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(Photo courtesy the Austin Hatcher Foundation for Pediatric Cancer.)

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Jef White
Editor
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Giving Back

Approaching 25 years in the industry, one thing I can say for certain is that aftermarket professionals are a generous bunch.

I've seen shops and suppliers donate their time, talents, products and services to those in need—everyone from veterans to victims of natural disasters to local families facing adversity—and give unselfishly to fundraising efforts by groups such as the Automotive Aftermarket Charitable Foundation (AACF) and SEMA Cares, among others.

I've also reported on dozens of initiatives by industry leaders designed to strengthen stewardship and diversity and preserve the marketplace for the next generation of shop owners and enthusiasts.

That's why I'm glad we were able to put together a collection of articles this month for our first-ever Giving Back section, highlighting the incredible work going on at the Austin Hatcher Foundation for Pediatric Cancer (AHF) and its motorsports connections, offering a roundup of companies supporting important outreach efforts, and providing a rundown of ways shops can help make a difference in their own neighborhoods.

Whether it's directing money to a worthy cause or donating time and resources to a community project, few would argue against the value of giving back when you have the means to do so. Still, it's valid to consider whether adding a philanthropic element to an already endless list of tasks makes sense for a small aftermarket business.

I came across an article by Jane Haskins for LegalZoom titled "The benefits of small business charitable giving" that outlines seven reasons you may want to make charitable activities a part of your company's culture. They include:

1. ***Boosting morale.*** "It feels good to help others."
2. ***Creating goodwill.*** "Having your name attached to a cause or event builds name recognition."
3. ***Building camaraderie.*** "Gives your employees a chance to get to know each other in a way they wouldn't otherwise."
4. ***Improving your community.*** "Make your community a better place to live and work."
5. ***Networking.*** "The opportunity to interact with local officials and community and business leaders who you might not otherwise meet."
6. ***Attracting & retaining good employees.*** "Make your company more appealing to potential employees and help them feel more satisfaction at work."
7. ***Tax advantages.*** "There may be tax write-offs for charitable donations."

Together, they make a convincing argument that, to get a little, sometimes you have to give a little. ***TS***

THE SHOP

EDITORIAL

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Jennifer King
jdking@cahabamedia.com

EDITOR: Jef White
jwhite@cahabamedia.com

MANAGING EDITOR: A.J. Hecht
ahecht@cahabamedia.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Mark E. Battersby, John Carollo, Stefanie Galeano-Zalutko, John Gunnell, Josh Poulson, Tony Thacker

CREATIVE SERVICES

ART DIRECTOR: Elizabeth Chick

DIGITAL PROJECT MANAGER: Greg Ragsdale

WEB DEVELOPER: Greg Caudle

CIRCULATION

SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES & INQUIRIES:
theshopmag@omeda.com

ADVERTISING

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: Stacy Marshall
smarshall@cahabamedia.com

SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE: Wendy Miles
wmiles@cahabamedia.com

CLIENT SERVICES COORDINATOR:
Presley Dean
pdean@cahabamedia.com

CAHABA MEDIA GROUP

PUBLISHER: Matthew G. Conroy
VP OF SALES: Greg Meineke
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE: Brandon Whittemore
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS: Laurie Tisdale

P.O. Box 530067
Birmingham, AL 35253

EDITORIAL & PRODUCTION
1900 28th Avenue South, Suite 200
Birmingham, AL 35209
205-212-9402

