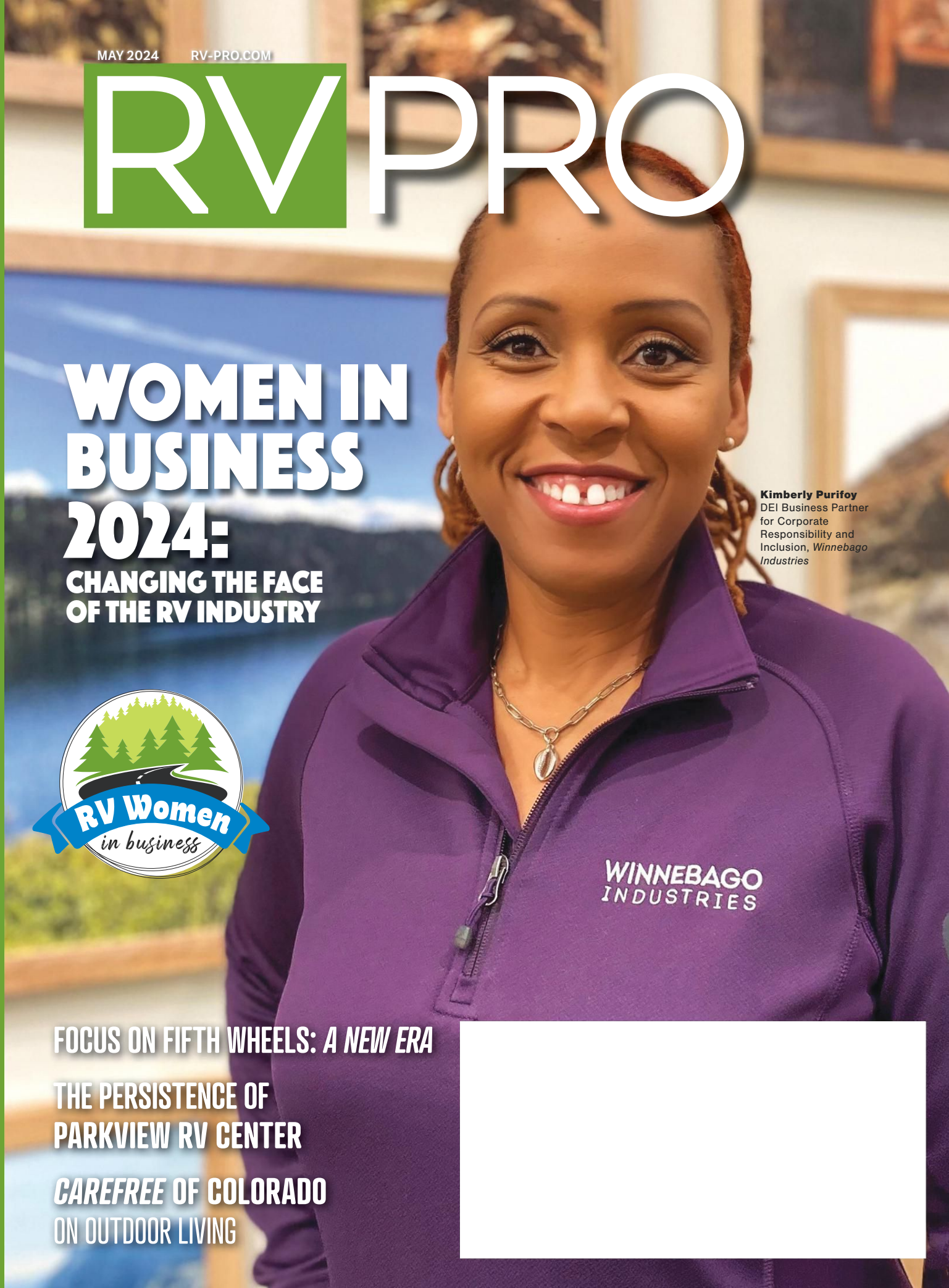
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RV PRO

WOMEN IN BUSINESS 2024:

CHANGING THE FACE OF THE RV INDUSTRY

RV Women in business

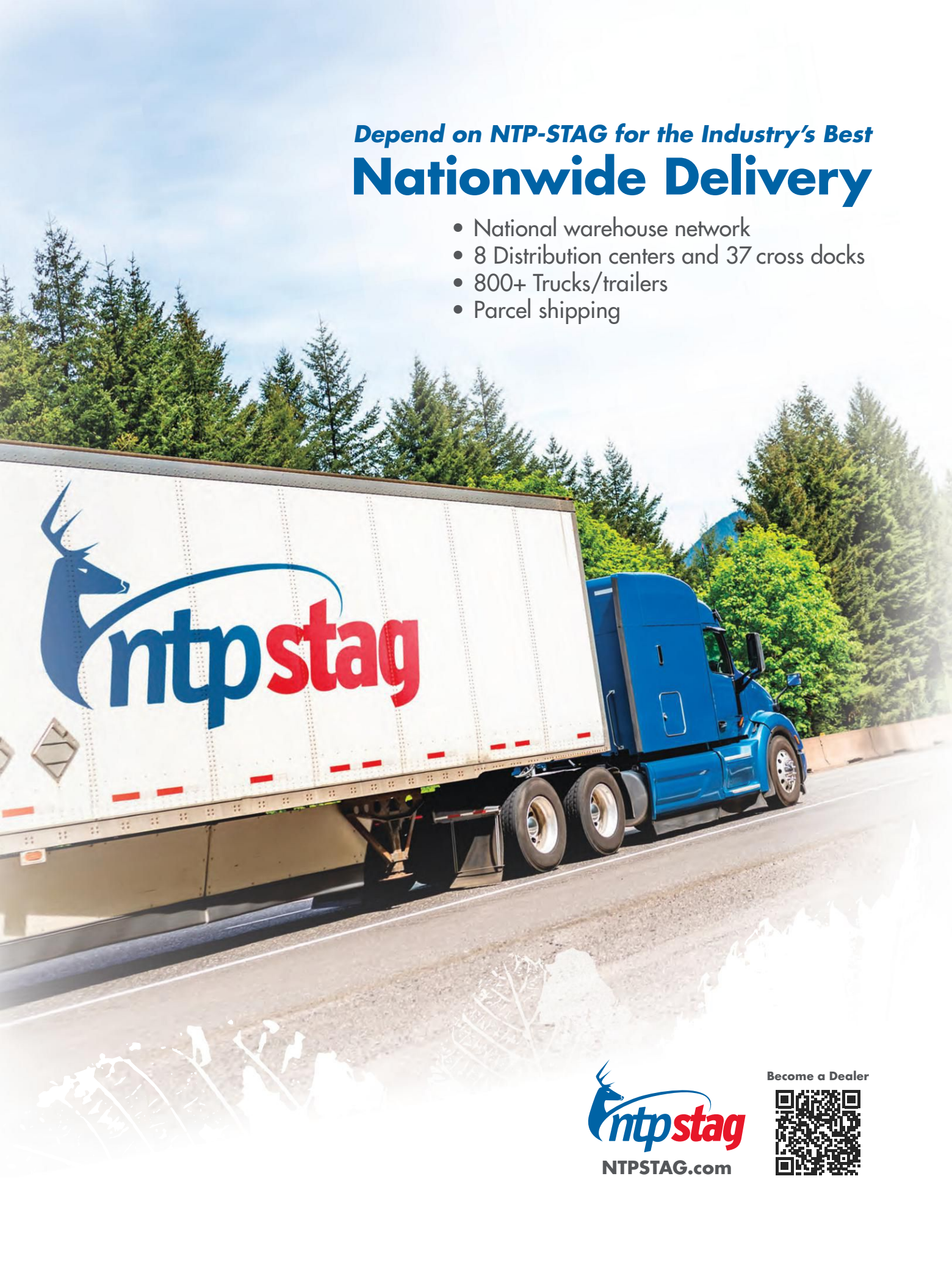


Kimberly Purifoy
DEI Business Partner for Corporate Responsibility and Inclusion, *Winnebago Industries*

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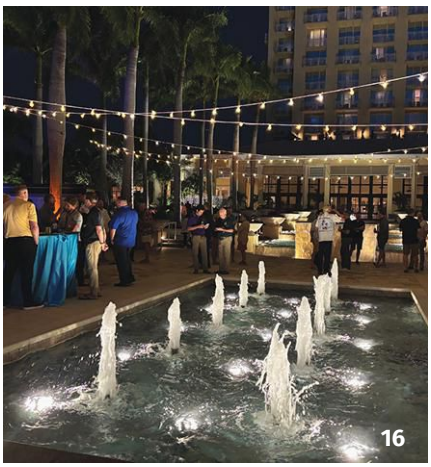
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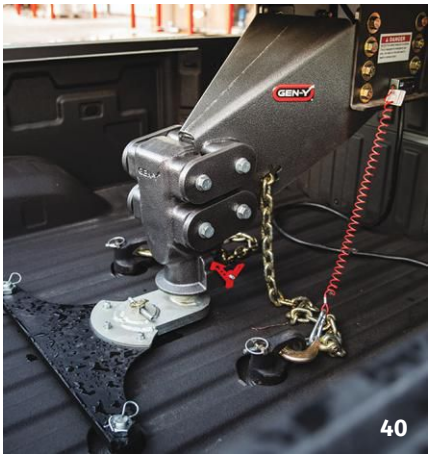




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This 14-year-old Canadian entrepreneur started her business three years ago and shows no signs of slowing down.

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ON THE COVER
Kimberly Purifoy of Winnebago Industries is one of the 2024 Women in Business honorees. *Photo courtesy of Winnebago Industries.*

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Jennifer King

I heard of her before I'd met her.

Denise Chariya – powerhouse director of marketing at THOR Industries. A woman-in-the-know and a dedicated supporter of the RV Women's Alliance (RVWA). So, of course when I met her, I had a little bit of a shy "ooh, she's an RV industry celebrity" moment. But that quickly vanished as I came to speak with her and learned how welcoming and what a go-getter she is. Denise, like many women I have met in this industry, including Susan Carpenter of B&B Molders, Tracey Anglemeyer of Thetford, Eva Mitic of Go Power!, Monika Geraci of RV Industry Association, Stacey Robinson at Great Canadian RV, Ashley Bontrager Lehman of Ember RV, Debbie Brunoforte with Campers Inn RV, Denyse Pontius of Century Chemical, and many more, have inspired me in dozens of ways on how to be a good leader and support others. Being a good listener rises to the top of those skills. Conducting business with integrity, placing people before profit and extending a hand to help the next generation succeed are other ways these women have shown us the path forward. We're excited for you to get to know Denise (page 52) and the other women featured in our Women in Business section this month.



Jordan Benschop

With a few years under my belt in the RV world – post-pandemic, too – seeing shifts take place for the betterment of our industry has been nothing short of inspiring.

One of the most exciting changes to witness has been the growing diversity of representation from all walks of life. Fresh perspectives and stronger support, especially for women in the industry, is paving a way for new opportunities in business. Take Olivia Irvine, for example – a 14-year-old entrepreuner who, with the help of the RVWA, has shown us what's possible as women in business, no matter the age or background (page 56).

It was a delight to meet Olivia and countless other ladies, many mentioned above by Jennifer, along my journey here. Their encouragement, good advice and motivation to thrive has triggered a buzz of enthusiasm for the RV industry's present and future. We don't anticipate that stopping anytime soon.

As an all-women editorial team here at RV PRO, I think I can speak for us all when I say our Women in Business issue is a favorite of ours. We're so grateful to continue the tradition of recognizing the impactful work and talent of so many impressive, outdoor-loving ladies in May.



Michele Moore

Before starting at RV PRO in January, my RV knowledge consisted of going camping as a kid in my grandparents' pop-up camper a couple times. In other words, I'm a total newbie. Being new at something can be such an awkward feeling, and I'm so thankful to have had some amazing mentors throughout my career – and nearly all women. Perhaps that's why our May issue celebrating women in the RV industry feels so special and why I was delighted by the large number of nominees we received for our Women in Business section. One who stood out to me was Kimberly Purifoy, whose profile you can read on page 47.

As many others have, I got my start in publishing with an internship. Kimberly manages the Winnebago Industries internship program, and her nominator credits the program's success largely to Kimberly's efforts. I have great memories of my internship and of the women on Southern Living's copy desk who mentored me, so it was inspiring to read about Kimberly's contributions to the Winnebago interns, many of whom are young women. Kimberly also acts as a mentor for new employees and interns who are not part of the official company program. Once I have more experience in the RV industry under my belt, I hope to someday be able to give back and guide newcomers the way Kimberly does.

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

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

MANAGING EDITOR
Michele Moore
720-784-8073
mmoore@cahabamedia.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Darian Armer, Javacia Harris Bowser, Linda Cahan, Lisa Dicksteen, Mike Harbour, Rob Merwin, Thomas Morin, Scott Russell, Mel Selway, Ronnie Wendt

CREATIVE SERVICES

ART DIRECTOR
Melanie Magee

DIGITAL PROJECT MANAGER
Greg Ragsdale

DIGITAL PRODUCTION DESIGNER
Shelby Dempsey

WEB DEVELOPER
Greg Caudle

ADVERTISING

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

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

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

CLIENT SERVICES COORDINATOR
Holly Strickland
hstrickland@cahabamedia.com

CAHABA MEDIA GROUP

Publisher
Matthew G. Conroy

Vice President of Sales
Greg Meineke

Vice President of Finance
Brandon Whittemore

Director of Content
Elizabeth Manning

Director of Operations
Laurie Tisdale

Director of Sales
Stacy Marshall

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RVDA Seeks Nominations for James B. Summers Award

The RV Dealers Association (RVDA) is seeking nominees for the James B. Summers (JBS) Award, named in honor of the association's former executive vice president and CEO.

The 2024 award recipient will be announced and recognized during the RV Dealers Convention/Expo, slated Nov. 11-15 at Paris Las Vegas.

As RVDA's highest honor, the JBS Award recognizes an individual who has made frequent and distinguished contributions to RVDA and its members.

Nomination guidelines and process:

Eligible nominees should have provided at least five years of service to RVDA. The nomination should include a written narrative that explains an individual's contributions to the association, and it should lay out a compelling case for why the individual deserves to be selected for this most prestigious honor.

The late Jim Summers worked on behalf of dealers throughout his career at RVDA and even into his retirement. He was the first to receive the award in 1986.

Submit nominations by May 20 through the RVDA website or by email to Julianne Ryder at jryder@rvda.org. A list of previous JBS Award honorees is also available on the RVDA site.

nuCamp Announces Promotions During Women's History Month

nuCamp, manufacturer of teardrop trailers and truck campers, announced the promotion of two individuals within its finance and marketing departments.

"As part of our commitment to fostering a thriving work environment and recognizing the invaluable contributions of women in leadership roles, nuCamp strives to create opportunities for growth and advancement," the company said.



Aleshire

Cheryl Aleshire – Director of Finance and Office Operations

With an illustrious career spanning over 25 years in public accounting, Aleshire assumes the role of director of finance and office operations. Having served as the controller at nuCamp for the past eight years, Aleshire has consistently demonstrated exemplary fiscal stewardship, playing a pivotal role in enhancing the company's financial stability.



McComb

Julie McComb – Director of Marketing

With more than two decades of marketing expertise under her belt, McComb has been appointed as the director of marketing. Since joining nuCamp in 2019, McComb has been instrumental in shaping and executing innovative marketing communication strategies, driving brand growth and visibility.

"As nuCamp continues to evolve, we have full confidence in our newly appointed leaders to spearhead ongoing innovation and success. These promotions underscore our unwavering commitment to excellence and reflect our dedication to nurturing internal talent. We anticipate that these advancements will not only positively impact our internal operations but also further strengthen our relationships with our esteemed customers and partners," nuCamp said.

During Women's History Month and beyond, nuCamp celebrates the achievements and leadership of women like Aleshire and McComb, whose expertise and dedication contribute to the continued growth and success of the company, it said.

FCCC Names New VP of Sales & Marketing



Ghous

Freightliner Custom Chassis Corp. (FCCC) announced the appointment of Akbar Ghous as its new vice president of sales and marketing.

In his new role, Ghous will drive ongoing, comprehensive strategy and management of sales and marketing operations across each of FCCC's product categories – RV, commercial truck and commercial bus.

Ghous brings nearly 20 years of experience in sales, marketing, business development, management and strategic planning and analysis to FCCC. He's spent his entire professional career at Daimler Truck, the parent company of FCCC, in several key leadership roles in sales and marketing.

Most recently, he served as operations manager for Daimler Trucks' senior vice president of sales and marketing, where he managed and led operations, strategic initiatives and special projects for the organization's sales and marketing team.

"Akbar's vision, commitment and proven track record of success in both sales and marketing make him an ideal fit for this critical role on our team," said Jeff Sather, president and CEO of FCCC. "And his extensive experience within Daimler Truck means he steps into his new position with a comprehensive understanding of FCCC and the industries we serve – as well as a unique appreciation for the critical role our customers and partners play in our company's success."

"I am incredibly thrilled and humbled to step into this amazing role at FCCC," Ghous said. "Over the course of my time and across my different roles within Daimler Truck, I've learned firsthand FCCC's hard-earned reputation for innovation and excellence throughout the industries it serves. It's an honor to join the company at such an exciting time and to help play a part in guiding its future growth and success."

Lightspeed Appoints Brian Provost President & CEO



Provost

Lightspeed, a provider of RV dealership management software, announced that Brian Provost has been appointed chief executive officer, succeeding Kris Denos.

"We are excited to welcome Brian Provost to Lightspeed at this pivotal time in the company's growth story," said Doug Bayerd, managing partner, private equity at Brookfield. "Brian is an excellent leader who enjoys developing people and building strong teams. With his track record of success leading and growing numerous mission-critical software companies, we know we have the right chief executive officer to guide Lightspeed as it accelerates plans to enhance its value for customers."

Provost has over 15 years of experience as a successful chief executive officer leading software businesses. He most recently served as CEO of iCIMS, a global talent and recruiting SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) company. His prior chief executive experience includes other business-essential software companies like Ascentis

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(now UKG) and Convey Compliance Solution (now Sovos). Provost is a graduate of Bethel University and a former member of the board of trustees. He enjoys spending time outdoors with family and friends when he's not on the road connecting with customers and employees.

"Lightspeed has collaborated with recreational dealerships for nearly 40 years, creating industry-specific software solutions to streamline the way dealers work," said Provost. "I'm excited about our path forward and our leadership position supporting such a dynamic and growing industry. As we look to the future, our priorities will center around continuing to improve delivering a comprehensive suite of technology solutions with a straightforward purpose in mind: Enable our dealers to operate their businesses successfully and seamlessly and delight their customers."

Dutchmen, Keystone Recognize Employee With 'Courageous Action Award'



Nowicki & Heath

Candy Heath, an employee at Dutchmen RV's Plant 820, was given a "Courageous Action Award" for her quick and decisive actions that saved the life of Tracie Nowicki, a co-worker.

Nowicki, who is a diabetic, was experiencing a sudden diabetic crash and urgently required food. While she was in the break area having a snack, a piece of food became lodged in her throat, causing her to choke and depriving her of oxygen. Without hesitation, Heath rushed to her aid, performing the Heimlich maneuver and dislodging the obstructing food from Nowicki's throat.

Nowicki's alarming condition left her unable to call for help as she struggled to breathe. "I honestly didn't think I was going to survive as I couldn't breathe or call for help. My fingers and face were turning blue," said Nowicki.

Heath just happened to walk through the exterior break area door, a door she normally doesn't go through, when she looked over and saw a fellow co-worker in trouble. Heath's timely intervention proved critical in preventing a potential tragedy. Despite the urgency of the situation, Heath's training and instinct kicked in, allowing her to assess and respond effectively to the emergency.

