The same trip in a folding camping trailer would cost $1,712 – a 47% savings.
- A couple traveling from Seattle to Yellowstone National Park would expect to spend $11,328 for 14 days via plane, car rental and Airbnb rental. A similar trip in a Class B van would cost $4,606 – a 60% savings.





Source: CBRE Hotels Advisory Group, commissioned by Go RVing & RVIA

Throughout 2023, more than 1,000 technicians – new to the RV industry – enrolled in the **RV Technical Institute** (RVTI)'s programs, and more than 800 dealerships have at least one certified RV tech on staff.

- 2023 saw 15,000 individuals enroll in some type of training and 5,000 become newly certified techs **– the largest number in the RV industry's history.**



NOVEMBER SHIPMENTS

25,160 TOTAL

2.8% INCREASE **compared to November 2022 (24,470 units)**

38.4% DECREASE **with 291,652 units**

"Coming off of the holidays, we are encouraged by reports of increased RV vacations and campground reservations throughout the winter months," said RVIA President and CEO Craig Kirby. "As we enter 2024, there are signs pointing to increases in RV shipments and retail sales, particularly in the latter half of the year as RV usage remains high and there are expected improvements to the macroeconomic environment this year."

RV wholesale **shipments are expected to hit a median of 350,100 in 2024.** The total would represent an **11.8% to 15.8%** increase over the expected 2023 year-end range median of 307,700 units.



Source: RVIA Winter 2023 RV RoadSigns



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