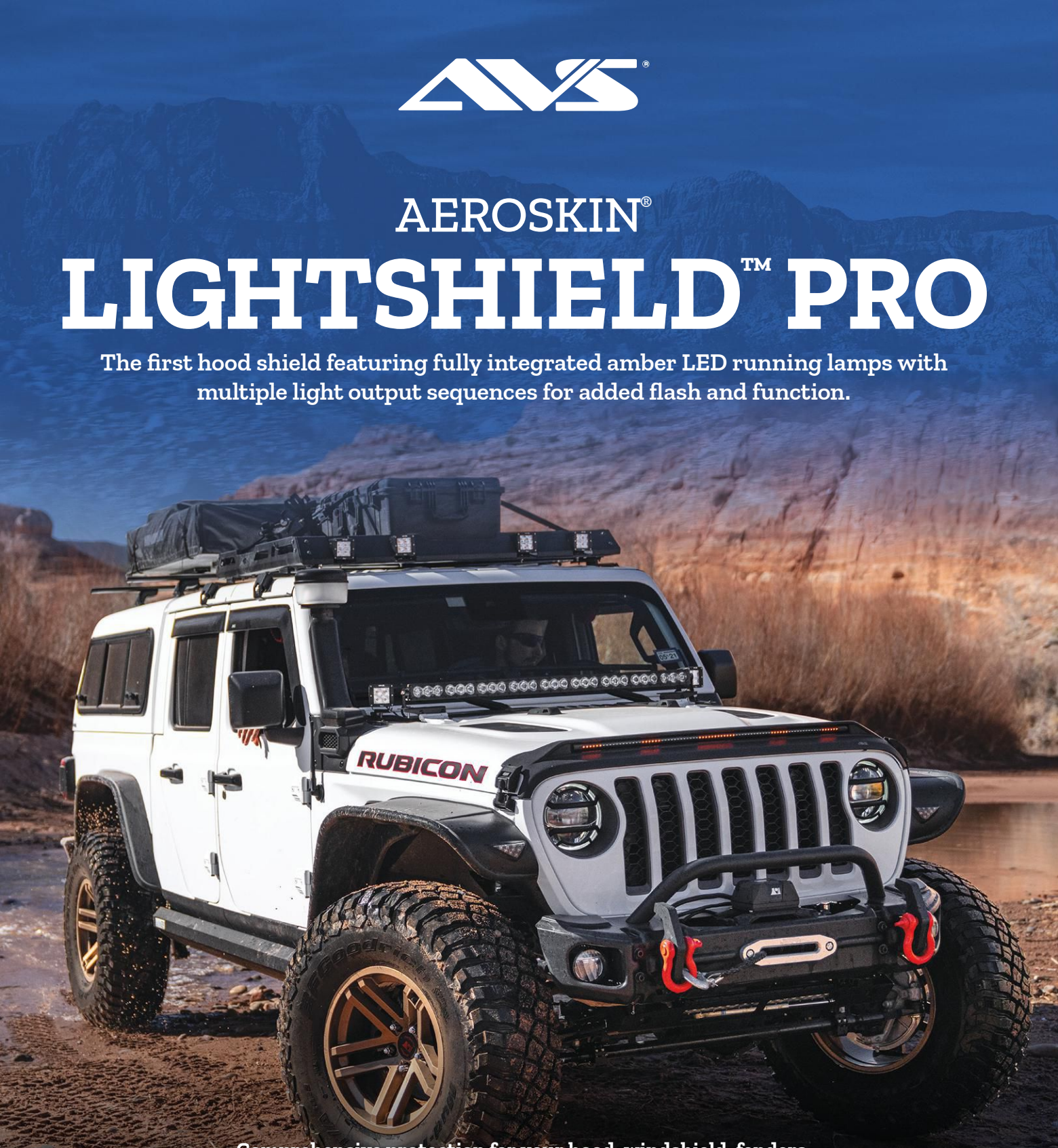
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UNDERSTANDING PAYROLL

A rundown of responsibilities.

By Mark E. Battersby

Payroll, typically the biggest expense for most specialty automotive aftermarket shops, has come a long way since its creation in 1913.

The 16th Amendment gives Congress the "power to lay and collect taxes on incomes." The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 established minimum wage, overtime, recordkeeping and youth employment standards, further complicating payrolls.

In general, an employer is responsible for its share of certain federal payroll taxes, including employer contributions under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA). Social Security is financed by a 12.4% payroll tax on wages up to the taxable earnings cap, with half (6.2%) paid by workers and the other half paid by employers.

For 2023, the FICA tax is composed of a Social Security tax of 6.2% on a wage base of $160,200 (up from $147,000 in 2022) with the 1.45% Medicare tax applying to all wages.

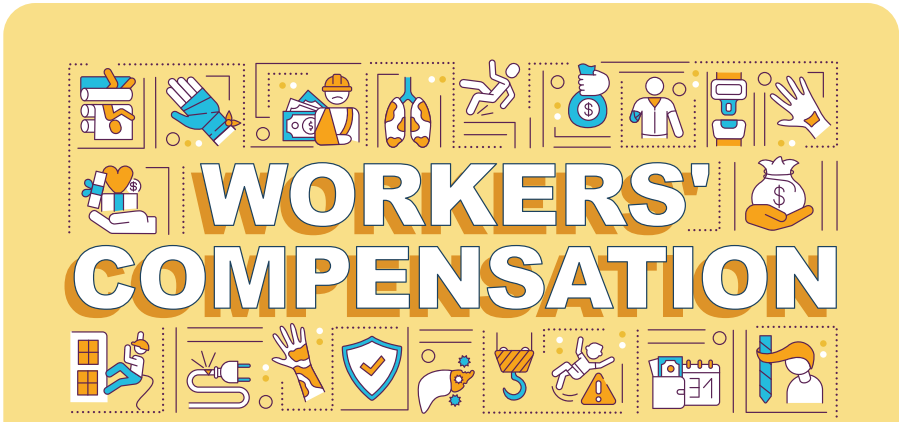
Comparable rules apply to self-employed performance, restyling and customization professionals for self-employment tax. They must pay 12.4% on amounts up to the Social Security wage base and 2.9% for Medicare tax, with half of the overall amount deductible.

The listed payroll tax rates do not include an additional 0.9% in Medicare tax paid by highly compensated employees on earnings that exceed threshold amounts based on their filing status. Employers must withhold the additional Medicare tax from wages of employees earning more than $200,000 in a calendar year.

OTHER PAYROLL COSTS & DEDUCTIONS

Among the responsibilities of every employer are other payroll costs that are based on legal requirements or optional benefits offered by the aftermarket shop. These can include:

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sation insurance for employees. Although most states make an exception for owners, sole shareholders or only employees, the states set the rates for workers' compensation insurance based on the industry, size and number of employees.

State Disability Insurance
California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Puerto Rico have mandatory requirements for employers to support programs that pay a portion of worker wages for work missed due to caregiving or a disability.