Heath said, "Because of my training I just did what was needed. Honestly, I didn't even think. I wasn't afraid – I just knew she needed help."

Her selfless act exemplifies the values of compassion and courage that define the Dutchmen community, the company said. In a tearful sentiment, Nowicki said, "I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Candy."

In recognition of her heroic efforts, Dutchmen and Keystone RV presented Heath with the Courageous Action Award in a formal ceremony held March 7. The award serves as a testament to Heath's bravery and unwavering commitment to the well-being of her colleagues, the companies said.

"Candy's actions embody the spirit of teamwork and compassion that we strive to foster within our organization," said Aaron Young, president at Dutchmen. "Her quick thinking and bravery undoubtedly saved a life, and we are immensely proud to have her as part of our team."

FRVTA Regional Shows Wrap With Strong Orlando Event

In March, the Florida RV Trade Association (FRVTA) completed the last of five regional shows held around the state, and the attendance numbers were mixed.

The Fort Myers RV Show celebrated its 39th year of providing residents of southwest Florida with the finest in RV selections, the association said. This year's event featured 10 dealers from all along the Gulf Coast displaying the latest and greatest recreation vehicles ranging from luxury Class A motorhomes to affordable folding camping trailers. The show moved to a new venue this year after 38 years at the Lee County Civic Center.

"The location at JetBlue Park was excellent, but it will take some time to get people used to the new location," said FRVTA Show Coordinator Tammy Lull.

Many sales were registered by both dealers and vendors alike, as attendance was just under 6,700 people over the four days of the show. The new location and unseasonably warm weather contributed to the drop in attendance.

Next up was the Jacksonville RV MegaShow, held again at the Jacksonville Equestrian Center. The show marked the 15th year the show was held at the Equestrian Center. Over 7,700 people attended the show over the four beautiful weather days of the show. This was up over 300 people from last year.

"Our members really like this venue," said Greg Stachacz, FRVTA Region 6 president. "Also, the public has gotten used to coming to our shows here, so we see this as a long-term location for our shows."

The West Palm Beach RV Show was held Feb. 15-18 at the South Florida Fairgrounds. Horrible weather on both Saturday and Sunday hurt the show held entirely outdoors, FRVTA said. The show still drew over 3,200 people and the participating dealers were, for the most part, happy with the results.

"It's not so much about how many come to the show, it's more about buyers attending," said State Chairman of the Board Brian Copley. "With the weather issues I think we still did pretty well."

The Ocala RV Show was held again at the Florida Horse Park just south of town. Great weather and huge crowds contributed to the successful show, FRVTA said. Just under 8,000 people attended the show and dealers were more than pleased with the results. "This is the largest regional show in terms of dealer space and having been at this facility for a number of years we've built quite a following," said Show Director Patty Flanagan. "Everyone I spoke to was very happy with the results."

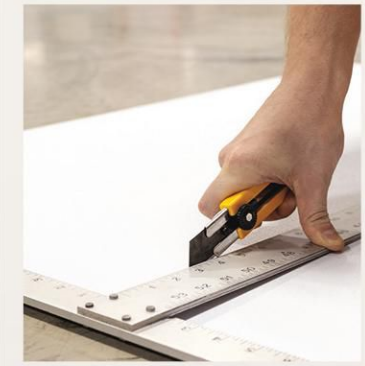
The final regional show was the Orlando RV Show held in Kissimmee at Osceola Heritage Park. Being that the region hasn't had a show in several years, the dealers decided that the first show should have free parking and admission. Dry and seasonably warm weather added to close to 5,800 people attending this first year event. Four regional dealers packed the field visible from the road, which contributed to the great admission numbers. Dealers and booth exhibitors did very well, and talks are already underway to make plans for next year, FRVTA said.

The association will hold regional shows this summer and fall. For more information, contact the FRVTA at 813-741-0488.

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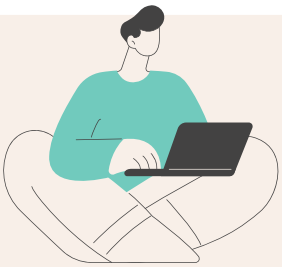


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HOW RV CONSUMERS ARE SEARCHING: FIFTH WHEELS



Statistical Surveys, Inc. and **RV Trader** present data to help dealerships understand what customers are looking for during online searches to help them make informed business decisions.

According to Statistical Survey's data, since 2020, fifth wheels have maintained their position as the second most popular RV type by registrations, with Keystone, Forest River and Grand Design dominating the Top 3 spots year over year.*

Top Fifth Wheel Makes & Models



The following are the top fifth wheel make/models from RV Trader based on searches.

1. **Grand Design Solitude**
2. **Keystone Montana**
3. **Grand Design Reflection**
4. **Keystone Cougar**
5. **Alliance RV Paradigm**

Top Fifth Wheel Manufacturers



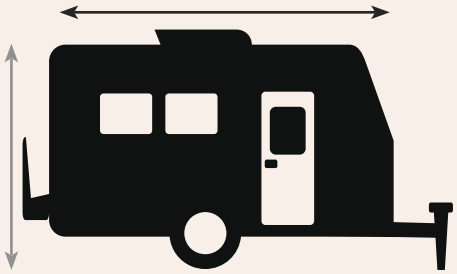
Alliance RV has also emerged as one of the Top 5 fifth wheel manufacturers, experiencing a 19.02% growth in searches on the RV Trader marketplace.

New vs. Used Fifth Wheels

There was a **7%** increase in used fifth wheel units over the past year on RV Trader. Used fifth wheel units rose from **31% to 38%.**

Buyers are increasingly seeking out pre-owned fifth wheels with an **even number of sleeping accommodations ranging from 34 to 43 inches.** This trend provides valuable insight into the types of units that will continue to dominate the market, focusing on the accommodations and size requirements that are top priorities for buyers. Dealers can capitalize on this demand by offering top fifth wheel models that align with these criteria.

Top Length Searches for Fifth Wheels



The following are the top length searches for fifth wheels from December 2023 through February 2024 on RV Trader.

1. **42 feet**
2. **41 feet**
3. **37 feet**
4. **43 feet**
5. **34 feet**

Top Sleeping Capacity by Search Results for Fifth Wheels on RV Trader

Buyers are most interested in units that have an even number for sleeping capacity.

1. **4**
2. **6**
3. **8**
4. **10**
5. **5**



The data on fifth wheels from RV Trader is pulled from December 2022 – February 2023, in comparison to December 2023 – February 2024.

**Data from Statistical Surveys, Inc.*

About RV Trader
RV Trader, a part of the renowned family of brands and owned by Trader Interactive, is a marketplace for advertising RVs, motorhomes and campers. With an average of 6.5 million monthly visitors, RV Trader offers innovative tools to help manufacturers and dealers make connections with customers, increase sales and maximize profits. For more information, visit RVTraderMediaKit.com.

About SSI
Statistical Surveys, Inc. (SSI) provides the latest and most accurate market share data for the marine, RV, powersports and trailer industries. SSI's expertise, spanning over 65 years, ensures businesses receive information that positions them at the forefront of the industry.

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Forward Momentum

The RV Industry Association's annual conference hosts a record turnout, new event segments and fresh perspectives to bolster the industry's leadership.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JORDAN BENSCHOP



"FUN Is Good."

At least, good for business and attaining viral success – according to Mike Veeck, keynote speaker at the RV Industry Association (RVIA)'s second annual Leadership Conference in Bonita Springs, Florida.

Veeck was the subject of the 2023 Netflix documentary "The Saint of Second Chances," having owned several minor-league baseball clubs that made headlines across the country, but not for winning games – for hosting mass food fights and one-block parades.

Veeck's lunchtime talk sparked laughter and inspiration in more than 190 top-level industry professionals, a record turnout for the RVIA's event. His message – to not take yourself too seriously and be open to outlandish ideas to avoid "one-dimensional" thinking – was one the association took to heart. Attendees were invited to kayak the Estero River and volunteer at outdoor recreation sites to connect and learn beyond the walls of the conference venue at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort.

The event's crowd represented the breadth of the RV industry, including campgrounds. Growing diversity among attendees' market segments and perspectives made way for RVIA's new agenda addition named "Park Perspectives," where leaders shared their personal journeys and ideas to better the industry. Wednesday's lineup spotlighted Brandon Mantz, Xantrex's national sales manager, whose talk "Designing for the Adaptive Community" addressed the importance of accessibility in outdoor rec.

"Is accessibility an afterthought in your business? How do we remove barriers to provide equal experiences for everyone?" Mantz asked the crowd. One in 4 people currently have a disability, with 1 in 7 experiencing a physical disability similar to Mantz's. He suggested having accessible RVs readily available at dealerships and RV shows, rather than needing to custom-order, along with addressing types of terrain and creating more accessible campground sites.

Ashley Bontrager-Lehman – Ember RVs founder, president and CEO – also shared her perspective on shifting from the day-to-day to managing a board and bolstering one's initiative. Additional insight included a "Starting Your Sustainability Journey – a Roadmap" talk with Lippert's Director of Sustainability Kartik Mekala and Sandy Rynalski, ESG vice president for THOR Industries. And Alissa Reyes, Thetford's senior VP of HR and administration, spoke on leading with emotional intelligence.

Brought back by popular demand, a main highlight of the conference

THE EMERGING LEADERS COALITION CLASS OF 2024

Dave Basler, OHI
Larry Besse, Primeaux RV
Rusty Eckstein, Camping World
Hugo Gonzalez, Patrick Industries
Mark Howlett, Truma Corp.
Rick Kessler, RVBusiness
Bryan Melton, Airstream
Cory Nelson, Winnebago Industries
Mike Terlep, Forest River
Britton Wall, Blue Ox
Anthony Wollschlager, Airxcel
Bob Yessa, Truma Corp.





was the CEO Panel Discussion – featuring well-known leaders Don Clark, Grand Design RV president and CEO; John Ferrando, Blue Compass RV president and CEO; Mary Pouliot, executive vice president of Thetford/Norcold; and moderated by RVIA's President Craig Kirby.

Pouliot described her current leadership style as "transformational" – setting a vision, high expectations and empowering her people to move toward those goals.

"When I first started off in leadership, I was more directional, more transactional – and over time it's evolved. As you evolve toward collaboration and teamwork, you evolve your leadership style ... You need a team; you can't do it all yourself," she said during the panel.

Clark suggested not settling for the status quo – nor surrounding yourself with people who do – while Ferrando advised aspiring leaders to find a good mentor, foster commitment and build a "personal brand" for how you want to be known.

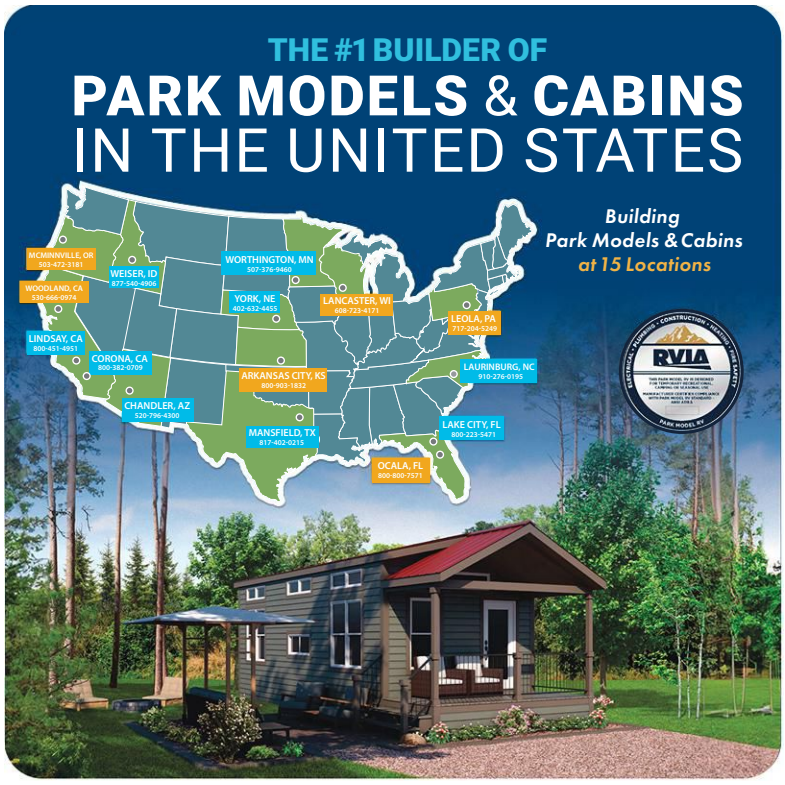
In addition to the discussions, RVIA's Emerging Leaders Coalition celebrated its continued growth with 2024's graduating class, paired with a new application process to join the group. The agenda also included a keynote speech from Drew Tarvin, an IT project manager at Procter & Gamble who led multimillion-dollar projects for a $350 million brand, plus two group workshops on evolving leadership. Attendees gathered one last time for a closing reception on a warm Thursday evening.

RVIA's annual Leadership Conference, held March 5-7 this year, showcased the RV industry's ability to create forward momentum, be each other's support system and, most importantly, understand that "Fun Is Good." RVP

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A Fifth Wheel With Head Room

Palomino's 2024 Columbus
fifth wheels deliver quality and style through outstanding design, safety, amenities and layouts.



BY RONNIE WENDT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PALOMINO

Palomino Columbus sets itself apart by consistently delivering fifth wheels that embody quality, safety and innovation.

Jack Plummer, sales manager for Palomino, predicts this fifth wheel will be highly sought after by RV enthusiasts in 2024 because of its innovative construction, advanced safety features, elevated comfort and convenience, and fresh floorplans.

"Consumers want a unit that's going to last, that has nice eye appeal, and offers outstanding features," Plummer says. "That's what we feel the Columbus does. My motto with the Columbus is dollar for dollar, and pound for pound, this is the best fifth wheel on the market."

He notes both dealers and customers seem in agreement with this sentiment. Everyone's been buzzing about the Columbus at RV shows this year, he says.

"They really liked its fit and finish, the features and the price, which MSRP around $100,000," he says. "The Columbus offers great value."

INNOVATIVE CONSTRUCTION

"We focus on construction and quality," Plummer says. "We will not build 25 of these a day. We're going to build six to 10 a day and do it right, so we can give the customers a solid unit that is very well constructed."

The company's focus on construction isn't new. He states that the brand has been committed to this mission since it was launched in 2012.

"We have a quality control person go through every unit to make sure the fit and finish looks good," he says. "We come as close as possible to building a perfect unit. That is accomplished by slowing down construction and taking our time, and through innovation."

Inventive construction is a priority for the Palomino Columbus, he adds. By beefing up the foundation of the chassis with C channels for additional strength and adding corner welds, Plummer says the company achieved a "superstructure chassis."

This change enabled Palomino to have a 7-foot upper deck on its 101-inch-wide fifth wheels. "We're one of the first companies





Bunk beds offer additional sleeping, perfect for larger families or extra guests.

to have a 7-foot upper deck," he says. "This provides customers with extra headroom and spaciousness inside, especially for those customers who are over 6 feet tall."

To top it off, everything is built on a 5/8-inch tongue-and-groove plywood floor, a 2-inch double-sided Azdel sidewall with foam insulation, and a residential-style 5-inch by 2 1/2-inch-wide wood radius roof truss with Alpha ply membrane.

ENHANCED SAFETY FEATURES

Safety is also of paramount importance to the Colon, Michigan, company, according to Plummer.

"We are trying to become one of the safest fifth wheels on the market," he says.

Columbus fifth wheels come standard with a MORryde CRE3000 suspension system, for a smooth towing experience. The system provides over 3 inches of suspension travel to protect the unit from road shock, improving towing capability and deliver a smoother ride, he says.

The fifth wheels also feature a MORryde rubber pin box to reduce back-and-forth chucking during towing. The pin box's back-and-forth and side-to-side movement absorbs energy from the trailer and improves the comfort of the ride in the truck, he explains.

The units also have anti-lock brakes, upgraded Goodyear tires and a TST monitoring system. Using sensors, the TST system keeps track of tire pressure and heat on the road. Drivers are alerted through a display in the cab if these values exceed recommended thresholds, Plummer says.

"These things combine to create one of the safest towing fifth wheels on the market," he says. "An anti-lock brake system should be standard on all units. You need it if you have to make a hard stop. It's just such a wonderful safety feature."

ELEVATED COMFORT & CONVENIENCE

In response to consumer demand, the Columbus has raised the bar in terms of comfort and convenience, according to Plummer.

Palomino raised the unit's slider box from 78 inches to 83 inches to add 5 inches to the slideout height. "This change allowed us to put in larger, frameless, tinted windows that provide a nice panoramic view when sitting inside the unit," he says. "It also allows us to create a slideout that is 3 to 5 inches taller than most of our competitors."

While larger panoramic windows meet customer demands for ample natural light and breathtaking views, MCD Innovations' UV-reflective shades help maintain a cool interior temperature. Palomino also included three 15,000-Btu air conditioners on the Columbus to ensure optimal comfort even in extreme heat, he adds.

"With the larger windows, you're going to let in more sun," he says. "On hot summer days, you're going to need to keep the unit cool. You can pull down the UV reflective shades, and the sun will not warm up the coach. You still have the view, but you can keep the unit cool. The three air conditioners do the rest."

Plummer explains two air conditioning units come standard, but customers can add a third. "Our neighbors in the north or the Midwest do not have a need for three units," he says. "But I handle Texas and Florida, and our dealers here all want three air conditioners."

Ample air conditioning has increased in importance over the last several years, Plummer adds. "Last year in Texas, they had so many 100-plus degree days," he said. "When it's that hot, it gets hard to keep things cool. But with three air conditioners, you can run them and keep the camper cool."

LED light fixtures brighten the interior on cloudy days or in the evening, he adds.

NEW FLOORPLANS & DESIGN ELEMENTS

Palomino has introduced a new floorplan to the Columbus line, which has seven floorplans and new designs for 2024, says Plummer.

The new 376DS has a double suite layout with two bedrooms and two baths, addressing the needs of diverse demographics, from couples to families. The new floorplan replaces the 375DS, which had a full loft design.

Incorporating a half-loft design into the 376DS enhances airflow and spaciousness in the rear bedroom, providing a more comfortable living experience, according to Plummer.

"When the loft is all the way across the unit, it's hard to push cool air down to that second bedroom to keep it cool," he says. "By doing a half loft, we could put vents off the air conditioners that blow into the room. It also gives more headspace in the second bedroom, which is at 84 inches, so that it doesn't feel tight in there."

Palomino also has a rear-kitchen floorplan with two doors, allowing people to enter the RV through a bathroom or a kitchen door. "You can pull over and use the bathroom or kitchen without opening a slideout," he says.

The bathroom features a large Signature Spa shower surround with a fiberglass base, an undermount stainless steel sink and a porcelain toilet. Things are kept light and airy inside with a shower skylight, he adds.

There has been little change to the unit's appliances, which currently come in stainless steel, for 2024. The fifth wheels come standard with the Insignia 24-inch residential-style oven, four burner cooktop, 30-inch residential microwave, and a Norcold 12-volt, 18-cubic-foot refrigerator or 20-cubic-feet LG residential refrigerator.

The Columbus also has a 50-inch Smart TV with Bluetooth audio and exterior speakers, a 12-gallon water heater with quick recovery, a 35,000-Btu furnace and a 5,000-Btu fireplace (on some models).

Solar comes standard with a 260-watt solar panel and 1,800-watt inverter. "There are five to six receptacles dedicated to that inverter, so you can run power off those, depending on the floorplan you choose," Plummer says.

A washer/dryer prep is available, as are stackable washers and dryers, should they be desired, he adds.