Paid Leave
If the shop offers time off for personal days, vacation, sick days, parental leave or other purposes, these are part of the payroll process. Paychecks usually list compensation paid as part of an employee's paid leave benefits, even when the employee's pay stays the same.

Health Care Costs
A specialty automotive aftermarket business with 50 or more employees is almost always required to provide a company health plan under the Affordable Care Act. Health care plans are also an option for many smaller businesses. As part of the payroll process, the employer will deduct any portion of the premiums paid by workers, as well as being responsible for the employer's portion.

Retirement Plan Contributions
If the shop sponsors an employee retirement plan, it must manage contributions via the payroll process. Employee contributions will be deducted from their pay, with the employer responsible for its matching share.

Employee Reimbursements
Specialty automotive aftermarket shops that fund or reimburse the expense of a home office or work-related travel generally handle them as part of the payroll process and include them with the employee's paycheck. Income tax rates for reimbursements and other stipends are different from those for regular income and should be classified as such.

Extra Withholding
If an employee has indicated on their Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Certificate, an additional amount that should be withheld each pay period, it should be included with their federal income tax payment.



Bonuses
Bonuses are a way of compensating employees for a good year without becoming locked into increased wages. For withholding purposes, bonuses can be lumped together as "supplemental wages," a heading that includes commissions, overtime pay, payments for accumulated sick leave, awards and prizes, back pay, and payments for nondeductible moving expenses.



If the shop sponsors an employee retirement plan, it must manage contributions via the payroll process.

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INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR TAX

Some shops use independent contractors to lower tax bills.



In addition to federal payroll taxes, most shops are responsible for state payroll taxes as well.

Gifts

The IRS considers most gifts made to employees to be compensation. As a result, those gifts are included in income for tax purposes and withholding rules generally apply.

Other Benefits

Other benefits offered by some specialty automotive aftermarket shops—including charity matching, HSA contributions and wellness programs—may, depending on the program, involve deductions for employee contributions, require payments into an associated account or include a stipend with the employee's paycheck.

PENALTIES FOR TARDINESS

The IRS charges a late fee if an employer doesn't deposit the employment tax owed on time. Called a Failure to Deposit Penalty, the penalties are:

- One to five days – 2% of unpaid amount
- Six to 15 days – 5% of unpaid amount
- More than 15 days – 10% of unpaid amount
- More than 10 days after receipt of the first IRS notice – 15% of the unpaid amount

STATE & LOCAL PAYROLL TAXES

In addition to federal payroll taxes, most shops are responsible for state payroll taxes as well. The most common state payroll tax is for state unemployment insurance (SUTA), of which employers cover a full 100%.

Unemployment insurance is based on a tax base that varies by state. Depending on the state agency, unemployment tax payments are made along with payroll taxes or as a separate payment each taxing period.

Some states collect additional payroll taxes for such things as workforce development, disability insurance and transit, which the business is responsible for paying and deducting from payroll.

Not surprisingly, many specialty automotive aftermarket shops and businesses are subject to even more payroll taxes based on ZIP code, county or municipality. Either the employer, the employee or both can be responsible for these taxes.

MISCLASSIFICATION

Many employers, especially those in the automotive aftermarket industry, have long preferred to treat workers as independent contractors, reaping payroll tax savings with no fringe benefits or other expenses associated with employees.

Although California and several other states have cracked down on who can be considered an independent contractor, and the IRS has announced its own focus on misclassification of workers, many shops

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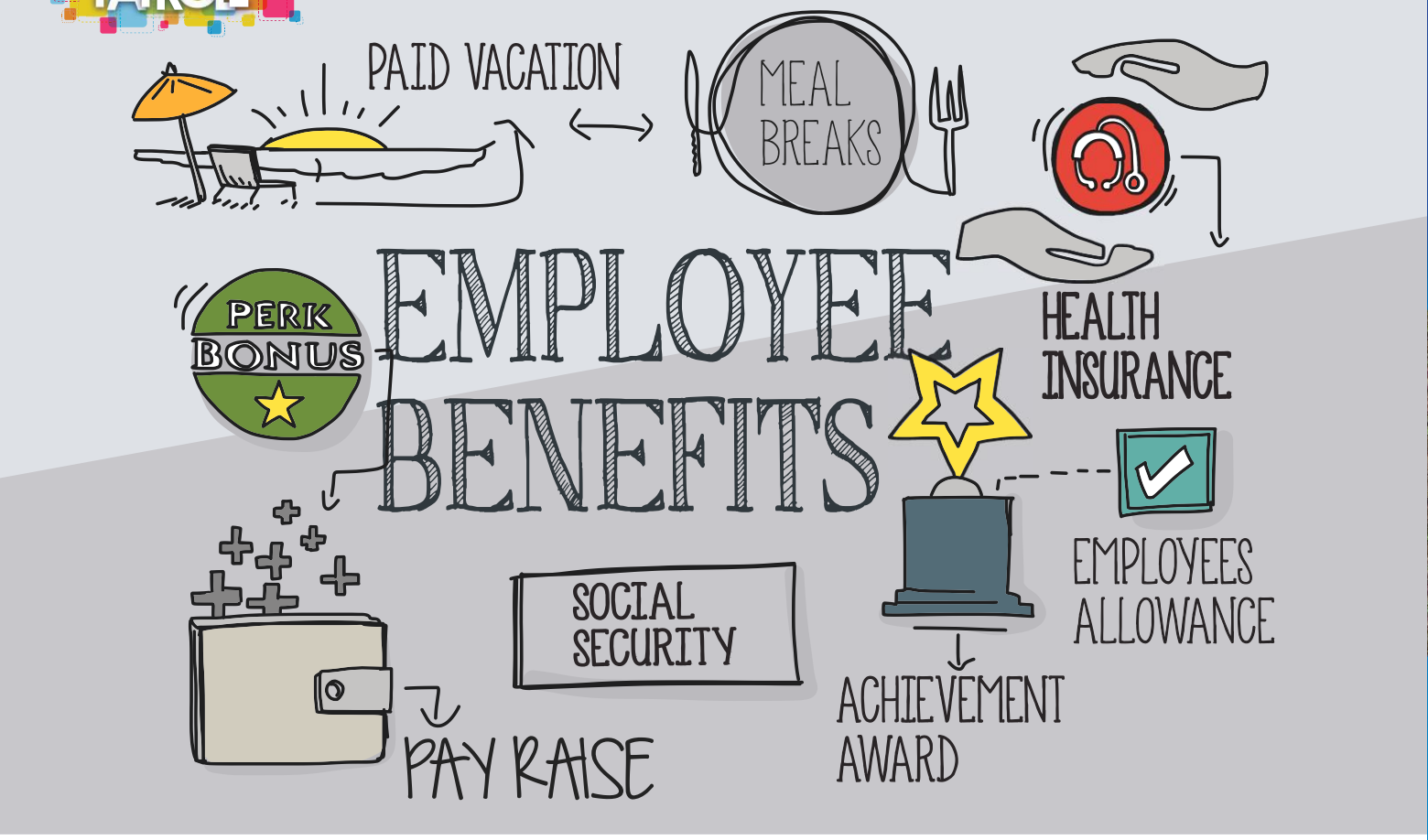
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continue to lower their tax bills by shifting from having employees to using increasing numbers of independent contractors.

Whether on the federal or state level, the key question is usually the degree of control over the work and who exercises that control that determines the "independent" status. To help, an employer can submit a Form SS-8, Determination of Worker Status for Purposes of Federal Employment Tax and Income Tax Withholding, for a worker classification determination.

There is also the IRS's 20-factor common-law test for employers to ensure they are following both federal and state laws.

CONTROLLING PAYROLL COSTS

In addition to the increasingly risky use of independent contractors, there are other strategies for keeping payroll costs manageable. One tax credit, a direct reduction of the operation's tax bill rather than the income on which it is based, is the Work Opportunity Tax Credit or WOTC.

The WOTC is designed to encourage employers to hire workers from certain targeted groups that historically have found it challenging to find employment. The amount of the tax credit ranges from $2,400 to $9,600 per employee.

Generally, the credit equals 40% of the qualified first-year wages for individuals who work at least 400 hours that first year, limited only by the amount of the specialty automotive aftermarket operation's income tax liability or Social Security tax owed.

The WOTC is available for wages paid to certain individuals who begin work on or before Dec. 31, 2025, and includes members from groups including veterans and recipients of various kinds of public assistance.

To qualify for the credit, an employer must first request certification by submitting IRS Form 8850, Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request for the Work Opportunity Credit, to its state workforce agency (SWA), not the IRS. It must be submitted to the SWA within 28 days after the eligible worker begins work.

Meanwhile, reimbursing employees for mileage, tools or other job-related expenses typically incurs payroll taxes. However, by establishing an accountable plan, a shop can avoid paying payroll taxes on these payments, thereby excluding them from employees' taxable income.

Naturally, the plan should require employees to provide proper documentation confirming that each expense is work-related.

Shops can consider offering tax-exempt fringe benefits instead of more traditional monetary raises.

Shops can also consider offering tax-exempt fringe benefits instead of more traditional monetary raises. The cost of tax-exempt fringe benefits such as health benefits, education assistance, dependent care assistance, group term life insurance and retirement planning services can be deducted similarly to wages and bonuses without a payroll tax obligation.

What's more, employees will not owe income or payroll taxes on the benefits.

Obviously, understanding the basic rules for withholding payroll taxes—and paying over withheld amounts—on the wages of all employees is a good start. Guidance and advice from a competent, qualified advisor is virtually a necessity. ***TS***

MARK E. BATTERSBY *writes on financial and tax-related topics. Learn more at thetaxscribe.com.*

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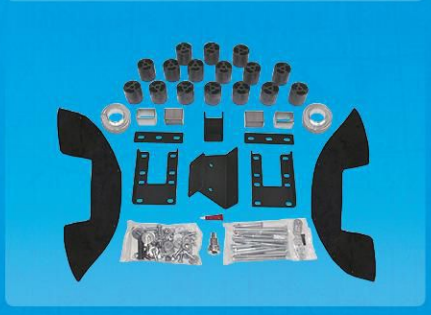














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WHSE23TS

PERFORMANCE

Wiring Harnesses p. 22 / 20 Years of Drifting p. 26 / Performance Products p. 30



Today's tuners offer total vehicle control. (Photo courtesy Hypertech)

DIALED IN

Maximizing sales of tuners & programmers. ///// **By John Carollo**

Tuners and programmers are an important part of the specialty aftermarket, providing vehicle customization options for everything from track days to towing. Far beyond simple power enhancers, many of today's products deliver a full menu of individualized settings to control everything from throttle response to speedometer readings and everything in between.