INTERIOR & EXTERIOR UPDATES

Palomino fifth wheels feature a painted fiberglass front cap, which the company introduced in 2023. The redesigned front cap was necessary to move to a 7-foot upper deck, Plummer explains.

Exterior highlights include graphics with a five-year warranty against peeling, fading and cracking, as well as metal-wrapped awning covers to safeguard awning fabric.

The combination of lighter and darker tones creates a noticeably brighter look inside, which consumers will appreciate, Plummer adds. "The combination gives the unit a nice bright, open feeling," he says.

Power theater seating with USB charging and storage comes standard. Some models have a 50/50 split 88-inch sleeper sofa, he adds.

Looking ahead, Plummer says the Palomino Columbus remains dedicated to providing exceptional value and quality. The company's dedication to continuous improvement, innovation and style will help it meet the needs of RVers for years to come, he concludes. RVP



The Columbus's residential-style kitchen features stainless steel appliances.



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Once Upon a Prime Time

Prime Time Manufacturing leaves its mark through ongoing innovation in its newest family-forward Sanibel fifth wheel.

BY DARIAN ARMER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PRIME TIME MANUFACTURING



Prime Time Manufacturing began its operations in 2009 – arguably one of the worst economic climates the RV industry has seen – yet the company is still innovating today, with new floorplans that are industry firsts. The ability to not only start but also successfully build a company to where Prime Time is today is a testament to the manufacturer's philosophy of innovation and a desire to set themselves apart.

"Prime Time's story began in 2009, driven by a desire to connect with our buyers and improve the RV experience," says Mark Baskerville, regional sales manager for Prime Time, South Central territory. "Prime Time started under the Forest River umbrella with Pete Liegl parnering with a couple RV industry veterans."

SETTING THE COMPANY APART

Baskerville says the founders felt inspired to create a company that would be unique from the rest in a couple of very specific ways: innovation and a family-like atmosphere.

"We work to have innovative floorplans and features as well as a more close-knit family atmosphere," he says. "We really want our customers to feel a difference. From servicing to warranty claims, we want to be set apart."

Two ways the company works to achieve that distinction is through their Customer Assurance Inspection (CAI) facility and their concierge service. Baskerville says the CAI facility is a 125-point, white-glove checklist that every Prime Time unit goes through on top of the PDI (predelivery inspection).

The Concierge Service is made up of Prime Time's service and warranty teams. Each team in parts, warranty and service have a territory they are responsible for, which allows their dealer network to build rapport and relationships with the teams.

"The year 2009 was definitely a very interesting time both economically in the country and in the RV industry. So is 2024 – both economically and in the RV industry," he says. "Just like at the time of the founding of our company, specifically our fifth wheel team, we feel we are doing some really exciting things. Some things that are one of one."

This is especially true for the manufacturer's Sanibel lineup.

'CHAMPAGNE ON A BUDGET'

As a company, Baskerville says, "Since the onset we have been a company that's taken a lot of pride in offering a lot of different options, within both floorplans in each segment and different segments. We have always wanted to offer a wide range of options."

Sanibel falls in the full-profile, wide-body luxury fifth wheel segment.

"We believe Sanibel is one of the most feature-rich products on the market with all of the bells and whistles. We believe we stack up against brands that are exceedingly more expensive than us with quality and features," Baskerville says. "We are economy luxury, or champagne on a budget.

"There are a lot of options out there for campers to pick from. What we believe keeps us standing out from the rest is real innovation. We're not using it as a throwaway term. It drives our decision-making, new floorplans we come out with or taking a tried-and-true floorplan to the next level."



Mark Baskerville, Prime Time regional sales manager, South Central territory



With five recliners in the Sanibel, the entire family can kick back together and watch a movie or the game.

Baskerville says that while they strive to keep Sanibel affordable, they also work to provide super innovative floorplans with a wow factor, in both engineering and features.

THOUGHTFULLY DESIGNED FOR FAMILIES

Sanibel's newest floorplan, the 3952FBWB, has had a great reception with both dealers and customers alike thanks to its thoughtfully designed layout with families in mind.

"We talk about family, and families are made up of different people. We believe that what we've given mom and dad in the bedroom with a king bed, fireplace and dual vanity is a warmth and feeling of home," Baskerville says. "It feels more like a hotel suite than a camper. We wanted the master suite to feel different than any other bunkhouse on the market. Usually, you get a stuffy little space in the front cap of the unit. So, we put mom and dad in the back for full height and space."

With the parents in the back of the coach, kids get the front to themselves. Bunk beds are affixed to the wall to work as a more flexible space depending on a family's needs. With how the bunks are set up, there's space to easily use a Pack 'n Play for babies or toddlers. But that's not all the bunk room is set up for.

"The bunk room was designed so that it's not just set up to work for little kids. A lot of bunkhouse units have little flip down bunks that hold up to 100 pounds. Once a kid gets in high school or comes back from college, they can't sleep there anymore. This room works for toddlers, kids and older kids. It's still going to work for that family," he says.

The bunkhouse also has a dedicated desk space. Baskerville says many customers who have purchased the 3952 are full-timers traveling and homeschooling their kids, so a dedicated desk space is a big bonus. The bunkhouse also provides its own bathroom and entertainment slide with a TV.

"They can hang out in their room with some privacy. The space is multifunctional. We want it to be many different things for many different people. It's what we think makes it so unique. We've sold to families with very young kids and retirees with no kids at all that want to modify the bunk room. One lady was going to put a sewing machine in and make it a 'she-shed,'" Baskerville says. "We feel like we really hit a home run for our customers with this floorplan. The way I picture the coach in my brain is in three sections. Mom and dad have a space in the back that is truly immaculate, and the kids have a space in the front that is unique. The middle of the coach is a space for the family to come together."

Baskerville says many standard bunkhouses have theater seating for two and a dining table, so when it's time to watch a movie together the kids are stuck sitting on the floor or at the dinette.

Sanibel's fix? The Super Sofa and a pop-up kitchen bar. Kids can dine at the pop-up kitchen bar and parents can utilize the sofa and a TV tray to eat.

"The 1950s style of everybody sitting at the dinner table is not as common as it once was. This style of dining is much more common, especially when camping," he says.

The Super Sofa has five recliners, so the whole family can sit together and watch the game or a movie.

And while Sanibel offers all the upgraded touches a customer expects in a luxury fifth wheel coach – like a large four-burner stove and full-size appliances – it remains "aggressively affordable."

But how?

"The biggest way I believe we're able to accomplish what we're doing and keep it within cost is to keep it as standard as we can. It's super streamlined and super standard in the way that we



The bunk beds are comfortable for kids of all ages.

build them. The floorplan is multifunctional to work for different customers in different ways, but we also make decisions that limit one-offs at the plant, such as colors," Baskerville says. "It's how we're really able to keep our costs down internally and keep our product so feature-rich and affordable."

The 3952FBWB didn't just focus on an innovative floorplan; attention was given to the décor as well. Baskerville describes the unit's décor as elegant and modern – a chic style with two-tone cabinetry, including Surfside Smoke. It features herringbone-patterned flooring, brass-looking hardware, a subway tile backsplash and more.

Baskerville says the price point on the floorplan has been about $70,000 at shows. The MSRP is $101,000.

ALWAYS ORIGINAL

"At Prime Time, we don't clone brands. So, there's no clone products between Sanibel and Crusader, our other fifth wheel brand," Baskerville says. "We are doing some really great innovative things in that lineup also."

Specifically in the Crusader, Baskerville references the 375FLS, which features a front living room, but not just any front living room.

"We put a 70-inch TV in that front living room, and it's also the first-time Prime Time's ever put in a Smart TV. We really went all in on this floorplan. In the kitchen we have a butler's pantry, and in the bedroom we did a little vanity top/place for your laptop where you can sit."

Baskerville says there's a third thing that sets Prime Time apart from the rest: its sales representatives.

"We work our territories in a specific way. We do quarterly training visits and try to get to every single one of our dealers at least three to four times a year," he says. "Whether it's newsletters, different marketing tools they can use or simply staying engaged with the sales team and our product, we take great pride in how we work our accounts and work with our dealers. The Primetime experience should be felt not only by the retail customer, but the dealer partners as well. We set out to have that family culture as an RV manufacturer, and while our retail customers are a priority, it's not only them that benefit from that culture. Our dealers do too." RVP



The living space in the Sanibel includes a pop-up kitchen bar with seating.

RV PRO webinar

May 16, 2024
1 p.m. CT



Navigating FTC Compliance:

Essential Annual Reporting Guidelines for RV Dealers

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) made significant revisions to the FTC Safeguards Rule, effective June 9, 2023. Among the revisions was the requirement that your RV dealership's Qualified Individual prepare a written status report, at least annually, for the board of directors (or equivalent governing body or person(s)). This report evaluates overall compliance with the FTC Safeguards Rule and identifies other material matters. Are you ready to submit? Time is almost up.

In this webinar, presented by KPA's Director of Product Technology Stephen Troy, we will discuss:

- What your Qualified Individual needs to prepare the annual report
- How RV dealers can evaluate overall compliance with the FTC Safeguards Rule for the annual report
- What material matters should be included in the annual report
- Who the annual report should be submitted to
- The actions that annual report recipients should take



Stephen Troy,
Director of Product Technology at KPA

Stephen Troy is the Director of Product Management at KPA, where he focuses on leveraging technology to enhance and simplify compliance and risk management for automotive dealers. With over two decades of experience in automotive compliance, Stephen previously held the position of Director of Product at ComplyNet. Knowing dealership teams are busy, he believes systems that save time for dealers, managers, and employees result in better compliance outcomes and real ROI from the program.

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2024 Fifth Wheel Models: A Dramatic Shift in Exterior Design

The modern updates have been made to attract a different generation.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SCOTT RUSSELL



There is a new kid in town when it comes to exterior design in the towable sector of the RV market. It's lighter, brighter and sleeker than anything seen in the past, and younger customers are swooning over it. What is this new exterior style trend, and is it here to stay?

FRESH NEW LOOK IN FIFTH WHEEL EXTERIORS

It's tough not to notice the dramatic shift in RV towables, especially fifth wheel exterior designs, with the release of 2024 models. This year it's all about brighter and stark contrast. Just a few short years ago, fifth wheels were still a sea of beige tones with the traditional RV swoosh graphics shared by their motorhome cousins. Except for custom paint models or the occasional black Luxe on the road, most fifth wheels looked pretty similar.

This year's models took a turn in a new lighter direction. The classic beige tones have all been replaced by bright white. While white has been slowly trickling into the market for a couple of years now, this year's white is paired with contrasting black graphics that further set off the design. The thing is, these aren't just any regular, run-of-the-mill black graphics. The graphics are straight, boxy and edgy against the white. Gone are the classic rounded swoosh graphics we are all used to seeing throughout the RV industry. The new kid in town has a modern look not previously seen.

MORE THAN JUST A SHIFT IN COLOR SCHEME

So, what's the big deal about this dramatic shift in exterior fifth wheel design? Many models have taken this modernization a step further by including structural components such as RV windows and doors. To support the straight and boxy exterior, the traditional towable rounded exterior windows have been replaced with square windows. While not all models have gone to the square shape, some have additional black graphics around the windows to create the illusion that they are square.

Some models didn't just stop at the windows. Others updated the door with a black glass reflective design to contrast the white and the windows. While the door update isn't as widely seen yet in the 2024 models, the square windows or appearance of square windows via the surrounding graphics has really taken off.



The Brinkley Model G's sleek look received positive feedback at the Florida RV SuperShow in Tampa this year.

WHERE DID THIS DESIGN TREND ORIGINATE?

This new design trend has spread like wildfire across most major players in fifth wheels and also in some travel trailer models. But where did this style originate? One example of the new modern exterior was at the 2023 launch of Brinkley RV's Model Z fifth wheel and Model G toy hauler at last year's Florida RV Show in Tampa. The booth was buzzing, and the consensus among the people was positive about the unique sleek lines and starker contrast of the black graphics against the white.

I personally grew up on a lake popular for boating and known for speed racing events in the Midwest. My family owned many different brands and types of boats over the years, and as soon as I first viewed this new design, it reminded me of the graphics and designs seen throughout the boating industry. I apparently wasn't the only one with this opinion either. I spoke to Brinkley RV's marketing director, Jerimiah Borkowski, at this year's 2024 Florida RV Show about my boat industry origination theory. I learned that his background before transitioning to the RV industry was, in fact, the boating industry, working for Bennington Marine, a prominent manufacturer of pontoon boats. He offered some validation to my opinion that this style looks similar to those found in the boating world.

CUSTOM PAINT STICKS OUT MORE THAN EVER NOW

At this year's 2024 Florida RV Show, the sleeker, boxier, black-and-white color scheme swept the show, with models displaying this new design across towables in many brands. This trend seemed to take hold with lightning speed, and just like the sea of beige fifth wheels seen in the past, now we have an ocean of

white and black.

With so many models sporting the bright white exterior, custom paint jobs stand out now more than ever. A great example of a standout at the show was Keystone RV's Cougar Midnight Edition. This monochromatic shiny fifth wheel in Black Onyx generated its own unique buzz at the Florida RV Show.

The feedback we heard at the booth with the Midnight Edition was positive. People stated that the black was something fresh and different. Despite favoring the look of its blacked-out appearance, many people we spoke to had concerns about how hot the black paint would make the interior of the fifth wheel.

It would be an interesting experiment if Keystone did a side-by-side temperature test of a Midnight Edition and a regular model in the same conditions. The Midnight Edition also comes in Phantom Gray for customers who are drawn to the all-dark look but may have heat reservations about the black paint.

APPEALING TO A NEW DEMOGRAPHIC OF BUYERS?

It's no secret that the towable RV market has long been the favorite of younger buyers. However, as a larger sector of this market is attracting millennials and now Gen Zers, the design update may target this youngest growing demographic.

As a Gen Xer, I can still hear my parents and my grandpa telling me never to purchase a white vehicle when I went to shop for my first new truck in the late '90s. White will show too much dirt, they advised. My father was an auto worker for General Motors his entire career and knew what he was talking about. I, of course, listened, and as a young man more interested in attracting ladies than living at the car wash, I bought an all-black, lifted-up truck instead. I actually met my wife cruising town in that truck soon after. I digress. Needless to say, their phobia of dirt had an impact on my color-purchasing decision.

Today, as a full-time RV family of almost nine years, I know the challenges personally of trying to keep our home on wheels clean as we hop across the country. Everything from black streaks to road construction tar and mold crosses my mind when I look at all these new bright white fifth wheels. As much as I appreciate the sleek design, experience has taught me the realities of maintaining this look.

However, Gen Zers are attracted to more modern designs and are less likely to be influenced by the older generation's concern about showing dirt. They also may not have developed the veteran RVer's fear of black streaks just yet.

Regardless of style, Gen Z values outdoor adventures and



The Heartland Corterra has a prominent vertical stripe on the nose cap displaying the product name.



Grand Design Influence's minimalistic appearance stands out among the manufacturer's other offerings.

will become a significant target of the RV sales market. RV manufacturers need to take notice of what Gen Z prefers and incorporate their needs into future designs. Don't sleep on the desires of the younger up-and-coming buyers.

NEW 2024 PRODUCT LAUNCHES

While many existing fifth wheel product lines have been updated to this whiter color scheme, some new product lines launched in 2024 with the updated design incorporated from the start. At the Florida RV Show, we had the chance to check out Grand Design's new fifth wheel line, the Influence. The Influence exterior is extremely minimal. A single group of black and gray stripes of varying thicknesses runs the length of the unit, and that is it. Most of the fifth wheel is a blank white canvas. Compared to other Grand Design models, it almost looks, dare I say, a bit bare. They were going for a different, updated look, and this line stands out from the others in their lineup. The front cap bears the model name among a mostly solid silver cap with Grand Design's drawing compass logo.

We also spent some time in Heartland RV's new fifth wheel product line, the Corterra. While the Corterra doesn't have square windows, graphics are used around some of the windows to mimic a boxier shape. It also has a panoramic oversized window built into the front cap.

Something particularly striking about the Corterra's exterior is the way the product name is displayed within a prominent vertical stripe on the nose cap of the fifth wheel, as well as part of a rectangular graphic under the windows to further the boxy appearance. While some of the graphics are solid black and rectangular, other straight bar graphics are a dark gray and fade into the white exterior on one end. The design is modern and unique.

IS IT HERE TO STAY?

While this new, more modern exterior fifth wheel design seemed to come out of nowhere, only time and sales will tell RV manufacturers if they hit a home run or completely missed the mark with this one.

Will this sleek update resonate with younger buyers? Will the white exterior turn off more experienced and older RVers who don't want to battle to keep their fifth wheel clean? Stay tuned! RVP

THE PERSISTENCE OF PARKVIEW RV

The RV Dealers Association's current chairman talks his family's long-standing Delaware dealership & investing in the people who protect its customers' interests.

BY MIKE HARBOUR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PARKVIEW RV



There's no denying that more than a half a century of operation – and by three generations of the same family, no less – is a big indicator of dealership success. Still, Parkview RV Center's Ryan Horsey believes there's always room for improvement.

"I think in the next few years, we need to do a better job of providing a quality service on the fixed operations side of things, and we also have to go ahead and make sure the relationships we have are all-win relationships," says Horsey of the Smyrna, Delaware, dealership founded by his late grandparents Robert and Lucille, originally as a used car lot in 1968. "There's a void there, and my concern is if we don't go continue that pursuit of excellence to help our customers, those customers are going to go to another industry."

The native Delawarean, who also serves as this year's RV Dealers Association (RVDA) board of directors chairman, is convinced dealerships with growing parts and service departments will thrive now that unit sales have declined after several years of unprecedented growth.

His shop is ready for the challenge: its 10 service bays are staffed with nine full-time technicians, a part-time tech (Horsey's son Riley), plus two service advisors and a warranty advisor. Parkview has four lifts, including one that accommodates up to 50,000 pounds, and even has the capability to tackle light bodywork. Most importantly, in Horsey's view, is the fact everyone in service is RVDA certified.

"When I look at the RV Learning Center, I look at it as great pilot programs so that our frontline operations can say, 'OK, this is a good foundation for how I can take care of the customer,'" he says. "So many times, we don't really understand why we're getting certified."

For Horsey, training is simply investing in the people who will be protecting his customers' interests. It's a subject so important to him that he asked for time during a workshop at NTP-STAG Expo 2024 given by presenter Tony Yerman, the RV Learning Center's fixed operations consultant. At the heart of the impromptu request: to make sure attendees weren't just after a piece of paper for their dealership walls.

"I talked about the full RV experience because there's a difference and there's a defined line between those who sell and those who care about the life cycle of the RV consumer. If we're not doing our part to make ourselves better for our customers, the things that we love, our customers are going to get into cruises, VRBOs or overseas travel," he says.

Not surprisingly, Horsey, who grew up at the dealership his parents Rick and Sharon later managed when Robert died in 1986, is devoted not just to the industry but to the activity.

"RVing goes not only from my personal point A to point B, that is living the dash, but it also influences my children so it allows us to have multigenerational relationships within the lifestyle," he says. "The best experiences that I've ever had came from RVing."

Horsey's first job at the dealership came at the tender age of eight, when he was assigned to pulling weeds around the lot. Today, he's the vice president of fixed operations, and he shares ownership of Parkview with sister Amy Horsey West, vice president of finance and insurance, and Rick Horsey, president. Ryan's wife, Joy, is treasurer, secretary and controller, while Amy's husband, Mike, is the vice president of sales and marketing. In addition to Riley,





Ryan Horsey

(Above left) (L to R) Joy Horsey, treasurer, secretary and controller; Ryan Horsey; Rick Horsey, president; Amy Horsey West, VP of finance and insurance; Mike West, VP of sales and marketing.