Understanding their features and benefits, as well as the emissions regulations that govern what tuners are legally allowed to accomplish, will help shops steer enthusiasts in the right direction.

To help, suppliers outline what's happening in the tuners and programmers market, trends to watch for and ways to make the most out of selling these high-tech products.

CHANGING TUNES

As with most new technology, innovations involving automotive tuners and programmers are constantly occurring.

"The past 10 years have seen a tremendous change in this market," says Mike Litsch, senior category manager – domestic tuning for DiabloSport. "In 2013, almost





There's more to today's tuning products than just engine tuning. (Photos courtesy Hypertech)



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Hypertech
Chris Fairless
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■ **HOT PRODUCT:** MyCalibrator Tuner
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Added performance, drivability and shift quality; view live data and record it for review, refinement or diagnostic purposes; popular applications include 2021-up Ford F-150 models.

Livernois Motorsports and Engineering LLC
Thomas Millen
VP

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
X4 Performance Programmer
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Particularly suited for Ford applications; holds multiple tunes; plug-and-play flashing; easy to use; versatility to handle custom tunes while offering simple functions including tire size input adjustments, diagnostics and code clearing.

SCT/Bully Dog
Nader Rayes
Brand Manager





Today's tuners and programmers are more sophisticated than ever. (Photos courtesy Derive Systems/SCT)

any popular domestic vehicle that you wanted to tune could be tuned in your driveway. Today, we face multiple applications that require the PCM be removed from the vehicle and physically unlocked before it can be tuned."

Beyond that, he adds, the OEMs have added security protocols that make in-vehicle flash tuning increasingly difficult.

The units themselves also do more, says Chris Fairless, director of sales for Hypertech.

"The market is always evolving as the computer systems become more complex," he notes. "With that comes more challenges and opportunities. There is so much more to tuning products than just engine tuning."

Meanwhile, enthusiasts are expecting more from their tuner purchases, notes Thomas Millen, VP of Livernois Motorsports and Engineering LLC.

"Consumers are looking for results that have traditionally matched custom tuning levels and are no longer satisfied with 10- to 15-hp gains on gasoline applications, while still demanding near stock-like reliability," he says. "Coupled with the added complexity of modern vehicles, this means that the work going into the end product is far more involved than at any point in the past."

With multiple engine options on some vehicles—and with some of those engines being redesigned every few years—the market requires endless development, he notes.

"Add in that almost all vehicles now utilize some form of encryption that must be broken or bypassed to allow for calibration, and it's another technical layer being added to the mix," says Millen.

Adhering to seemingly ever-stricter emissions regulations is now part of the process as well, says Jay Tilles, brand manager, Banks Power.

"Doing business in California for more than six decades, there has never been any other choice for us but to

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DIALED IN





A benefit of upgrading customers to higher-priced options is that there's likely more engineering behind the products and the profit margins are typically greater. (Photos courtesy Banks Power)

design and engineer 50-state-compliant tuners and programmers," he says. "With ramped-up enforcement of the Clean Air Act, more retailers are requesting emissions-compliant tuning solutions. And, more importantly, with the price of diesel pickups going up, more owners are seeking reliable, compliant solutions that won't break their truck or void their warranty."

Understanding specifications for individual applications is becoming even more important.

"The level of sophistication has increased in terms of on-vehicle communications and depth of features when tuning a vehicle," says Nader Rayes, brand manager for SCT/Bully Dog. "Due to those opportunities, the development time for tuners/programmers has increased significantly. Increased sophistication has pushed companies to be more specialized in certain vehicle brands."

WATCH CAREFULLY

Keeping up with market changes can be difficult. Suppliers offer some areas to emphasize.

"Historically, failure to understand the product and how it aligns with the customer's expectations is a hurdle that has existed for some time," says Millen. "We work with our dealers to help them understand the capabilities and limitations during the sales process, but often that gets lost in translation before being relayed to the end user. Additionally, not reading or following the instruction manual, and not utilizing the tuners' various functions remain common themes for shops and end users alike."



Consumers are looking for results that have traditionally matched custom tuning levels. (Photos courtesy livernoismotorsports.com)

Price can be an issue when selling tuner and programmer products—but not always in the way one might think.

"We find that some shops seek the least expensive solution for the customer," Tilles observes. "Our theory is that many independent shops are owned by current or former mechanics and/or enthusiasts who put themselves in the customer's shoes. They remember the days of having to save every penny. But the shop owner's objective should be to both fulfill the customer's needs and make money. The best solution is not always the least expensive. A benefit of upgrading customers to higher-priced parts is that there's likely more engineering behind the products and the profit margins are typically greater."

The more you work with the products, the better you can service your customers, says Rayes.

"Most experienced tuning shops know how to circumvent most issues. Mistakes and issues occur when a new vehicle is introduced to the market and the tuner is ambitious to be first to market in terms of

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DIALED IN



The tuner market is evolving as computer systems become more complex. (Photo courtesy Hypertech)

engine tuning, without fully understanding the limitations of the vehicle communication parameters."

To help, Litsch suggests planning an upgrade path for each project.

"Some customers will buy a tuner, install the tune and leave it alone for the duration of their time with the vehicle. Others are going to load the tune and immediately datalog it and try to improve it. Others will add a cold air intake a month or two down the road, then change wheels and tires," he says. "Can the original tuner support all those changes in the future? We offer a variety of tuning products to meet the specific needs of most any consumer."

Fairless reminds technicians to perform a tuner update before installing the programmer.

"This ensures that the tuner has the latest software program installed before it goes into the vehicle," he says.



Plan an upgrade path for each project. (Photo courtesy Holley/DiabloSport)

DIALING IT IN

When it comes to selling tuners and programmers, it helps to speak to enthusiasts in their own language.

"We believe that today's buyers are more educated than ever before," says Banks' Tilles. "Gone are the days when the customer walks in and hands over his keys saying, 'Do whatever you think is best.' Product research is not only easier these days, it's actually fun."

Another way to grow sales, he reveals, is to demonstrate your expertise online.

"Shoot videos about what you do in the shop. What makes your shop unique? What makes you an expert? How is your method of tuning superior to the competition? Tell your story," says Tilles. "Your customers will not only find your content engaging, but it will also build loyalty and increase credibility."

Customer conversations should include an outline of everything the products have to offer.

"Take note of the specific features and options offered on each device. Tuning devices offer so much more than just power tuning these days," says Litsch from DiabloSport. "Does the customer want to disable active fuel management/dynamic fuel management (AFM/DFM) or the multi-displacement system (MDS)? Do they want to adjust throttle sensitivity? Are they planning to install taller tires? Is idle speed control something they are after? All of these are features offered across our product lines that can help convince a customer that a tuning product is right for them."

In fact, the word "tuning" doesn't do the market justice when it comes to available options, says Hypertech's Fairless.

"Not every customer needs or wants a tuning device," he says. "However, there are lots of tuning options that come as standalones."

Examples include:

- Disabling a vehicle's auto start-stop and/or V-4 mode
- Optimized throttle response, including throttle tunes for off-road and towing
- Speedometer calibration
- Powersports products

SCT's Rayes advises the best way to keep people legal while having fun is to talk openly about what you can and cannot do.

"Embrace the environmental pressure on the industry and tailor the tune and performance parts to be compliant," he suggests.

It comes down to knowing your product, says Millen from Livernois.

"Knowledge, knowledge and knowledge. A growing majority of consumers are educated on the tunes and tuners available for their vehicles, meaning they expect the shop they are purchasing from to know at least as much as they do—but preferably more," he says. "Additionally, having various marketing materials at the ready (such as YouTube videos and testimonials) with firsthand experience can help the customer gain confidence in the product and service being offered." ***TS***





Plug, then Play

Ordering a custom wiring harness can be complicated.

///// By John Gunnell

Automakers may be facing a chip shortage that's hindering their production and hurting their sales. However, there's no shortage of wiring harnesses for pre-computerized cars that may come into your shop for restoration work or a hot rod or custom build.

In fact, some of the same suppliers sell harnesses for "chip cars," too.

In the case of a harness, the word "custom" can be confusing. A "custom" wiring harness is a reproduction of the electrical wiring that the automaker installed in a car when it was built at the factory.

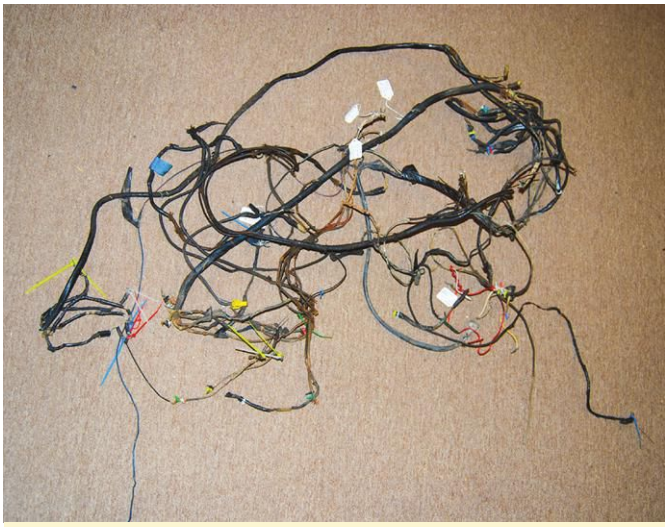
Meanwhile, a "universal" harness is the kind most often used in hot rods, resto-mods, custom cars and rat rods (see sidebar).