Horsey's other two children, Ramsey and Samantha, also work at the dealership part time, as does Amy's daughter Paige.

Such a family affair, as dealership consolidation sweeps through the industry like wildfire, is uncommon, but Horsey also credits transparency as being a key part of Parkview's longevity.

"I have a morning meeting with all our service technicians and parts associates to let them know exactly where we are financially, where we are training wise, what's the most important goal for the day, the week or the month. I think the biggest thing is everybody feels they are valued, they feel they are making a difference in the livelihood of the overall business picture," he says.

Among Parkview's technicians, many have a decade or more of tenure; the most recent hire came aboard in mid-2023, after the man's application appeared unsolicited on Horsey's desk. A positive interview confirmed the applicant, previously employed at a competing dealership, met Horsey's top requirement for new hires.

"The first thing I look at is character. That's first and foremost," Horsey says. "If I can't trust you, I'm not going to work with you. Also, if you're a person of good



Ryan Horsey and Mojo, Amy Horsey West's dog





character, I honestly believe that we can go ahead and fill a void someplace."

As a man of faith, Horsey believes everything revolves around relationships and principles; he's been especially inspired by Jeff Hirsch, Campers Inn's president and CEO.

"A few years ago before COVID, Jeff talked about being a positive disruptor," Horsey says. "One of the biggest things about that is you need to have full transparency with the people you work with, whether they're manufacturers, customers or associates."

Horsey has had to be especially transparent with scheduling service since dealerships everywhere now find themselves with more maintenance and repair work than in past years.

"My first and foremost priority is our customers. If it's someone who's bought an RV from us and there's something that's preventing them from using that RV, I won't bat an eye. I will not wait for warranty; I'll say 'Let's go ahead and fix it to get the customer on the road.' We will let the dust settle," he says.

For those with operable units purchased elsewhere, Parkview's service advisors will make future appointments. It's an arrangement that's now the norm among many shops, especially as repair event cycle time (RECT) has become a front-and-center subject, according to Horsey, and something he'll focus on as RVDA chairman for the rest of his term.

"You cannot sleep on it. You must have an understanding of what allows our customers to keep their RVs in their driveways," he says.

As for sales, of the 281 units Parkview sold in 2023 (down about 20% from the previous two years), most were towables with a smattering of motorized units. The store also does a brisk business with Northern Lite, Lance and Palomino truck campers. Delaware has no sales tax and state registration isn't required for those types of campers, according to Horsey.

"We have a lot of customers that come in from the Northeast to purchase truck campers from us," he says. "From Delaware to the Outer Banks, as well as New Jersey, it's pretty cool because you can go on the beach and surf fish all day with your RV on the back of your truck and you can camp out on the beach. There's not a lot of places you can do that."

Horsey is quick to admit truck campers were an acquired taste for him; when brother-in-law Mike announced Parkview was taking on Lance, he figured at least the store would be selling a well-known and respected brand. Horsey also was reminded of something his dad told him years earlier.

"Sell people on the things they want and need, not what you want them to have," he says. RVP

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Carefree, Outdoor Living

Homing in on products that create additional livable space outdoors proves successful for this Colorado company.

BY JENNIFER KING

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAREFREE OF COLORADO

Fast turnaround times, plus a dedication to quality materials, seems to be the winning recipe for Carefree of Colorado.

A mainstay in the industry since Carefree's founder, Gene Upton, introduced the first true automatic rollup awning for RVs in 1971, Carefree's relationships with its dealer contacts, OEM partners and distributors are critical for its success.

RV PRO spoke with Carefree of Colorado's President Eric Cannon and Vice President of Sales and Marketing Kevin Mayer to learn more about what customers are looking for and how the company strives to fill those needs.



Many items that Carefree of Colorado makes can be shipped within 48 hours.

RV PRO: What would you say are your top-selling products for dealerships?

Mayer: Our top-selling products include replacement parts for almost every awning model we have manufactured over the past 50 years. We are proud to be able to provide parts that extend the life of our products rather than forcing consumers into buying replacement units.

In addition to parts, we sell a healthy amount of replacement canopies for both patio awnings and slideout covers. These are one of the most common wear items on an RV, so replacing them again extends the useful life of the product. We have a variety of price points, from entry-level cut-to-fit fabrics to higher-end, custom-manufactured premium vinyl and acrylic canopies with options for add-on guards that protect the canopies from future degradation. Most of those custom replacement canopies are manufactured and shipped within 48 hours.



Carefree President Eric Cannon

Cannon: We've got a really fast turnaround time. Most things we can ship custom, whatever you need, within 48 hours. So even if your distributor doesn't have it on the shelf, you can order it with us and we can create a replacement canopy for most things with a really fast turnaround time.

The other thing that I would say is we have a wide variety of custom canopies. And so, as you're looking at wanting to upgrade [an] awning canopy that might give a little bit longer life, we have all of those options available too.

RV PRO: Why are replacement canopies and slideout covers important to your business, and why would a customer want these?

Mayer: Slideout covers are not always standard equipment from the manufacturers despite being critical in

preventing debris from falling on the slideout and ultimately jeopardizing the slideout seals. Once the slideout opens and closes a few times with a few leaves or sticks in the mix, the seals deform and tear, then water begins to breach the RV and bad things can happen.

Our range of slideout covers easily retrofit onto most units to instantly provide debris protection while shading the slideout, minimizing heat gain inside the unit. Carefree's patented lock design prevents billowing while driving.

Cannon: Whether it's a towable, a small teardrop or big Class As, expanding the livable space is always something that we talk about. Our awnings and awnings in general create additional livable space. The whole point is to be outdoors, and [for] most people it's not safe for our health to be in full sun.

So our awnings provide some level of protection there. And we've done some consideration of how we [can] expand that livable space thought beyond just an awning.

But we fundamentally feel that our bread and butter is a mechanical and electrical design to create shade and do it efficiently and seamlessly at the push of a button. So, I think that's kind of the lane we stay in right now.

RV PRO: What is it about the construction of Carefree of Colorado's products that make them stand out? What materials are used in manufacturing?

Cannon: We design our products in the United States. We do all of our canopy assembly, final assembly of all of our awnings, here in Colorado. And we distribute all over the country. We're Americans making things in America for other Americans to enjoy the outdoors, and I think a lot of our customers consider value in that. The industry in general is tightly ingrained in the U.S. You don't see things being imported and we love being a part of that, and we think it adds value to our economy and certainly our employees – the work that they are able to do to provide these products.

Mayer: All of our awnings are manufactured in Colorado. We are proud to be an American manufacturer and the quality that comes with that. While we offer a variety of price points, we do not compromise on some core materials – for example, we only utilize 6063 aluminum in our product. You will not find any steel in our awnings like you will in others – steel is heavy and rusts quickly. Our vinyl fabric is the benchmark for design and weight – patterns are hand-selected and production standards are high. For higher-end units, we utilize Sunbrella and Recasens acrylic fabric and sew with Tenara thread, which does not degrade in the elements.



Carefree of Colorado's products are all assembled in the United States.

RV PRO: Can you tell me about durability? Do any of your products come with a warranty?

Mayer: All of our products come with a one-year warranty. As mentioned earlier, we strive to provide replacement components as much as possible rather than forcing repurchase.

RV PRO: How about installation – should a dealer assist a customer with installation?

Mayer: Dealers should install when possible. Awnings are a great category to become familiar with servicing – they are a heavy wear item and play a critical role in the comfort of RVing. Once a dealer becomes comfortable, servicing awnings will usually grow into one of their best service categories.

RV PRO: What is your customer service like for a dealer or an end-user?

Mayer: We pride ourselves on customer service. Our team of agents in Colorado is standing by to answer technical questions or provide direction with replacement parts or custom configurations. Each agent participates in extensive product training, including exposure to the manufacturing processes.

RV PRO: Where do you gain insights on what will resonate with customers?

I think one of the places that we've gained some insights from [is] we've got a really strong relationship with the RV Industry Association. They do a lot of broad market studies – what do people want, how do we improve the buying experience, the user experience? And we've been investing a lot in [that] here. People are looking for improved quality and reliability.

Historically, RV ownership has been a lot of DIY. You're fixing things by yourself. And I think as the industry evolves, people are looking for a more white-glove experience. They want things to just work reliably the way they do in other parts of their lives.

And so, we've taken that and worked to invest in the reliability of our products and the quality of our products over time. RVP

Italian Quality Fiberglass Distributed Stateside

Brianza USA makes a splash and turns fiberglass laminates – often considered a commodity – into a specialty with an Italian flair.

BY ROB MERWIN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRIANZA USA

First impressions are everything. When a prospective motorhome or fifth wheel customer strolls a dealer's lot and kicks the tires, they have a lot of factors to consider when sizing up a unit. You know, the usual suspects: size, floorplan, slideouts, graphics, GPS systems, Bluetooth, cameras, aux outlets, Wi-Fi, cabin amenities – the list goes on.

Often overlooked, however, is the exterior fiberglass laminate. James Witty, president of Brianza USA Corp., says it should be the highest selling advantage that RV manufacturers can have. He should know, because the company has turned fiberglass – what is often considered a commodity – into a specialty.

"It's the first thing a prospective coach customer sees," Witty says. "Whether they comment on it or not, trust me, they're looking at it. They judge it. And there can't be a more important component for a motorhome. If an air conditioner needs to be replaced, no problem. If it's the fiberglass, you're in a heap of trouble. The last thing you want down the road is yellowing or delamination – it's very temperamental. Quality fiberglass is a great way for a manufacturer to build their brand. Long term, it helps everyone to have the best product in the industry. It matters."

Brianza USA's parent company is Brianza Plastica, a manufacturer of high-quality fiberglass laminates for the recreational and motor vehicle markets based in Italy. Having entered the markets in the United States and Canada just 10 years ago, it's already made a splash by winning a Blue Excellence Award this year from Jayco, which recognized the company as a Top 10 supplier for service and on-time delivery.

Headquartered in Elkhart, Indiana, where its facility serves as a distribution center, it warehouses two months of backup inventory behind its active inventory.

"That's the reason we've had such success with nearly 99% on-time delivery, which is really rare for this industry and one of the reasons we won the Blue Excellence Award," Witty says.

Brianza provides two main fiberglass brands, which are manufactured at its plants in Italy, and delivered in sheets and coils: Elycold (a premium high-gloss fiberglass) and Elyplan (a fiberglass targeting entry-level coaches and mid-level fifth wheels).

"Elycold is truly of Italian quality and German engineering combined with American moxie – it's second to none. We use the highest quality raw materials and our testing is incredible, from heating, aging and bonding with an extremely low discoloration rate to our process that cools the fiberglass at room temperature to limit imperfections. It's an excellent product that's going to lay flat for a long time."

Witty stresses that Brianza's manufacturing "recipe," production process and vigorous testing are what set it apart from the competition when it goes out the door. Behind the science



(left to right) Alberto Crippa, Giuseppe Crippa, Paulo Crippa, Cristina Crippa

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Stephan Bachstein (left) and his team in the research and development lab.

of their manufacturing is fiberglass industry expert Stephan Bachstein, who is in charge of quality control and engineering, and who also "refuses to skimp" on raw materials.

"Even more than that, Stephan takes the machinery, which is standard throughout the industry, and continuously tweaks it to higher levels until he's satisfied with its quality of output. He's a well-known and admired superstar in the world of fiberglass and FRP," Witty says.

To further ensure quality, Brianza also built a new chemical lab in 2019 to test the product for heat and aging.

"We have multiple levels of quality control through measuring and monitoring. It's unbelievable how much chemistry is involved in fiberglass for something that seems like a simple product. There are so many areas where it could go wrong, and it requires the right mix of fiberglass to resin and more," Witty explains. "To say 'fiberglass is just fiberglass' is a lazy narrative. We hold ourselves to excellence with a product that tests well, looks great and performs at a high level.

"We're committed to having the best quality product, on-time delivery and customer service in the industry – we're customer focused at all times. If there's an issue, which we rarely have, you'll hear from us within an hour of being contacted, and [if] problems get identified within 24 hours, then they get solved within 24 hours."

"For years we have served the best European groups in the recreational vehicle sector and we know we have the right mix of quality/service to satisfy even high-level needs, [so] it seemed like a natural step to aim for the important American market," says Alberto Crippa, Brianza sales executive and board member. "After the first years of adjustment and startup of Brianza USA Corp., last year we decided to change course by taking on an American commercial team of competent people introduced to the market. We were lucky enough to hire James [Witty] as president and Kolin Adams and Eric Rheinheimer as valuable collaborators. We are therefore certain that in 2024 the mix between the quality of the products that Brianza Plastica can provide and the service that the Brianza USA Corp team provides on a daily basis will lead to an important development on the U.S. market."



As a family-owned company, Witty explains that its company culture is unlike any other he's worked in.

"Italy is just different. When you get hired in Italy, it's a much bigger deal because oftentimes people get hired for life. Every single meeting is fun and lively, and you feel like part of the family when you work here. It's awesome – it's who they are, and we love to celebrate our victories."

The future is bright for Brianza USA and more victories are anticipated, as word gets out and demand grows for its products. Its customer base is already rapidly expanding and its revenue has nearly doubled, though Witty stresses that Brianza doesn't strive to grow too aggressively.

"We won't compromise our product just to get more sales. The level of quality with the Italians? It's bar none, and they won't sacrifice quality." RVP

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Hitch 'er Up!

Determining the right hitch for every customer's needs.

BY LISA DICKSTEEN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLUE OX AND GEN-Y



The GEN-Y 16k Mega Duty drop hitch

Once the sale of a hitch-mounted trailer is made, the customer cannot just drive to the nearest national park. They need to attach said trailer to their vehicle, which means, of course, they need a hitch.

This can be a precarious time for a dealer in the negotiation process. The customer has just spent a lot of money on their dream trailer and can't wait to get going – but now they need to buy something else first?

It's important to make sure the customer gets the right thing, too, because the wrong hitch will put a big hitch in their plans (pun intended). And as is typical, guess who they'll blame if the chosen hitch gives them problems?

Yup, you guessed it – you, the dealer.

For that reason, RV PRO spoke to representatives from two major hitch manufacturers to get the information needed to fine-tune those conversations, close the deal and send another happy customer on their way.

What Kind of Hitch Makes Sense?

The first job is deciding what kind of hitch is needed in the overall sense. Rick Kauer, product and training manager for Blue Ox, which is based in Pender, Nebraska, broke that down for us.

The weight-distribution-only hitch is used primarily for weight transfer. Add-on sway control devices are useful for windy days, ruts in the road and heavy truck traffic, but this option is not very practical for most users, Kauer explains.

Sway-control hitches work primarily the same way, using friction resistance to accomplish the goal with two-point and four-point options. They are effective but generally provide a harsher ride, produce significant noise and lose efficiency when it's rainy because the steel surfaces get wet and slippery, Kauer says.

On the other hand, sway-prevention hitches are designed to stop the sway before it starts. The hitch head (positive caster design), spring steel bars (augmented suspension) and rotating latch (capture of chain) provide a noise-free, easy-to-use, comfortable-ride, all-weather hitch, he says. This type of hitch offers added weight adaptability with no tools required, making them a top choice for many RVers.



Thomas Cole, GEN-Y international sales manager



GEN-Y's EXECUTIVE Fifth Wheel to Gooseneck pin box with Torsion-Flex Technology

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Rick Kauer says Blue Ox's SwayPro or TrackPro are often the right choice.



Rick Kauer, product and training manager for Blue Ox

Explaining the Added Cost

As a dealer, you know what's best, but how do you handle the customer who initially doesn't want to spend the extra money to purchase a premium brand over a cheaper ball-mounted hitch?

To address that issue, RV PRO spoke with Thomas Cole, international sales manager for GEN-Y Hitches of Nappanee, Indiana.

"We get that question all the time. At the end of the day, you are going to have those customers that only care about price," Cole says. "We've found that our customers care more about our story, our quality and the fact that we are 100% made in small-town USA. Once dealers demonstrate the easily adjustable drop hitches and explain how they create a smoother ride, and our top-notch customer service, [it] can sometimes make selling our product easier than some cheap ball mounts."

Kauer agrees that a quality product often sells itself. "Blue Ox has a rich history of steel product manufacturing, building premium products in the RV, agriculture and powersports industries," he says. "We pride ourselves on offering premium products, unrelenting customer care and being a family-owned American business. Yes, there are less expensive products on the market, but nothing beats our quality and dedication to our dealers and consumers."

The Right Choice for the Customer

So, how does a dealer decide within a brand which of the options is best suited for each customer?

Kauer explains that there are several things that help a dealer assist a customer in deciding which hitch they need: tow capacity of the vehicle towing the trailer, trailer GVWR (gross vehicle weight rating), tongue weight of the trailer and matching the customer's specific combination of those things. Time has shown that the SwayPro or TrackPro are most often the right choice because of sway prevention, he says.

As the dealer, you already know the trailer model and year (for specifications and weights), and the tow vehicle details, so you could choose to use the Blue Ox hitch determination formula to find the ideal hitch for any situation.

For example, a travel trailer with a 10,000 GVWR will have approximately 12% to 15% of that GVWR on the tongue of the trailer, so that's 1,200 to 1,500 pounds of tongue weight (use a tongue weight scale to verify). The choice in this situation is going to be the SwayPro WD Sway Prevention Hitch BXW1500 because it can handle a tongue weight of 1,500 pounds and cover the 10,000 GVWR with 15,000 pounds of trailer capacity.

Before you have them sign the paperwork, Kauer cautions, there's one more detail to settle: verifying the tow capacity of the vehicle that will be doing the towing. It's not recommended to exceed 80% of the max capacity. If the tow vehicle has a 9,000-pound tow capacity, you don't want to recommend pulling anything over a 7,200-pound GVWR trailer.

Cole says that GEN-Y's founder, Carl Borkholder, created the MEGA-DUTY to fill the need for an adjustable receiver hitch back in 2012, beginning what evolved into the patented TORSION-FLEX technology that undergirds all their hitches today.

"Torsion hitches, while they sound complicated, are very simple," he says. "Eight out of 10 customers understand torsion axles, and the rest get it fairly quickly, allowing the dealer to move directly into explaining that GEN-Y TORSION hitches incorporate the same concept as torsion axles, but inside the hitch itself. This truly isolates the truck and trailer, creating a smoother ride, less cargo/driver fatigue and less stress on the trailer's frame." RVP

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Women in Business 2024

Meet 10 women, nominated by their peers, who are changing the face of the RV industry.

Statistics show that half of workers in the United States are women, according to a March 2024 report from Independent Women's Forum. Not only that, but 16% of U.S. households have women as the primary or sole breadwinner, and in 29% of households, women earn the same amount as their spouse.

What's more, women comprise 35% of the United States' 10 highest-paying occupations, which is up from 13% in 1980.

Women are making strides, yes. And women are gaining recognition for their hard work and dedication.

But there's a long way to go.

Women still make only 77 cents for every $1 a man earns. Only 10% of Fortune 500 companies have female CEOs, and according to a World Bank Group report, nearly all countries performed poorly recently on measurements of child care and women's safety.

A 2024 Women at Work survey by SurveyMonkey showed that only 39% of working women secured a pay raise so far this year, down from 44% last year. In addition, 1 in 5 women said their work-life balance has gotten worse; 50% who said it's worse said this was due to increased workload.

While women continue to find successes in the workplace, the need to continue to support other women and empower them to reach further than they may have deemed possible is imperative. That's why RV PRO is proud to introduce you to the 10 women on the following pages, all who were nominated by their peers to be recognized for their dedication to their companies and to furthering the mission of supporting women in the RV industry. As we've said in years past, the chance to recognize the significant contributions that women make in the RV industry is one we don't take lightly here at RV PRO. We thank the nominators for helping us highlight the achievements of these accomplished women, and we thank our sponsors for supporting this important effort.