MAKING CONNECTIONS

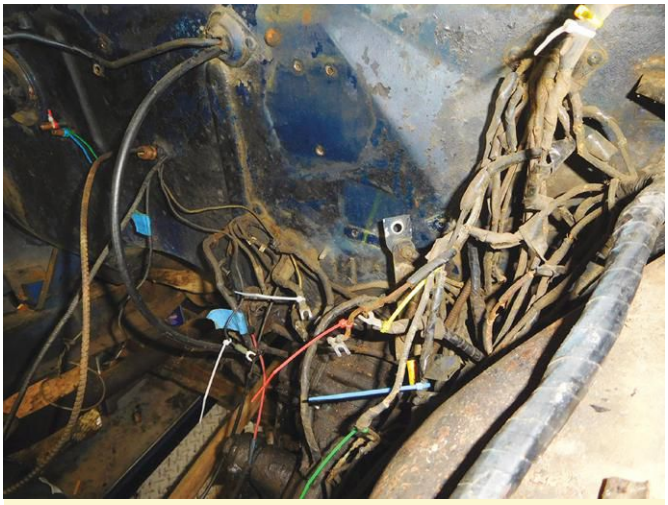
Every shop owner knows that installing a factory reproduction wiring harness is not an easy job. If the old harness was in poor shape or modified in any way, routing the



Dawn Erickson of Lark Works fabricated a custom wiring harness for a 1949 Studebaker. That's the old harness on the floor in front of the car.



Here's how an original harness might look after removal. The tags and colored bag ties were attached to help when installing a new harness.



The original harness in a 70-year-old car can look like a real rat's nest. It pays to remove the old wires carefully and spend time tagging or color-coding the connections.

new harness properly can become an even more daunting task.

The wires in a reproduction harness are made to original factory lengths, so a wire that's routed incorrectly may not reach all the way to the spot where it's supposed to connect.

But, even if the installation is difficult, you may think that ordering a harness, at least, is easy. You know the year, make and model of your customer's car, so can't you just call and get a wiring harness for that particular vehicle?

Dawn Erickson, the owner of a wiring harness shop called Lark Works, says there's more to it than that.

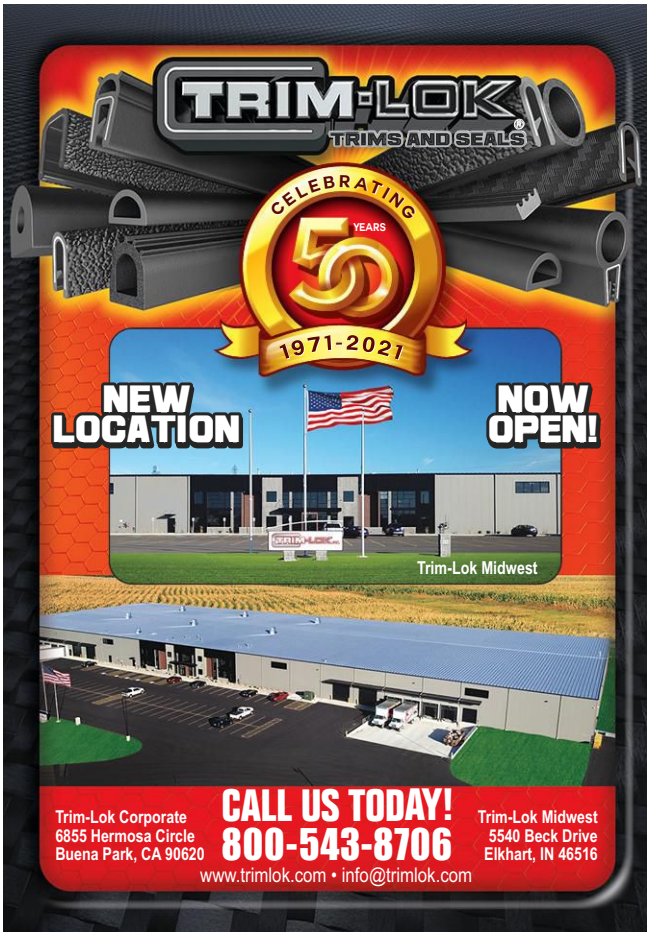
Erickson is from Stockton, Kansas. She worked for a Minnesota firm that did harnesses for the military and wiring for the medical industry. Later, she became a full-time auto restoration student at McPherson College in McPherson, Kansas.

After school, she opened a full-time business making Studebaker wiring harnesses, naming it after the Lark car.

"It was a learning curve," she says modestly.

If your shop needs to replace a harness and you call Erickson to ask about getting one for a particular vehicle, she'll first tell you that she is busy and needs to plan orders months in advance.





Plug, then Play

UNIVERSAL WIRING KITS

A universal wiring kit might be a good alternative for your shop's latest project if the car is a build rather than a factory-correct restoration.

Most universal kits are lower-priced than a custom-built stock wiring harness. They come with a specific number of circuits—most offering 12 or 14, but some specialty models offering up to 21. Some are designed as 12- to 14-circuit systems to give shops and other customers greater flexibility.

A prewired fuse block matching the number of circuits is provided. A 12-circuit system will include 12 fuses and 12 circuits. This is a good choice for cars that do not have many powered options, such as a 1930s Deuce Coupe hot rod.