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Account Manager RV Division, *ASA Electronics*



What makes Stacey stand out in the RV industry?

Stacey is responsible for managing half of our RV business within our organization – everything from growing sales, supporting accounts, product development and a plethora of other duties as well.

In what ways has she gone above and beyond for ASA Electronics?

She is continuing to push us to think outside of the box and not stay stagnant. Stacey's persistence within our organization as well as with her customers results in better output from both. She is never satisfied with putting the ball in the next person's court – she will make sure the ball doesn't stay there for long instead of sitting back waiting. It's all about moving our business forward as well as her customer's business.

What does Stacey add to the company's culture?

She sets the example. She is focused on business first and getting the job done. You will not see her participating in any time-wasting activities in the organization and always is focused on whatever it takes to move her business forward and getting that done first.

How does Stacey contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

[She] helped to start the "Michiana Women Rise" group that is actively involved in local government and helping local women-owned businesses grow. Her support as a mentor is obvious from her social media presence [that] she has grown on behalf of the local women in the group. Stacey also participates in RVWA events to grow her network and knowledge of all things RV.

Speaking of Michiana Women Rise, Stacey says she helped found the group in 2022, hosting meetups and networking events for entrepreneurs and small business owners in Elkhart, Goshen, Mishawaka and South Bend.

"Michiana Women Rise brings the community together in small or large groups to get peer-to-peer mentorship, connect with each other, and build leadership skills within their business," Stacey says. "By bringing women entrepreneurs together from a widespread community, I believe that my commitment to fostering growth and collaboration propels these aspiring leaders forward, making Michiana Women Rise a beacon of inspiration in our community."

What else would you like others to know about Stacey?

She's not only a rockstar salesperson and local women's group leader, but she is also a rockstar mom who raises two boys active in sports.

"I believe that having a supportive community for women in a male-dominated industry is very important as it promotes diversity and inclusivity," Stacey says. "By inspiring the women in this industry, we uplift each other to break the barriers and excel in a more professional light. Initiatives like RV PRO's contest highlight the achievements of the women in business and inspires others to become a role model for some other up-and-coming women. Being a part of this experience allows a chance to contribute to building a community where women's contributions are celebrated and recognized."

Shirley Cartwright

Sales and Product Manager, Sabre Fifth Wheels, *Forest River*



How has Shirley contributed to the RV industry that makes her stand out?

Shirley oversees a wide range of critical responsibilities. She leads the product development and sales strategies, ensuring that Sabre's offerings meet the highest standards of innovation and customer satisfaction. Shirley coordinates cross-functional teams to streamline processes from concept to market, manages key client relationships to ensure their needs are met and exceeded, and analyzes market trends to guide the direction of product development and sales tactics. Her role is pivotal in driving Sabre's growth and maintaining its competitive edge in the RV industry.

In what ways has Shirley gone above and beyond for her company or organization?

Shirley has consistently gone above and beyond by spearheading initiatives that have significantly increased market share and customer satisfaction. She has successfully launched new product lines that have become bestsellers, demonstrating her keen insight into market demands and trends. Shirley has also implemented innovative sales strategies that have boosted sales figures year over year. Her commitment to excellence is evident in her hands-on approach to problem-solving and her willingness to mentor her team, ensuring that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to excel in their roles.

How does Shirley add to the culture of where she works?

Shirley is a beacon of positive energy and inclusivity at Sabre. She fosters a culture of collaboration, encouraging open communication and teamwork across departments. Shirley leads by example, demonstrating integrity, dedication and a strong work ethic. Her approachability and genuine care for her team's well-being have cultivated a supportive and motivating work environment. She champions diversity and inclusivity, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

How does Shirley contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

Shirley is deeply committed to the advancement of women within the RV industry. She frequently participates in industry panels and workshops, sharing her knowledge and experiences to inspire other women. She is also an active member of several professional networks for women in the RV industry, where she advocates for gender equality and empowers women to pursue leadership roles.

What else would you like others to know about Shirley?

Beyond her professional achievements, Shirley's ability to inspire those around her truly sets her apart. Her passion for innovation, coupled with her commitment to sustainability, has led Sabre to adopt much better practices under her guidance. Shirley's visionary leadership has not only resulted in business growth but has also positively impacted the community and the environment in her workplace. Shirley is not just a leader in the RV industry; she is a role model and a force for positive change.

Cassie Guffey

Director of Service Parts, *Grand Design RV*

How has Cassie gone above and beyond for her company?

Cassie is responsible for all service parts-related activities including order intake, procurement, inventory management, warehousing and distribution. She is a forward-thinker, transforming the road ahead by identifying and capitalizing on alternative methods for inventory control and management (leveraging technology), parts distribution (through alternative methods for faster delivery), using alternative materials and processes for packaging (reducing waste) and most importantly, developing, mentoring and leading her team to operate at a high level with a focus on reducing RECT (repair event cycle time) through the timely and accurate delivery of critical repair parts.

What does Cassie add to the culture of where she works?

Cassie is an inclusive leader, utilizing the strengths of all team members to forge ahead with new ideas, concepts and processes. She is engaged on the floor every day helping others and encouraging high level performance.

How does Cassie contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

Cassie is involved in the Winnebago Industries women's inclusion group and leads that initiative for Grand Design. She is engaged in several programs designed for the growth and advancement of women in the workplace.

Cassie joined the Winnebago Inclusion Network (WIN) for its education and networking opportunities. She also enjoys the chance to mentor people who are newer to the industry.

"In October 2023, after going to the symposium in Chicago, I joined the Grand Design WIN Leadership Team," Cassie says, referring to the RVWA's Educational Symposium. "This has been a great way to join in and be a part of the planning side of the program. I have been in the industry for over 30 years and have seen the roles of women grow immensely from when I started."

What else would you like others to know about Cassie?

Cassie is a leader in the Community Go initiative and spends hours directing volunteer activities.



She is actively involved in the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program and worked with the Marine Corps and the State Department to provide toys for Ukrainian refugees in Estonia.

"I had been on a Board of Charitable Causes in my past. However, since being here at Grand Design, I have had more ability to join different causes and projects, such as barn building at Five Star, toy drives for Ukraine, Toys for Tots and projects for The Boys and Girls Club," Cassie says. "Winnebago and Grand Design have a program called Community Go that brings us great volunteer opportunities and matches donations to causes. This has really been a great way to get people excited to help. I truly believe that what you put out there in the world comes back to you, and it feels much better to know that you have done whatever you could to make a positive difference."

Laurie Hirsch

HR Manager, *Campers Inn RV*

What makes Laurie stand out in the RV industry?

Laurie expertly manages an array of critical HR functions. Her responsibilities encompass the entire spectrum of employee life cycle management, from recruiting and onboarding to ongoing personnel management and risk assessment. Laurie also oversees key areas such as employee concerns, workmen's compensation and payroll management, ensuring a comprehensive HR strategy. Her involvement in devising and implementing pay strategy significantly contributes to the company's competitive edge in talent acquisition and retention.

In what ways has Laurie gone above and beyond for Campers Inn RV?

Laurie's dedication to her role and the company is exemplified by her unwavering availability and readiness to address concerns at any hour. This commitment reflects her deep-seated resolve to ensure the company's success and address employee needs promptly. Her hands-on approach in resolving process issues and guiding management through critical decision-making processes has been pivotal in maintaining operational excellence across the organization.

How does she add to the culture of where she works?

Laurie's impact on the company culture is profound and multifaceted. She employs the DISC personality profiling and the Productive leadership management philosophy as tools for effective coaching and conflict resolution, which not only aids in personal and professional development but also upholds the company's standards in process execution. Laurie's approach fosters an environment of continuous learning and improvement, essential for the dynamic nature of the RV industry.

How does Laurie contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

Laurie actively mentors female employees, encouraging their growth within Campers Inn RV and the broader RV industry. She focuses on nurturing young talent, guiding them toward leadership roles and contributing to the development of women as industry role models. Her efforts in this area not only benefit the individuals she mentors but also enhance the company's reputation as an inclusive and progressive workplace. Laurie is an RVWA member, financial contributor (through



Campers Inn RV) and has attended RVWA functions.

What else should others know about Laurie?

What distinguishes Laurie is her genuine care for the employees and her commitment to the company's values. Her drive in challenging times is a testament to her altruistic nature. Her significant role in the company's expansion from 15 to over 37 stores demonstrates her strategic acumen and operational expertise. Laurie's focus on appropriate staffing and integration during acquisitions while upholding company values is a cornerstone of Campers Inn RV's success. Laurie is an invaluable asset to Campers Inn RV, for her expertise and dedication and also her influence on the company's culture, growth and commitment to empowering women.

Kelly Townsend

Advanced Certified Service Technician, ***RVEE***

In what ways has Kelly gone above and beyond for RVEE?

Kelly is a standout technician at RVEE, with meticulous attention to detail and a customer-focused mindset. As evidenced by her numerous five-star reviews, Kelly's commitment to excellence has earned her a reputation as one of the most trusted and reliable technicians in the industry. Her participation in initiatives to boost business growth and drive innovation demonstrates her proactive and entrepreneurial mindset. Kelly also plays a crucial role in supporting her colleagues and contributing to a positive work environment. She shares her knowledge to help others succeed, and her willingness to lend a helping hand fosters a sense of camaraderie and teamwork that is essential to RVEE's success.

How does Kelly add to the company's culture?

Kelly approaches her work with optimism and enthusiasm, inspiring her colleagues. Her infectious positivity creates a ripple effect, uplifting spirits and increasing motivation.

Kelly is also a strong advocate for continuous improvement in the workplace. She seeks out opportunities to learn, embracing new challenges and technologies and motivating her peers to adopt a growth mindset in their work.

Open communication is another of Kelly's contributions to RVEE. She fosters an environment where everyone feels valued and heard, encouraging open dialogue, feedback and constructive criticism.

Kelly also celebrates success and recognizes the achievements of her colleagues. She goes out of her way to express gratitude and appreciation for the contributions of others, which boosts the team's morale and fosters a sense of pride and accomplishment.

How does Kelly contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

Kelly mentors other women in the industry, providing guidance, advice and encouragement to help them advance in their careers. Kelly empowers her mentees, fostering confidence and resilience. She advocates for inclusivity and diversity within the industry, participating in initiatives and discussions aimed at addressing gender disparities and promoting equal opportunities for women. Through her advocacy work, Kelly raises awareness about the importance of gender diversity in the industry and encourages stakeholders to create more



inclusive and equitable workplaces.

Kelly leads by example. As a successful female technician in a traditionally male-dominated field, she demonstrates that women can excel in technical roles and make significant contributions to the industry's success.

What else should we know about Kelly?

Kelly's radiant smile and quick wit uplift those around her, creating a positive atmosphere. A mother of four, her caring nature extends beyond her family to her colleagues and customers. She approaches her work with compassion and responsibility, prioritizing the needs of others. Kelly's sense of humor also adds levity to the shop. Her ability to find joy in challenging situations inspires resilience and optimism in her colleagues.

Kimberly Purifoy

DEI Business Partner for Corporate Responsibility and Inclusion, ***Winnebago Industries***

In what ways has Kimberly gone above and beyond for Winnebago?

Kimberly acts as the employee resource group (ERG) advisor for the Women's Inclusion Network (WIN), Veterans Network (Vet Net) and Mosaic Multicultural Network; the Summer Intern Program manager; the Executive Lunch & Learn Series coordinator; the Leadership Speaker Series coordinator; and the Event Activation manager for the Melanated Campout, Society of Women Engineers and Camp Winnebago. Kimberly was integral in launching and developing Vet Net and Mosaic. She embeds herself in each group so she understands the program, her role, employees' desires and how Winnebago can best partner with the program.

What does Kimberly add to the company's culture?

Kimberly is an active WIN member, was a member of the Culture Club for its first year, and is on the Security Champions team. She participates in every company event at the corporate office. She makes a point to be friendly to everyone and volunteers at all corporate Community Go activities. At a recent event with Wilderness Inquiry, she was a main speaker on the importance of business involvement with outdoor activities such as Canoemobile.

Outside headquarters, Kimberly keeps close contact with employees from units in Iowa, Indiana and Florida. She helped organize a leadership cohort for Winnebago, Grand Design RV, Newmar and Barletta Boat Co., and toured the Tolson Center for Community Excellence during Black History Month to learn about its historic ties and impact within Elkhart.

How does Kimberly contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

Kimberly is an RVWA member and attends the alliance's annual events. She was invited to speak on a panel during the symposium about women in leadership. She uses the events to connect with as many women as she can and shares advice on engaging others in outreach activities.

Part of Kimberly's job is to manage Winnebago's internship program. The program is successful because of Kimberly's dedication to mentorship. Last year, interns were predominantly young women. While attending the Society of Women Engineers conference to talk about Winnebago, Kimberly spent time



learning about what women are looking for in their work. She brought these notes back to Winnebago to help enhance recruiting for employees and interns. As part of Winnebago's internal WIN, Kimberly participates in most events, helps new employees register and attends monthly WIN leadership meetings to offer her support.

What else should others know about Kimberly?

Kimberly is a lifetime member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; a member of the Dillard University National Alumni Association; a member of the Minnesota HBCU Alumni Collective; a volunteer for the Minnesota Historical Society; and she serves on the Women's Ministry Steering Committee for Mount Olivet Baptist Church.

Malinda Abelseth

CFO and VP of Accounting and HR,
Firefly Integrations



How has Malinda gone above and beyond for Firefly Integrations?

When Malinda started at the end of 2018, Firefly only had 54 employees and faced many challenges as a growing company. Today, Malinda is the chief financial officer and VP of accounting and HR for a company of 111 employees. During her time here, Malinda has implemented and trained an HR department that has grown and adapted to many of the challenges we faced with the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to steering us through the pandemic, Malinda has led efforts to make Firefly Integrations a destination employer.

What does Malinda add to the company's culture?

Malinda significantly contributes to workplace culture by creating an inclusive and supportive environment where employees feel valued and heard. She is a voice for employee perspectives in the decision-making process. Additionally, Malinda has an approachable nature and always offers a listening ear. She creates a space open for communication, enabling team members to express their ideas, feedback and challenges. Malinda cultivates a culture of respect, collaboration and mutual support, which enhances morale, engagement and overall organizational success.

Additionally, Malinda has helped lead the company-wide cultural advancement at Firefly Integrations. She began by evaluating and reporting on cultural challenges within our company. Once the issues were identified, she started working with leaders in the company to train and encourage them through implementing cultural advancements. With Malinda's efforts, we have seen improvements in employee retention, benefits and job satisfaction.

How does she contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

While she does not consider herself a formal mentor, Malinda actively supports women in the RV industry by providing guidance and mentorship to those seeking advice. Her open-door policy encourages women to seek counsel, fostering a supportive environment for professional growth and empowerment.

What else should others know about Malinda?

Malinda wears multiple hats and has a schedule that keeps her extremely busy. Despite her workload, she always takes time to meet with employees who have questions or needs. Malinda makes great sacrifices, often working late to compensate for the time she gives to others. Firefly Integrations is fortunate to have Malinda on our team as she cares deeply about the success of the company and the employees we have.

Stephanie Cox

Shop Assistant Manager,
RV World Recreation Vehicle Center



What makes Stephanie stand out in the RV industry?

Stephanie is responsible for scheduling and overseeing all work done in a busy service department. She manages 13 service technicians and is responsible for their work quality and efficiency. The dealership's service writers, detail department, parts department and warranty department all report to Stephanie, who keeps all departments running effectively and efficiently and most importantly, as a solid team working together to maintain its goal of providing excellence in RV service.

In what ways has she gone above and beyond for RV World?

Since joining the team on Oct. 1, 2013, Stephanie has gone above and beyond its expectations nearly every day. Whether it's squeezing in a service emergency, troubleshooting a nearly impossible service issue, working with outside and out-of-area service departments on behalf of traveling customers, or helping one of our team members with any issue, going above and beyond is the norm for Stephanie.

What does she add to RV World's culture?

Stephanie has created a culture of personal responsibility and accountability in which each team member can thrive, grow and find purpose and meaning in their work roles. She has also created a culture in which each employee feels safe, listened to, empowered and appreciated. By creating this kind of atmosphere, Stephanie has created a culture of team members that are engaged and motivated to do their best work.

How does she contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

Stephanie has hired and trained several women in the workplace who have followed her example of excellent leadership and have become leaders themselves. RV World's parts manager and warranty co-manager are both leaders as well and have been mentored by Stephanie.

What advice does Stephanie have for women aiming to thrive in the RV industry?

"Surround yourself with a good team of people and to do your best to create an environment in which each individual team member can grow, thrive and find support from other team members. There's nothing stronger than a group of individuals coming together in tandem to accomplish a goal. Be yourself, know yourself and be aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Build upon your strengths and use them to support others, and rely upon your team to support you on areas you may need help in. As an individual in our industry, you can accomplish great things. As part of a positive, fundamentally strong team, you can accomplish wonders."

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Tyann Miller

Director of Warranty, *Jayco*



What makes Tyann stand out in the RV industry?

Tyann oversees Jayco's warranty processes for all Jayco divisions. Her role consists of directing a team of 32 to process and maintain warranty submittals for units ranging from travel trailers to Class A diesel pushers. The team processes over 15,000 claim lines weekly, maintaining lead times for pre-authorization to be responded to within 24 hours and claims processed within a week. Tyann also partners with our production team participating in weekly audits to better the product. She also travels to dealers reviewing warranty processes with dealerships.

Tyann has been in her current role for two years but has managed the same team for just over seven. She started her career in the RV industry with Jayco and has been with the company for 16 years total.

In what ways has she gone above and beyond for Jayco?

Tyann has made great connections with our dealer body through her years of travel. She hears out their day-to-day issues and comes back with ideas on how we can better our partnerships to take care of the customer.

What does Tyann add to Jayco's culture?

Tyann is an innovative thinker. She is constantly challenging her team and other departments on how we can do better for our dealers, vendors and customers.

How does she contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

Tyann's nominator came into the industry five years ago and has mentored her from a claims processor to managing the claims, pre-authorizations and vendor chargebacks team. Tyann is a wealth of knowledge and takes the time to share what she knows so we can make sure our team works to the best of its ability. I appreciate how much trust she puts in her team to make the right decisions and is always willing to answer questions and guide you in the right direction.

What else should others know about Tyann?

Tyann organizes Jayco's annual Christmas drive where families are "adopted" from the local school systems. In 2023, Jayco adopted 18 families consisting of 51 kids with over 500 gifts.

What advice does Tyann have for women aiming to thrive in the RV industry?

"Build confidence in your skills and abilities. Believe in yourself and your potential to succeed in the industry. Network with other women in the RV industry to gain support, advice and mentorship. Forming connections with like-minded individuals can help you navigate challenges and opportunities."

Jessika Mendez

Operations Supervisor, *TireMinder*

What makes Jessika stand out in the RV industry?

Jessika is responsible for leading the customer service team, ensuring they provide top-notch support and achieve customer satisfaction. She guides and mentors agents, oversees their performance and steps in to resolve complex customer issues. Jessika is tasked with formulating and applying customer service protocols, enhancing support procedures for better efficiency and acting as a bridge between customers and the organization. Her goal is to keep her team inspired and uphold superior service standards.

Jessika was promoted to operations supervisor from customer support supervisor in March after an eight-year journey with the company.

In what ways has she gone above and beyond for TireMinder?

Jessika prioritizes exceptional customer experiences and embedding trust deeply into the product and the supporting company. She consistently ensures that every interaction reinforces reliability and satisfaction, fostering strong customer loyalty. She is dedicated to her agents' well-being, treating them with fairness and respect, and providing them with the necessary resources and support to excel in their roles. Her leadership not only elevates customer support quality, but also cultivates a positive and empowering work environment, demonstrating her commitment to both customer and team success.

What does Jessika add to TireMinder's culture?

She greatly enriches the workplace culture at TireMinder through unwavering support for her staff, her approachable and friendly demeanor, and her deep commitment to prioritizing customer care. By fostering a team environment where support and respect are paramount, she ensures that her staff feels valued and empowered. Jessika's genuine concern for customer satisfaction permeates the company, setting a high standard for service excellence. Her positive influence creates a nurturing and motivating atmosphere, encouraging everyone to strive for the best in customer interactions.

How does she contribute to the ongoing support of women in the RV industry?

Jessika mentors her team on both the TireMinder product and general RV knowledge, fostering



an inclusive environment that values learning and development. Her leadership reflects TireMinder's commitment to internal growth, emphasizing promotions from within to empower staff.

What advice does Jessika have for women aiming to thrive in the RV industry?

"Knowledge is power. You can learn from so many different places: colleagues, customers, different manufacturers, the internet, etc. If there is a particular part of the industry that you are interested in, gain the knowledge from every place you can, so there is no question as to why you are in that position."

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PASSION PROJECT

Director of marketing for THOR Industries and RVWA chair, Denise Chariya strives to help women thrive and find fulfillment in an industry she loves.

BY JAVACIA HARRIS BOWSER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DENISE CHARIYA



Denise Chariya, Director of Marketing, THOR Industries

Denise Chariya, director of marketing for THOR Industries, is not a fan of traditional networking. Making small talk in a big room with a bunch of strangers is not her idea of a good time. Yet, as a leader at THOR Industries, she was eager to join the RV Women's Alliance, a network designed to accelerate personal and professional growth for women in the RV industry. Since she's not from Elkhart, Indiana – where THOR is based – she hoped RVWA would help her make new industry friends in Elkhart and beyond. But she quickly realized that RVWA could help her with networking and so much more. No small talk necessary.

Recently, Chariya was tapped to be chair of RVWA, and she wants the organization to continue to be as helpful to other women as it has been for her.

"I definitely feel a sense of responsibility to deliver as much value to our members as possible," Chariya says. "It's critically important that all our members feel heard, valued and seen and that they learn and take away things that can help move them forward in their individual careers."

Passion & Purpose

Before joining the team at THOR, Chariya worked in marketing for a variety of other corporations, including Walmart, Walgreens and Wilton Brands. Chariya, a graduate of Elmira College, also worked at a marketing agency right out of college. Fun fact: Chariya once had a side gig decorating cakes, making her time at Wilton, which sells cake decorating and bakeware products, particularly special.

"I have always wanted my career to align with something that I'm passionate about," she says. "I feel like you just do more work when you're really excited about the product or the service that you're working on."

That's why THOR was a perfect fit too. Chariya's fondest childhood memories center on camping.

"My family traveled with a pop-up camper for my whole childhood," she recalls. "So the idea that I could bring my love of camping and the outdoors together with my love of marketing was one of those perfect marriages. I get to spend my day talking to people about how to get outside more and spend more time with the ones that they love. There's not much better than that for me."

She wants all women in the RV industry to enjoy the sense of fulfillment she has at THOR Industries. And she can play her part in making that happen through RVWA.

Networking Reimagined

Since its inception in 2019, the RV Women's Alliance has been thriving against the odds. Despite a global pandemic putting in-person meetups on hold for a couple of years, RVWA's membership has ballooned from 200 when it started to more than 2,800 members currently, representing more than 570 companies. RVWA members include men and women in the United States and Canada.

"RVWA offers a lot of alternative



(left to right) Denise Chariya, Chelsea Kreigh of Newmar, and Susan Carpenter, RVWA president

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networking opportunities," Chariya says. RVWA members who might want to skip awkward mixers can make plans to go to Camp Out this month – a weekend of food and fun that RVWA hosts each year. Attendees can bring tents and RVs or share a cabin with co-workers or friends.

People who are bored by typical conferences might opt for the RVWA symposium instead. This year's symposium will be held in October in Chicago.

RVWA also hosts regular educational programs, both virtual and in-person. This summer, the group will host a discussion series exploring a wide range of topics, including leadership, internal communication, sales and negotiation.

RVWA believes in community service too. Members get together to help build houses for Habitat for Humanity. This is the kind of networking that Chariya is eager to sign up for.

"I think there's a lot of power in learning together," she says. "I think that bonds people and creates connections with people in ways that you wouldn't necessarily expect."

Chariya didn't expect RVWA to help her in the ways that it has.

"There is so much heritage and history in the industry that it can be a little intimidating," she admits. "I started just over five years ago and coming in there's so much to learn."

RVWA helped her navigate the steep learning curve.

"RVWA has really helped me in that area because it gave me the opportunity to meet and work with a lot of people that do a wide variety of roles and work for a lot of different parts of the industry," she says. "In my normal role, I don't have the day-to-day interaction with dealers and suppliers, but through RVWA I am able to get to know those people and understand some of their struggles and things that are impacting them as well, which gives me a much better view of the industry as a whole."

Representation Matters

Chariya believes that a lack of representation is one of the biggest challenges women face in the RV industry. And RVWA is striving to change that.

"When you see people like you in roles, that really helps to have the vision to attain those roles," she says.

That's why RVWA highlights women in the industry on the organization's website and social media channels and through awards such as its Champion of Women Award, Leader of Tomorrow Award and Trailblazer for Lifetime Achievement Award.

Though Chariya loves camping, when asked what she loves most about working in the RV industry, she talks business.

"I love the entrepreneurial spirit of this industry," she says. "Even though I work for a big player in this space, there's still that small business mentality around making change happen and really looking at ways to innovate. That's such a core part of what our industry does."

Her love of THOR, however, is all about the people.

"I love that our leadership, even Bob



Martin, our CEO, they really care about the people," she says. "That value is very important to me, to not only think about our business and the numbers, but also to look at the people we're impacting both by the product we make and the people that we employ."

Kelly Miller, senior content manager at THOR Industries, can attest that this is a value Chariya lives out.

"It feels like I work for my big sister that always has my best interests at heart," Miller says of Chariya. "She's really concerned about my career and not just what's happening right now. She wants to make sure that everybody that she works with has a long and happy career."

Miller deeply admires that Chariya doesn't have a "one-size-fits-all" leadership style.

"She takes a lot of time to understand how each of us works and then caters her managing style to each person individually, which I think has been such a game changer for our small but mighty team," Miller says.

And like any good leader, Chariya pushes her team to be better, Miller says.

"I have learned everything I know about strategy and marketing from Denise," Miller says. "She really has pushed me and challenged me to get really creative but also understand all the data that goes behind making decisions. Denise is really unique in that she's able to blend creative strategy with analytical strategy in a way that I really haven't seen before."

Balancing Act

Promoting work/life balance – or at least a graceful juggling of the two – is something else Chariya encourages as a leader and is another priority of RVWA.

"The term work/life balance is a bit of a fallacy," Chariya says. "But we can lean on each other to learn different tactics and different approaches."

Her approach is to schedule time with family and friends.

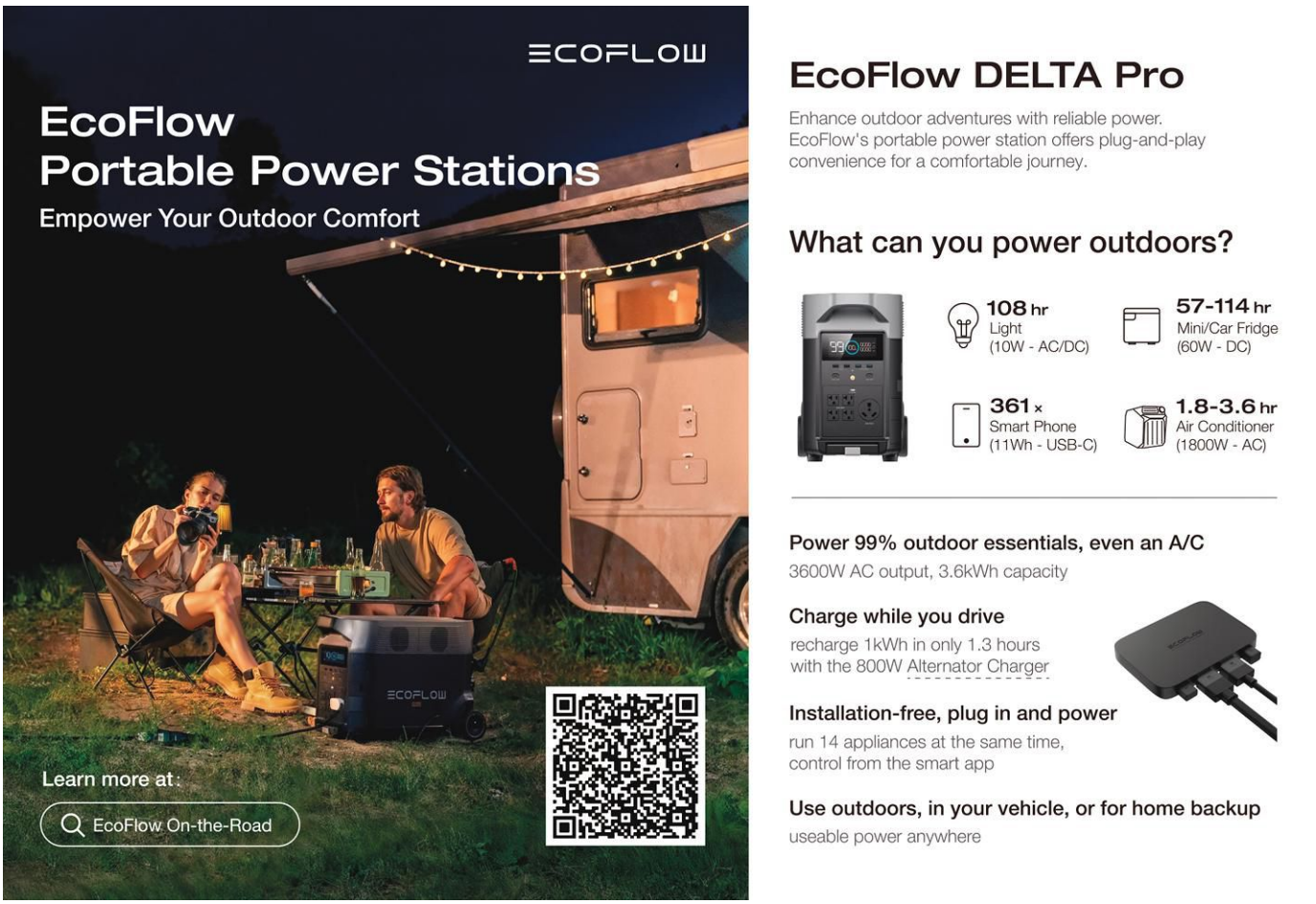


(left to right) From THOR Industries: Katelyn Krulek, Karly Anderson, Denise Chariya, Kelly Miller, Renee Jones

"Because my job is demanding, it's important to plan that time and hold myself accountable to it," she says. In her free time, she enjoys painting, sewing, cooking – especially over an open fire – and traveling, particularly in an RV with her husband, Than.

Through RVWA, Chariya hopes to help women in the RV business see that they can have fulfilling lives and thrive in the industry.

"I know what we're doing," she says, "really is going to help support women within this industry for years to come." RVP



OLIVIA IRVINE ON 'STAYING TOASTY'

This 14-year-old Canadian entrepreneur started her business three years ago and shows no signs of slowing down.

BY JAVACIA HARRIS BOWSER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF OLIVIA IRVINE



Olivia Irvine has a thriving business selling a variety of items to help people enjoy the great outdoors. Her products capture the attention of attendees at popular RV trade shows such as Canada's Toronto Spring Camping and RV Show, the Peterborough Home Show, the Ottawa RV Show and the NTP-STAG Expo in Florida. Irvine is also an active member of the RV Women's Alliance (RVWA), a network designed to accelerate the personal and professional growth of women in the RV industry.

And she isn't even old enough to have a driver's license.

Irvine is the founder of the Roasty Toasty Campfire Company, based in Haliburton, Ontario, Canada.

When she started her business in 2021 at age 11, she only sold firewood.

"Where I live, it's a big cottage country and a lot of people come up here during the summer for camping and all different kinds of things," Irvine says. "When I started selling firewood, we already had a lot of trees that were down that we could use. So, there were a lot of resources that I already had that I could use to start my business."

Irvine was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug after reading a financial book with her dad. "Rich Kid, Smart Kid" by Robert Kiyosaki is all about giving kids a financial head start. Irvine decided she'd get her head start by starting her own business, with plans to save the money she makes to one day pay for college.

"When I started selling the firewood, I knew that I wanted it to be more than that, because I wanted to earn lots of money to be able to go to college," Irvine says. "So, I came up with new ideas and new products to sell."

Today, Roasty Toasty Campfire sells firewood, apparel, metal signs, fire rings, smokeless fire pits and heated chairs. Roasty Toasty goods are sold at select grocers and outfitters near Irvine's hometown and are available through her website roastytoastycampfire.com.

Irvine also sells her products at various home and RV shows. It was at the Toronto RV Show that she decided to join the RV Women's Alliance after an inspiring talk by Stacey Robinson of Great Canadian RV, a dealership network.



"She's very positive, and she really believes that if you set your mind to something, you can achieve it and you can achieve further than what you think you can," Irvine says.

At the Toronto RV Show, Irvine attended a breakfast hosted by the RV Women's Alliance where she won free tickets to the group's annual symposium in Chicago.

Irvine enjoyed meeting new people at the symposium and got even more encouragement to keep building her business and going after her goals.

"They talked about how it doesn't matter your age or your gender. If



you want to do something, you can do it," she says of the symposium speakers. "Even if somebody tells you that you can't do it, you can still do it no matter what."

For Irvine, Roasty Toasty Campfire is just the beginning. Her long-term goals include going to Dawson College in Montreal to study interior design and later open her own home design business.

"I always wanted to be an interior designer, because I'm really into art and I would go buy house magazines and look at them and see ways that I would want to change it," Irvine says, adding that she believes Roasty Toasty Campfire Company is preparing her for her future interior design career. "I do want to open my own business for interior design. I think having the business knowledge will help me. And if I wanted to get other jobs, it would probably look pretty good on my résumé saying that I own my own business."

Roasty Toasty Campfire Company is doing more for Irvine than filling her résumé and college fund.

"She used to be very shy and is now quite outgoing and will talk with customers and network with potential customers with confidence," says her mother, Lisa Irvine. "She has a sense of pride in herself and of her business, and she's learned about perseverance."

That perseverance helps her juggle being a business owner while being a high school student. Irvine spends most of her time when she's not at school or doing homework checking emails and inventory, visiting local stores that carry her products to make sure they're stocked and sorting through product shipments.

"Sometimes it is a struggle to be able to hang out with my friends," Irvine says. "But I like staying busy."

Yet this busy businesswoman manages to make time for competitive dance, too.

Her advice to parents raising their own budding entrepreneurs is to offer help without holding on too tight.

"Parents should give their kids all the help that they can, but don't step on their toes too much," she says. "Let them do their own thing."

Irvine's father, Sean Irvine, says he and his wife help their daughter with emails, invoices, inventory and ordering. At trade shows, they help her set up her booths.

Sean Irvine recommends that other parents looking to inspire their children to take on lofty projects shouldn't go it alone.

"Find something they are passionate about, and help them find people who can guide them and encourage and motivate them," he says.

Olivia Irvine has words of wisdom to offer too. Her advice for other young people with entrepreneurial aspirations is simple: "Believe in yourself," she says. "If you think you can do it, then you can definitely do it. Just stay positive and don't let people tell you that you can't." RVP

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SMI: Are You Exceeding Your Towing Capacity?



HENGKI LESTIO/ADOBE STOCK

Tips for preventing the accumulation of slow-moving inventory at your dealership.

For those unfamiliar with the term SMI, it stands for "slow-moving inventory," a phrase that I developed many years ago to denote goods that are not moving through your parts and accessories inventories as quickly as they should. Since one of the themes for this issue of RV PRO is towing and hitches, I thought that discussing the towing capacity for SMI in your parts and accessories inventory might be appropriate for this two-part column, which will continue in the June issue of RV PRO.

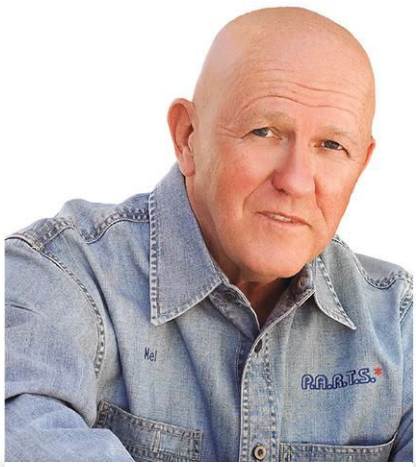
To better evaluate the value of the SMI in your parts and accessories inventories, it is necessary to define SMI for the possible components of those inventories. For items that are considered parts and accessories for the RVs that you might sell and service, SMI is any item that has not incurred a demand in more than nine consecutive months and was received at least 12 months previously.

SMI Towing Capacity

To determine the SMI capacity for your parts and accessories inventories, you will need to know the acceptable upper limits for SMI. For parts and accessories, SMI should not exceed 15% of the total inventory value.

Using the reporting function of your dealership management system (DMS), you should be able to generate a report (or a series of reports*) that identify those parts and accessories that have not incurred a demand in more than nine months and were received into your database at least 12 months prior.

*Series of reports: If you classify your parts and accessories based on similar characteristics, it could be more



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.

productive to create an SMI report for each of those classes. For instance, you might have classes such as towing/hitches, sanitation, electronics and similar such groupings.

Having generated your SMI report (or reports), you should divide the total cost of the SMI by the total cost of the inventory you are evaluating. Perhaps a few examples will assist in your evaluation calculations.

Example 1 – SMI for the entire parts and accessories inventory

Items qualifying as SMI = $53,950.41

All parts and accessories items = $234,567.00

SMI% = $53,950.41 ÷ $234,567 yields a 23% SMI

Example 2 – SMI for one class of your parts and accessories inventory

Items qualifying as SMI = $9,678.76

All items in this class of parts and accessories inventory = $34,567.00

SMI% = $9,678.76 ÷ $34,567.00 yields a 28% SMI

To identify the SMI culprits as well as evaluate your entire parts and accessories inventories for other Inventory Performance Factors (IPF), I suggest that you assign each item to a specific class based on similar characteristics or functions. This enables you to generate reports based on each of the classes so that you are reviewing and taking action on a smaller subset of items.

Hauling Too Much SMI – Now What?

There could be two aspects of your plan to deal with SMI. These involve elimination of existing SMI and prevention of future SMI. Since it is important to prevent accumulation of future SMI while you are concurrently eliminating the existing SMI, let's discuss some factors that could be in your SMI prevention plan.

The biggest contributors to SMI are frequently ordered special items for a customer, whether they are directly ordered by the customer or by one of the other departments in your RV business. Some factors that you could include in your special order process to minimize the chance for error are:

- Collect and verify the VIN to specifically identify the RV.
- If a material finish is related to the item being ordered, confirm the exact color, material, etc.
- Locate the item on the RV relative to front, rear, left, right, roof, undercarriage, etc.
- If the customer has driven to your business in the RV, take a few photos with your cellphone or a digital camera – a photo is a good reference for the item after the customer leaves.
- If the customer is contacting you via phone, text or email, suggest they send



photos of the item being requested and of the RV.
- Follow these same steps when an item is being special ordered by an employee of another department.

Another factor that could minimize SMI accumulation via your special order process is to have a second parts associate confirm that the item has been accurately researched before placing the order for the item.

Some special order items for RVs could be bulky and subject to damage in transit. So, upon receipt of the special order item, carefully inspect its condition as well as the color, material, etc. before contacting the customer to advise them that the special order has arrived.

The extra effort that you take before ordering a nonstock item will easily offset any additional efforts if the wrong item is ordered, and your efforts will enhance the customer's experience with your business.

A second factor in the prevention of SMI accumulation is related to the parts manager's understanding of and compliance with the various suppliers' policies for the return of goods. It is important that the parts manager be familiar with these policies. These policies can and do occasionally change and should be obtained in print rather than relying on the supplier representative's verbal statements. This information can be used to customize your business' special order policies to comply with the specifics of the suppliers' policies. For instance, if a supplier will not accept returns, especially of special ordered goods, then your parts manager could include a policy that special order goods are nonreturnable unless the return is due to an employee's error.

Anything Else?

Tracking all demand, which includes lost sales, is also important to the prevention of SMI. Through at least monthly review and analysis of demand for parts and accessories products, vigilant parts managers can order those goods that customers are requesting in quantities necessary to ensure that all demands are filled, yet not in excess of those demands.

By factoring in the seasonality of some parts and accessories, they can also adjust the stock level of those seasonal items as those demands ebb and grow. This minimizes the chances that an item might go out of demand while having excess on hand.

Assuming I have explained thoroughly the advantages of and procedures for an SMI prevention program, you could be on the road to minimizing accumulation of future SMI while concurrently addressing the elimination of your existing SMI. Tune in next month for some tips on minimizing and possibly eliminating your existing SMI. RVP

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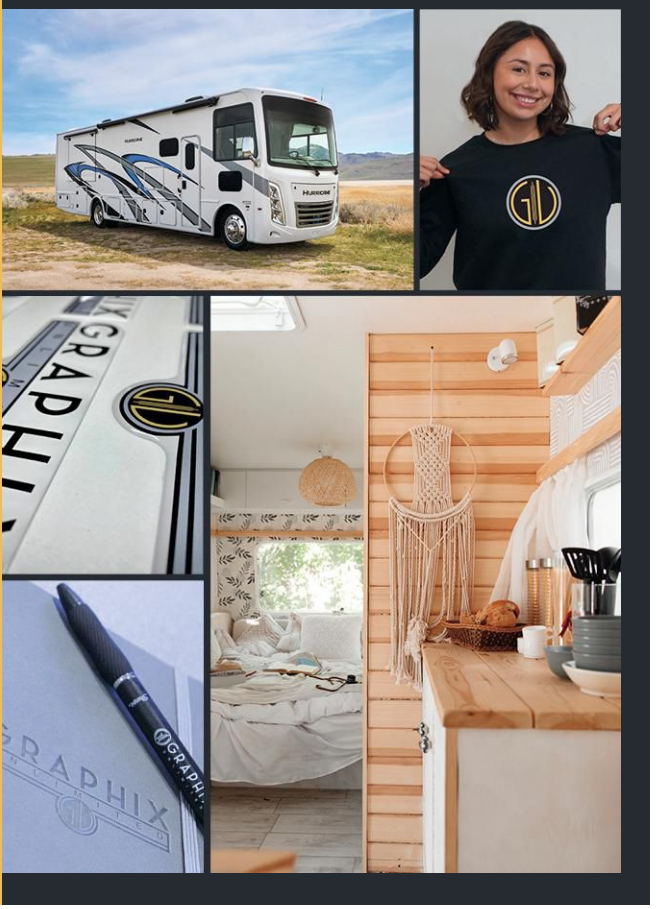
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Is Your Dealership a Drive-By?

Enhance your exterior and improve first impressions.

EDUARDO/ADOBE STOCK

I live about 20 minutes south of downtown Portland, Oregon. Within 25 minutes in all directions are about 25 RV dealerships, showrooms, new and used sales and parts/service departments.

People have choices when they're looking for an RV in the Pacific Northwest. We're not all riding bicycles! As with everyone everywhere, we do a lot of driving, and while we drive, we look at stores that interest us and capture our attention. When searching for a place to shop for an RV, we notice the quantity of RV units in the parking lots, the signs (if there are any) and the showroom if we can see it from the road. Below are some ideas about what helps us decide to stop and shop.

Movement: There is a dealership east of Portland that put out brightly colored banners on every vertical pole in front of their property. Movement is eye-catching! As their lot is long and large, there were a least 15 banners blowing in the wind. They alternated from red to yellow, and the same banner colors were on the front of the dealership to tie in the promotion. I have no idea if they got permission from the electric company to hang the banners or if they figured it would be best to ask for forgiveness. What I do know is these banners made a strong visual statement and encouraged people to slow down and take a look. What are you doing that encourages people to check you out?

Colors: Having a signature color combination for banners, signage and promotions is a good start. If a shade of blue or green is your logo color, consider a warm complementary color for sale signs and banners. Blues and greens are the most favored colors around the globe. Blue skies and water plus green foliage gives us life. Life would end without those colors in our world. But these are calming, recessive colors. Anything with yellow, red, orange and pink will stand out and capture



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 affordable and appropriate visual merchandising, store design and renovations. For more information, visit lindacahan.com.

attention. If your logo is a dark blue, add bright yellow or yellow-green as an accent. Mid-blues work well with yellow, orange and red tones. If your logo uses a shade of green, consider golden yellow or a tangerine hue for your accent color. Corals (orange/red mix) go with everything and are more sophisticated. Pick a polyester fabric that can survive the elements.

The Front: Once you've captured someone's attention, they're going to look at your store facade. Is your sign clean and fresh? A Chinese restaurant about 10 minutes from my home has good reviews, but I had never considered it as their sign is so faded and the entire building looks sad. I figured, how good can their food be? I went there, and it was OK, not great. Sadly, their sign was the perfect representation of the overall quality of the experience.

Upkeep: If you have lights, are they working? An unlit sign is a waste of space. It's not always sunny in Philly – or anywhere outside Arizona, so fix it now. Is the paint on your building clean, or is it peeling and cracked? How about your parking lot – clean or dirty, lit or unlit? Can people with walking challenges get into your front door? Is your front door easy to open? If it sticks, you're creating a bad first impression. Fix it!

Front Door: Speaking of the front door, there are only four things that need to be on or near your front door: store name, street number, hours and (if you choose) a "We Welcome All" sign. An "Open" sign in neon so it can be seen from the street is also a necessity.

Windows: Window dressing may sound like something that all the other retailers have to do but not RV dealerships. Really, what can you do – shove an RV in the window? Well, for a start, yes, that can work. There are many things you can put into your windows to "dress them." The question is: Why should you?

- **Define Your Image:** The windows of a store instantly define your image and are excellent advertising space. They tell people who you are. Windows are considered the "eyes" of a store. The expression "The eyes are the windows to the soul" works for businesses as well. Empty windows are depressing and often make a place look closed. If you have windows, it pays to put something in them.
- **Your Image:** If you're an upscale RV retailer, your windows will reflect that with an interesting display and good graphics. If you are a discounter and price is your defining point, your windows may be filled with huge paper signs or promotions painted on the glass. For those of you in the middle, your windows exist to set you apart from your competitors by drawing attention to your store – hopefully in a positive manner.
- **Be Memorable:** Another benefit to doing a window display is that it makes your business memorable.

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It's easy to pass by a store that does nothing. It looks like a quiet building with a few cars outside in the parking lot. A window display says to passersby that you care about your products, your customers and your dealership. A window display can impart a sense of permanence, and that is vital for the appearance of reliability.

- **Create an Experience:** The window introduces the beginning of the shopping experience. The term so many are talking about is "Experiential Retailing." Boomers (and younger generations) are interested in experiences and remember a store more for what they experienced there than for the deal – although a good deal is always appreciated.
- **Making Windows Work:** Every window display needs one thing to make it work – lights! If you are going to invest in this form of on-street advertising, please consider adding an 8-foot track with warm LED floodlights (2,700-3,000k). If it says "Daylight," it will look blueish. Depending on the height of your windows, the track should be mounted on the window wall, so the lights point directly onto the face of your display, not over the top of it. If your windows go up (from the floor) past 10 feet high, you may have to have the track lowered from the ceiling. There's no point in having lights much higher than 10 feet from the floor as the beam of light will not reach your merchandise and light it up sufficiently. Look at a mix of floodlight and spotlight bulbs for the track light fixtures. The floodlights enhance the entire area, while the narrow spots make specific items pop with light.

If You Don't Have Windows: Special promotions can be advertised with outdoor standing banners or with banners hanging from your roofline. Just make sure that if you're a full-price retailer that the banners are hung straight and look attractive and professional. There are fewer expectations placed on discounters, but how you hang your signs directly reflects on your installation abilities far more than a banner does. So, full-price or discount, do it right the first time.

Also, adding flowers or plants outside your store will soften the exterior and make it appear more inviting.

If You Can See Into Your Store: What do customers see as they look in through your windows? What they see first are your street focal areas. Even if you don't have window displays, these focal areas will serve to define your store on a first impression. These are great spots for photo blowups – even an enlarged cutout of people interacting with a small RV would be fun inside.

First impressions can be lasting ones. Make the first impressions of your RV dealership positive and welcoming. RVP





LITHIUMPHOTO/ADOBE STOCK

How to Actively Listen to Your Customers

Get the information you need without dominating the conversation.

If you were to ask customers what their number one complaint is when working with a salesperson, what do you think they might say? Some possibilities are: They need to lower their prices, their quality isn't as good as we would like or their customer service could be better.

While all these may well be true, the biggest complaint customers have about salespeople is that they talk too much. In fact, they spend more time talking than they do listening. This perception exists in all sales businesses, regardless of what the salesperson is selling. But why does this happen? There are several reasons.

When interviewing a new salesperson, too many companies tend to try too hard to find extroverted people, believing they can more easily talk to customers and build rapport than introverted people. While this may be true, there is a major downside. They talk too much – way too much. It's easier and much more natural for introverted salespeople to comfortably listen to their customers without getting jumpy or impatient. Having a very introverted salesperson won't work either, as they tend to be perceived as unfriendly or even awkward at times. So it makes more sense to hire salespeople who are a blend of both, who can naturally adjust to the multiple types of customers they may encounter.

When a new customer walks into the dealership for the first time, the nervous salesperson often tries too hard to prove their competency by vomiting nine thousand words at them, causing the customer to quickly back off and retreat into a shell. They become unwilling to get into a discussion, which makes it that much harder for the salesperson to get the information they really need to recommend the best product for that customer.

Some salespeople talk too much by design, to gain control over customers in the first few minutes and lead them to what they want to move off the lot, because it's more profitable and has a higher commission for them. While this might work with the extroverted, overly enthusiastic customer, it will shut down communications with anxious customers who may have been pushed around by the salesperson at a competitor down the street. This apprehensive customer



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.

tends to walk in with their guard up and have less patience with the chatterbox salesperson.

There are simply too many salespeople who are not well trained or not confident, and they use their nervous energy to talk too much during meet-and-greets, making this critical part of the customer interaction even more tenuous than it already is. Even the poorly trained salesperson can improve the chances of getting customers to do most of the talking about what they want and why.

The bottom line is that the plan to show up and throw words at your customers simply does not work with most of them. Even if you are an extrovert, taking an introverted-type position of asking questions and listening will be the most effective technique you can use early in the process.

The key for any salesperson is to simply slow down the process in the first 10 minutes of the customer interaction. Nervous or insecure salespeople tend to rush the introduction, speeding past any chance of helping the customer feel comfortable enough to communicate openly and honestly. Slowing down will relieve tension between the customer and salesperson, and help everyone relax and allow trust to build.

I am aware of some sales managers who put a time limit on how long the salesperson spends in the meet-and-greet process to get them in front of a product as soon as possible. However, all that does is increase the risk of the customer falling in love with a product that might not fit the way they're going to use it or may be over their budget. When this happens, the customer would typically want the dealership to lower the product price to meet their budget, lessening profit. That doesn't work either.

In addition to slowing down the initial process, it's important to explain to your customer that you have a great deal of inventory on the lot and not every piece will meet their needs. This shows that you are being respectful of their time, and that you will eliminate products that might not suit them (or their budget) by asking questions about their camping/RVing plans. You will work with them to build a profile of the perfect RV for them, identifying the few that best meet their needs and then take a look at them. In many cases, there are only two or three RVs that are perfect for them.

When asking questions, some other helpful tips that set the atmosphere for open, honest communication:

- Be a nice person, always polite and respectful.
- Proceed with soft curiosity and sincere interest.
- Be inquisitive but not investigative when asking questions.
- Be interested in answers and not judgmental (with negative body language or facial expressions).
- Frame questions in a way that paints a picture of fun and enjoyable camping experiences for them.
- Be enthusiastic and have fun in asking questions and enjoying their answers.



Other Key Tips

Facial Expressions

Customers will be more passionate about information that means the most to them. Be conscious of facial expressions accompanying their words, so you can capture those emotions and identify the things that are really important to them. Your own facial expressions – smiling and nodding – or even short comments will signify that you are listening and understanding what they are saying.

Take Notes

It's helpful to take notes of key things a customer says, as you can't remember everything. However, you must announce to the customer that you will be taking notes before doing so. Writing down customers' answers to your questions can make them nervous, so let them know you're doing so to eliminate inventory that doesn't fit their needs.

Clarify & Verify

Be sure to completely understand what the customer is saying. If you're not sure, ask follow-up questions to confirm. Restating what they just said is a great way to do this. You will be surprised how easy it is to misinterpret something they just said. Getting confirmation shows your interest in what they are saying and motivates customers to talk more.

Stick to the Budget

Whether they admit it or not, every customer, even the wealthiest ones, has a budget of what they want to spend. Two things are important here: establishing the preferred budget or at least a range, and then not exceeding that when showing products to them. Both will build credibility in your word not to sell them something over that. This is a major customer fear with all salespeople – that they will try to get them to spend more than they planned.

If you are respectful of the stated budget by refusing to show them products above their budget, you will be shocked at how many customers will bump themselves up to a higher budget without you needing to try to get them to do so. When it is done in this way, even though they will be spending more money than they planned, most customers are comfortable doing so because they decided to take that leap and were not pressured by the salesperson.

This represents a bottom-up way of receiving all the information you need to sell the customer the right product at a price they prefer, and all because you asked questions and listened to what they said.

Customers are prone to dislike salespeople who try to force them to do what they don't want to do, which greatly contributes to the negative perception many have of salespeople. Asking questions, listening to their answers and then acting on it in good faith and with respect will help you sell what you want while allowing the customer to buy what they want. RVP





ADOBE STOCK

Unlocking the Power of Organizational Culture

Drawing on psychological insights can significantly improve company culture.

Dealing with troubling workplace environments can be difficult. It's not always clear what the deeper issue is, and the friction and conflict it breeds can be tough to reverse.

At the heart of any organization are its people. Without a dedicated, aligned and fully engaged workforce, no progress can be made. High-performance organizations excel in creating an environment that recognizes and addresses the fundamental human needs that drive their members.

The Hierarchy of Needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, once revolutionary, is now widely embraced and frequently applied to organizational psychology. Leveraging this framework to identify what individuals require for success and taking the necessary actions to fulfill these needs can support the cultivation of an emergent culture that fosters growth, success and satisfaction in your organization.

1. Physiological

The lowest level in Maslow's hierarchy is physiological needs. These are the most basic human requirements, encompassing necessities like food, water and shelter. Although it isn't the organization's responsibility to directly provide for these needs, it is crucial to ensure they are met indirectly. This involves paying a living wage so that these basic needs are met and offering a sense of certainty to employees about their job security and expectations regarding their roles.



Margaret Graziano is the founder and CEO of KeenAlignment, as well as a Wall Street Journal best-selling author for her book "Ignite Culture." She has been recognized as one of Silicon Valley's Top 100 Women Leaders. Graziano's groundbreaking work is driven by her power to uncover and catalyze human potential. Go to keenalignment.scoreapp.com to take KeenAlignment's Culture Assessment and see if you have an emergent culture.

Establishing effective lines of communication between employees and their superiors is a great way to create certainty. When integrating new hires, make sure they have clarity on what their role is and what their responsibilities are. Encourage them to ask questions. For existing employees, occasional check-ins ensure they are aligned with their jobs and not struggling to fulfill their physiological needs.

2. Safety

Individuals need to feel secure both psychologically and physically in the workplace. This means that constant yelling or outbursts from superiors or colleagues cannot be tolerated. There cannot be fear of physical or psychological harm. Having rules and guidelines that discourage and have consequences for this type of behavior is often necessary. Optimizing the hiring process and having the right people in the organization is also a big part of promoting feelings of safety. If someone is incredibly capable but ruins the productivity of others by spreading fear and/or anger, they are a net negative to the organization. It is impossible for people to be productive or creative in a state of fear.

Boundaries need to also be respected. Treating people how they want to be treated goes a long way toward making them feel safe in their environment. An organization that provides safety for its employees earns trust – a foundational element of a healthy, high-performance culture.

3. Love & Belonging

Love is a fundamental emotional need for people. While this is commonly thought of as something that relates to relationships with friends, family and significant others, there are also ways to fulfill this emotional requirement in the workplace. An organization that has an environment of kindness, respect and inclusivity is able to help meet this basic human desire.

Everyone has a need to belong and be accepted for who they are. Understanding the motives of new hires for joining the organization and what they believe they will gain from their work can aid in fostering a sense of belonging.

Organizations can further support this need by asking existing employees various questions and attempting to better understand each individual. Some questions to ask include:

- Are they happy in their role and doing their work? Is it aligned with what's important?
- How do they feel they are contributing through their work?
- What matters to them? What causes do they care about?
- What do they want to be doing with their life?
- How can their job help them experience belonging?

Asking about their job satisfaction, contributions and personal aspirations emphasizes the importance of each individual's role in the organization's success, cementing a feeling of belonging and increasing engagement and satisfaction.

4. Esteem Needs

"I feel significant," "I feel respected," and "I feel like I'm contributing," are all feelings that are necessary to meet the level of esteem. When people feel recognized and valued, they are motivated to continue being effective and valuable. Making sure every person in your organization feels they play an important role in the organization's success, no matter their job, is paramount.

However, it is crucial to distinguish between significance (feeling important and making a difference) and contribution (being a part of something bigger than you or your ego and making a difference, even without recognition or significance). The latter is the pinnacle of Maslow's Hierarchy and the highest level of effectiveness, known as self-actualization.

5. Self-Actualization

Self-actualization involves realizing one's potential, fully developing one's abilities and having a true appreciation for life. It encompasses fulfilling the spiritual needs of growth and contribution, preventing employees from feeling like mere automatons solely focused on financial gain and only going through the motions. Self-actualized people are at their most capable, productive and fulfilled selves and regularly tap into their highest level of thinking and creativity.

According to Maslow, individuals must fulfill lower needs before pursuing higher ones. To reach self-actualization, every need in Maslow's Hierarchy must be addressed first. Because of this, Maslow asserts that less than 1% of the adult population ever achieves this level. Keep in mind that this was published over 50 years ago. In today's world, psychologists think it is closer to 5%, solely because there is a deep desire in humans to contribute and feel a sense of fulfillment – the more people evolve, the more they want to experience higher feelings of satisfaction in their work.

Importance for Culture

Meeting people's needs is essential for creating an emergent culture. Consider the three fundamental elements of an emergent culture: cause, framework and energy. Cause revolves around making a difference and defining the organization's noble cause. Framework pertains to the structures in place for optimizing employees' creative potential and ability to produce, including hiring processes, delegation, team assignments, etc. Energy is how people treat each other, the moods they bring to work, and how the work that gets done within and between departments creates or mitigates the sense of belonging and unity. It is about bringing the values of the organization to life.

The fundamentals of an emergent culture are closely intertwined with the needs of individuals within the organization. Prioritizing the well-being and fulfillment of employees is key to catalyzing to Maslow's top 1% and achieving this will take nurturing an emergent company culture that contributes to personal and organizational success and growth. RVP

TOWING & HITCHES



ELECTRIC BRAKE CONTROL

Autowbrake, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, presents its Autowbrake Electric Brake Control. The Autowbrake Electric Brake Control connects to trailer wiring and can be mounted anywhere on a trailer, providing smooth automatic anti-lock braking. Multiple power options are available: using 12 volts from your vehicle, solar with trailer battery, vehicle lights and more. A fob is included to use for emergency override, sway control or adjustments.

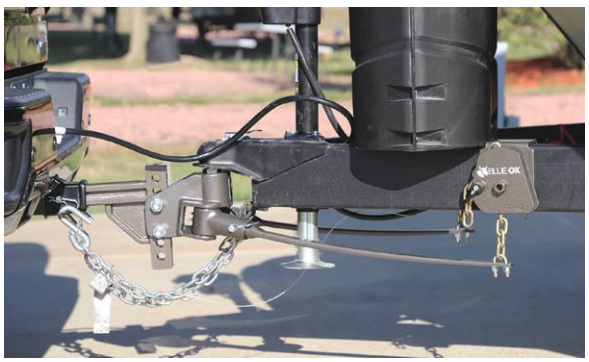
getautowbrake.com

WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION HITCH

B&W Trailer Hitches, Humboldt, Kansas, offers its Continuum weight distribution hitch. B&W's new Continuum weight distribution hitch has several features to better control your towing experience. Composite spring bars are five times more flexible than steel with similar strength, allowing tongue weights of 600 to1600 pounds with a single bar size. A closed-loop hydraulic cylinder and pump assembly make it possible to fine tune your setup – you can easily add or subtract weight with the pump of a handle. In most cases, the Continuum can be installed in 30 minutes or less, using only a 9/16-inch wrench. The head angle of the hitch is preset, and the bar assembly ships preassembled.

bwtrailerhitches.com





WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION HITCH

Blue Ox, Pender, Nebraska, offers its SwayPro WD Hitch. Blue Ox designs caster into the hitch head to constantly center the trailer. Spring steel bars augment the suspensions of the tow vehicle and trailer. Rotating latches allow for quick and easy setup. SwayPro offers noise-free sway prevention that works even in rain or snow. Standard tongue weights are available: 350, 550, 750, 1,000, 1,500 with a two-inch shank and 2,000 with a 2.5-inch shank. An underslung version for trailers with the coupler mounted to the underside of the tongue is also available.

blueox.com

WIRELESS TRAILER CAMERA

Brandmotion, Novi, Michigan, presents its Wireless Transparent Trailer. The Wireless Transparent Trailer's system is designed to streamline your towing experience, preventing blind spots via a wireless wide-angle camera mounted to your vehicle's rear, which provides constant visibility of the road behind you. Select the universal system or the product custom made for your vehicle.

brandmotion.com





WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION HITCH

CURT, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its TruTrack 2P trailer-mounted weight distribution hitch. This hitch is easy to couple and doesn't require adjusting the spring bars after the initial setup. Traditional WD hitches require the spring bars to be connected and disconnected each time the trailer and tow vehicle are hitched or unhitched. TruTrack can be quickly coupled and uncoupled without resetting the trunnion bars, simplifying the coupling process. Set up the TruTrack and then couple or uncouple your trailer using the quick-connect hitch when you need to separate the trailer and tow vehicle.

curtmfg.com

AUTOMATIC SLIDER

Demco, Boyden, Iowa, offers its Automatic Sliders for OEM Prep Packages. The Automatic Sliders for fifth wheels are easy to install. Installation can be done in three steps: pin the head to the base, attach the side plates and lock the hitch in. Demco Autoslide hitches are available for Ford, GM and Ram puck systems. OEM Prep fifth wheel hitches are also available in 21k and 31k stationary options. Made in the USA.

demco-products.com







CLASS C HYDRAULIC LEVELING SYSTEM

EQ Systems, Cassopolis, Michigan, presents its Class C EQ Smart-Level Hydraulic Leveling System (Ford and Chevrolet chassis). EQ Smart-Level is an automatic leveling system that is configured for most RVs on the market – diesel, Class A, Class C, Class B+, fifth wheel and travel trailers. Systems come with a 12-volt hydraulic pump and run up to six jacks and four hydraulic slideouts simultaneously. EQ Smart-Level allows full operation of your leveling system when its app is paired with a smartphone or tablet.

eqsystems.us

SWAY CONTROL HITCH

Equal-i-zer Hitch, Provo, Utah, offers its original Equal-i-zer Sway Control Hitch, which has kept families safe on the road for more than 75 years. Manufactured from 100% American-made steel, this hitch has an integrated 4-point sway control, resulting in sway control performance, weight distribution, quality and ease of use.

equalizerhitch.com



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Thermo Shield 14x22 | Part #SLS1422B
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PIN BOX WITH GOOSENECK COUPLER

GEN-Y Hitch, Nappanee, Indiana, offers its EXECUTIVE Fifth Wheel Pin Box replacement with Gooseneck SnapLatch Coupler and TORSION-FLEX Technology, providing customers with a safe and smooth traveling experience. The built-in suspension system reduces up to 90% of inertia between truck and trailer, which helps minimize chucking and jerking, while the casted steel SnapLatch coupler features a design that enables the ball to easily align with the coupler, securing itself in position.

genyhitch.com



WIRE HARNESS PROTECTION DEVICE

Hanington Innovations Ltd., Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, presents its Connect-to-Protect Trailer Wire Harness Guardian. The Connect-to-Protect protects the harness connector from the elements, prevents corrosion and damage, and secures the trailer wire harness when not in use. These products are military spec, custom PVC formulated, semi-malleable, and have been tested for extreme temperatures, impact resistance and engagement cycling. Connect-to-Protect has a low implementation price and a clean, custom look.

connecttoprotect.ca



TOWING PRODUCTS PLANOGRAM

JR Products, Clarence Center, New York, offers its JRP-TOW-T24 (JR Products Towing Planogram). Designed to enhance customer experiences and boost dealer sales, the Towing Planogram is stocked with multiple towing hitch pins and clips.

jrproducts.net



FIFTH WHEEL HITCH

Keller Marine & RV for PullRite, Port Trevorton, Pennsylvania, presents its OEX Hitches. Each PullRite OEX hitch model is installed and removed by using OEX Mounting Posts, which are removable and require no tools to operate. OEX also offers plenty of cab-to-trailer clearance, as the interchangeable coupler assembly provides up to 7.5 inches of offset. This hitch has a maximum tow rating of 25,000 pounds. Available for Ford, Chevrolet and RAM. Distributed by Keller Marine & RV.

pullrite.com

TRAILER CONNECTORS & ACCESSORIES



Pollak, Long Island City, New York, offers its new line of trailer connectors, adapters and accessories. The Pollak Pro line of precision-engineered trailer connectors, adapters, extensions and accessories have been designed for towing with light-duty and medium-duty trucks and SUVs. Pollak also offers a variety of specialized products for specific needs. For example, the ProSecure LED illuminates to ensure a secure connection, the Pollak Quick ConneXion offers easier and quicker connections, and the Pollak Pro Flex features multiple ports to easily tow trailers with different types of connectors.

pollaktowing.com



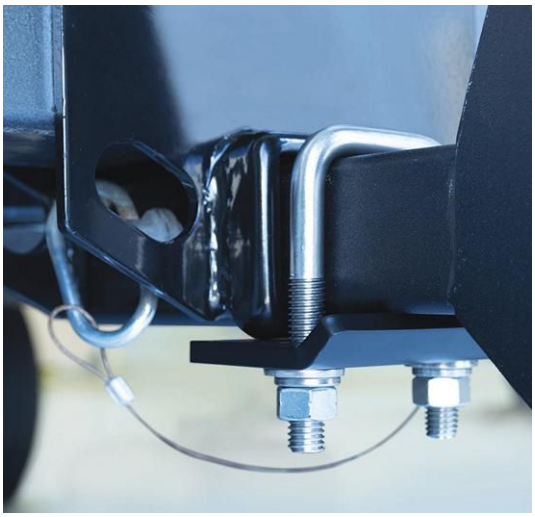
HITCH TIGHTENER

RecPro, Bristol, Indiana, presents its Anti Rattle Hitch Tightener, a USA-made bolt-on hitch accessory designed to eliminate rattle and enhance the stabilization of kayaks and other hitch-mounted attachments. The hitch tightener consists of a strong steel U-bolt, a rust-resistant black powder-coated steel sway plate, nuts and washers, offering durability against time and the elements. RecPro's Anti Rattle Hitch Tightener's design allows it to fit over any standard two-inch hitch mount and to be easily installed.

recpro.com

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OFF-ROAD BRAKE CONTROLLER

REDARC Electronics, Lonsdale, South Australia, offers its Tow-Pro Elite Brake Controller. This off-road brake controller gives you direct control of your braking regardless of the terrain and SwayStop Control stops trailer sway with one touch. Engineered and tested for different environments to ensure durability regardless of vehicle type. The Tow-Pro Elite features two braking modes – Manual Off-Road Mode for conditions such as steep descents, mud, sand and snow, and Everyday Mode (proportional braking) for day-to-day hauling.

redarcelectronics.com

TOW BAR & ACCESSORY RECEIVER

Rigid Hitch, Burnsville, Minnesota, presents its Tow Bar and Accessory Receiver. The Rigid Hitch CHE line of Tow Bar and Accessory Receivers is designed to carry accessories, such as a bike rack or cargo carrier, in tandem with your tow bar while dinghy towing. This line is a two-inch receiver and accepts ⅝-inch hitch pins with ratings of 10,000 pounds gross towing weight capacity and 500 pounds vertical load capacity. This product is not intended for trailer towing or weight distribution systems.

rigidhitch.com





LED NONBINDING TOW BAR

Roadmaster, Vancouver, Washington, offers its Nighthawk tow bar. Illuminated to improve visibility and safety, the nonbinding Freedom Latch and longer tow bar arms make it easy to connect on an angle or while parked on uneven ground. The Nighthawk has an 8,000-pound capacity, is made in the USA, and features integrated LED lights and internal channels to protect the power and safety cables. Nighthawk is available for Roadmaster (part #676) or Blue Ox and Demco (part #677) baseplates.

roadmasterinc.com



ADJUSTABLE ACCESSORY HITCH

Stromberg Carlson, Traverse City, Michigan, offers its Adjustable Accessory Hitch. If you like the Stromberg Cargo Caddy but don't have a hitch to mount it into, or need a place to mount a bike rack but don't trust the strength of your hollow bumper, check out the Stromberg Carlson Adjustable Accessory Hitch. It bolts on as Class I or welds on as Class II hitch to frame. The hitch can mount to the frame side wall or horizontal wall of a C channel or I-beam with angled hardware. Not to be used pulling cars or boats in Class I configuration.

strombergcarlson.com



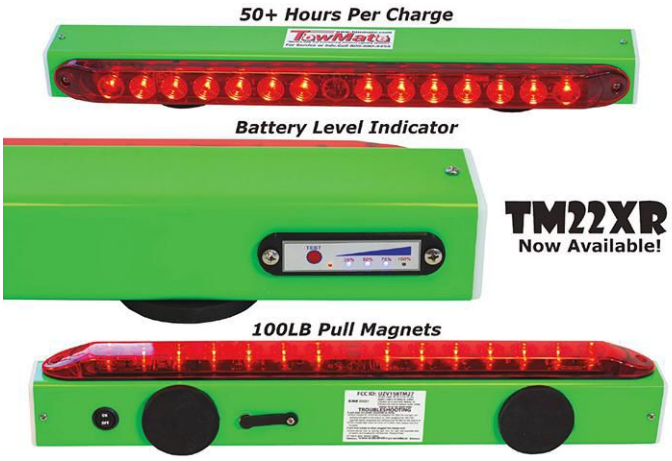
SUSPENSION ENHANCEMENT

SuperSprings International, Carpinteria, California, presents its SumoSprings. SumoSprings, manufactured from microcellular polyurethane, are designed to reduce sway, hop and vibration, as well as enhance driver control and comfort while towing or driving unloaded. Available in various densities for axles from 1,500 pounds to 5,000 pounds, they offer easy installation and come with a lifetime warranty.

superspringsinternational.com







WIRELESS TOW LIGHT

TowMate, Rogers, Arkansas, presents its TM22XR Wireless Tow Light Bar. The TowMate TM22XR is easy to install and offers clear wireless signaling for stop, tail and turn actions. Its 22-inch LED bar, backed by a lifetime warranty on electronics and LEDs, provides visibility in any conditions and is supported by over 60-plus hours of battery life per charge. Made in the USA.

towmate.com



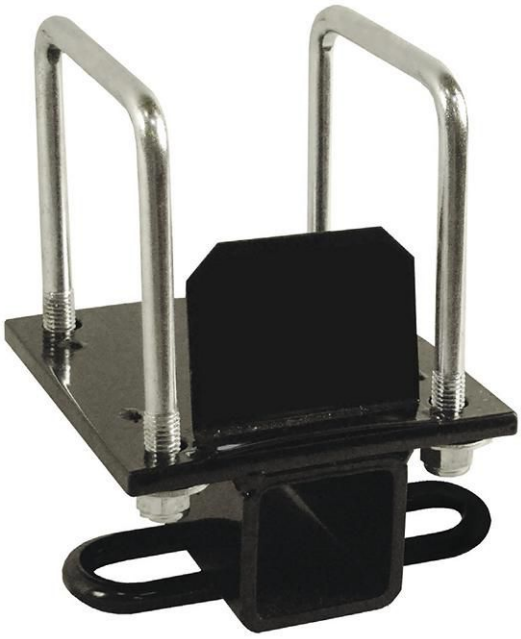
SWAY CONTROL SYSTEM

Tuson RV Brakes, Vernon Hills, Illinois, offers its Tuson Sway Control (TSC-1000). The Tuson Sway Control (TSC) is an asymmetric electronic trailer sway control system. The patented asymmetric system (independent left- and right-side braking) continuously monitors trailer yaw to identify a trailer sway condition and apply braking force to one side of the trailer, directly counteracting the sway with minimal speed loss and greater stability control. The TSC is maintenance-free and is wired directly into the trailer braking system to operate independently without any driver involvement.

tusonrvbrakes.com







ACCESSORY HITCH

Ultra-Fab Products, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Universal Hitch. This hitch easily secures hitch-mounted accessories like bike racks and carriers. It mounts on four-inch square bumpers, has a two-inch square receiver opening, a 3,500-pound towing capacity and 350-pound tongue capacity, and is constructed of heavy-duty steel with powder-coated finish. Includes mounting hardware and U-bolts, and has a one-year warranty.

ultra-fab.com/dealers



FIFTH WHEEL/GOOSENECK HARNESS

Valterra Products, Mission Hills, California, offers its Mighty Cord fifth wheel/gooseneck harness, which has a seven-way, RV-style connector that easily mounts in a truck bed to simplify hookup of a fifth wheel or gooseneck trailer. The harness plugs into existing wiring without cutting or splicing and retains the use of factory 7-pole at the bumper, and the connector mounts in the truck bed side wall, tailgate post or wheel well. The molded cable and spring-loaded dust cover protects from the elements. Available in 7-foot and 10-foot lengths.

valterra.com



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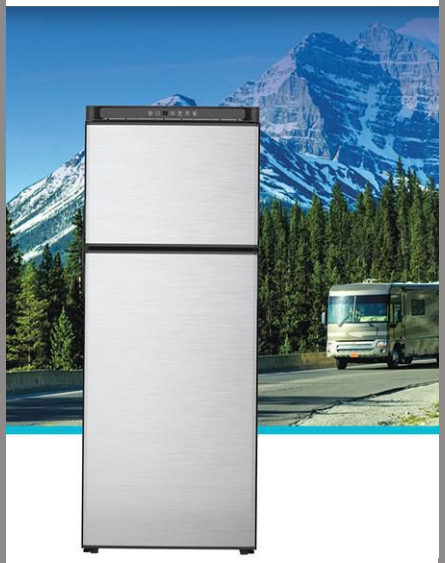
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Pit Stop



WOMEN AT WORK – 2023 KEY FINDINGS

- Women are more **ambitious** than before the pandemic – and flexibility is fueling that ambition.
  - 9 in 10 women ages 30 and younger want to be promoted – 3 in 4 aspire to become senior leaders.
  - Women of color are more ambitious than women overall: 96% say their career is important to them, and 88% want to be promoted to the next level.
- Women represent **1 in 4 C-suite leaders**, and women of color just 1 in 16.
  - For the ninth consecutive year, for every 100 men promoted from entry-level to manager, 87 women are promoted (73 women of color).
  - This "broken rung" is the greatest obstacle women face on the path to senior leadership.
- **Microaggressions** have a large and lasting impact on women.
  - Women who experience microaggressions often "self-shield" by muting their voice, code-switching or hiding important self-aspects – they are also 4x more likely to feel burned out and 3x more likely to consider leaving their companies.
  - Women with disabilities are far more likely to feel they must "perform perfectly" without being judged than women overall.
- Half of women and a third of men see **flexibility** as a "top 3" staff benefit and critical to their company's success.
  - 77% of companies consider a strong organizational culture a key benefit, but only 39% of men and 34% of women who work on-site consider feeling connected to company culture a key benefit.

source: McKinsey & Company

FEBRUARY 2024 SHIPMENTS

31,024 Total RV shipments

17.8% increase compared to February 2023 (26,326 units)

To date, shipments are up **14.9%** with 53,698 shipped through February

"This report marks the fourth straight month of increases as RV shipments continue to make a moderate recovery, putting us on track to meet ITR Economics' forecast of 350,000 shipments for 2024," said RVIA President and CEO Craig Kirby. "Spring is officially upon us, and our latest survey shows over 26 million Americans plan to go RVing this spring, with over 14 million planning to make RVing part of their travels to view the upcoming total solar eclipse."

Leading Ladies

DID YOU KNOW...

- The nation's **first Women's History Day** celebration was in NYC in **1909.**
- In the 1940s, Hollywood actress **Hedy Lamarr** developed "frequency hopping" that helped sink Nazi U-boats in WWII. The technology is now recognized as the foundation for modern Wi-Fi.
- In the 1950s, **Rosalind Franklin's** research led to the discovery of DNA's structure – before biologists **James Watson** and **Francis Crick** won the Nobel Prize for their "discovery" in 1962.
- American women couldn't vote until 1965 when President Johnson signed the **Voting Rights Act.**
- Women couldn't get their own credit cards until 1974, when the **Equal Credit Opportunity Act** was finally passed by Congress.
- In 1983, **Sally Ride** was the first woman (and the first gay woman) to go to space.
- American Revolution heroine **Sybil Ludington** is thought to have ridden more than twice as far as Paul Revere to warn militiamen that the British were coming.



Save the Date

The RV Industry Association (RVIA)'s Emerging Leaders Coalition is calling for volunteers to join its 3rd annual **ALL-INDUSTRY VOLUNTEER DAY.**

When: Wednesday, May 8
8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. ET

Where: Chain O'Lakes State Park in Albion, Indiana

Why: "With more and more Americans turning to RVs as the ideal way to experience an active outdoor lifestyle, it's become critical that our parks are given the attention they need and deserve," RVIA said.

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96686	Aqua MAX® Summer Cypress, 32 oz Liquid
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