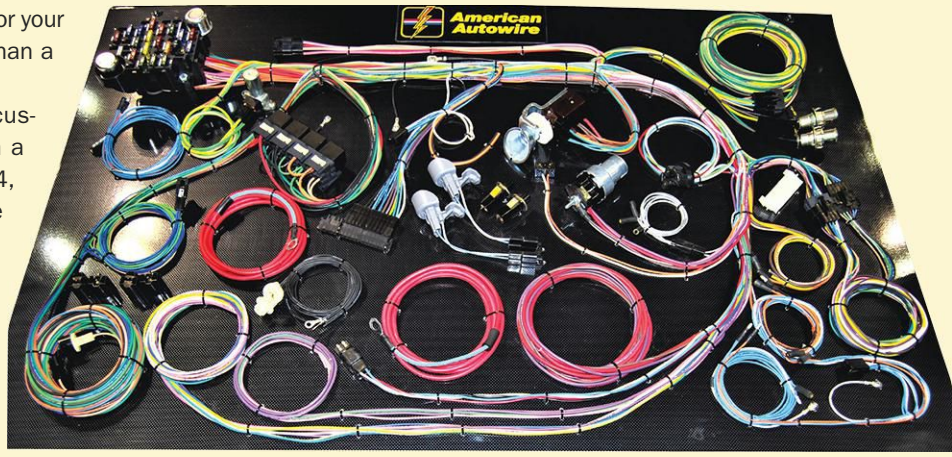
Many kits come with extra-long wires. This allows them to be installed on almost any car, including station wagons and professional vehicles such as hearses or limousines with stretched chassis.

A good kit will have all the wires clearly labeled. Some kits will have labels attached every five inches and some will have labels every 12 inches. The labels may include the part number or tell you about which fuses to use at certain points. Spark plug cables may be labeled to tell you which cylinder they fit.



Car builds using modern electronically controlled transmissions may benefit from Painless Performance's Perfect Torc Trans Controller, which has its own harness.

Many universal kits come with detailed instructions for specific General Motors, Ford and Mopar installations. To make jobs even easier, the wires in most universal kits use General Motors color coding.



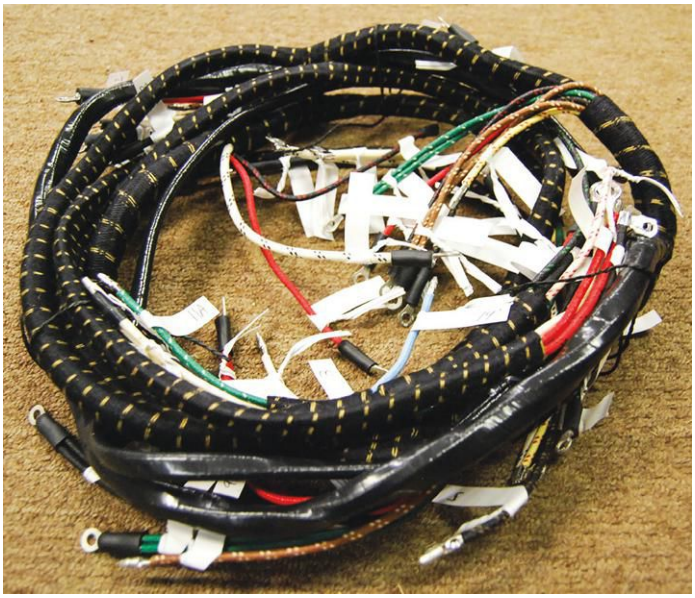
Technologically, many universal wiring harnesses improve on factory-installed equipment. This is American Autowire's 1969 Ford Mustang Classic Update Kit.

A quality universal performance wiring kit will include fuses for turn signals and headlights, as well as for an accessory circuit, a radio, brakes, a heating fan, windshield wipers, hazard lights, gauges, a climate control system, an ignition coil, a dome light, a clock, a cigarette lighter and a headlight dimmer switch.

Kits will also include electrical relays and connectors for a horn, the directional signal lights, the hazard signal and the dimmer switch, plus a headlight circuit breaker.

If your build includes more modern options such as cruise control, power windows, power door locks, a power seat, a GPS system, etc., you can find kits with as many as 17 fuses and 21 separate circuits.

It pays to make quality connections!



Then, she'll start asking you questions that explain why ordering a harness is somewhat complicated.

The list of questions looks something like this:

- For verification, what information is on the top line of the body tag on the firewall?
- Do you need battery cables?
- Do you need ignition (spark plug) cables?
- Does the car or truck have directional signal lamps? (They were not standard prior to 1953.)
- Does the vehicle have fog lamps?
- Does the vehicle have back-up lamps? If so, are there one or two?
- Does the vehicle have a spotlight(s)?
- Does the vehicle have a clock?

This main harness has an authentic look with braided cloth wire covers that have color patterns to match those in electrical diagrams in the original factory shop manual.

- Does the vehicle have a heater and defroster?
- Does the vehicle have a glove compartment lamp?
- Does the vehicle have a cigarette lighter? If so, is it illuminated?
- If it has a cigarette lighter, does the ash receiver have a lamp?
- Does the vehicle have a trunk lamp?
- Does the vehicle have a radio? Is it a factory radio?

After a shop answers these questions, Erickson can provide a very detailed price quote for review. Then, after a deposit is paid, she will schedule the building of your harness in the next available opening.

Erickson drove a 1962 Studebaker Hawk while at McPherson College. She also started doing Studebaker harness work based on what she had learned working for the company in Minnesota.

The Hawk wasn't her first Studebaker. That was a '53 Champion two-door sedan that she rescued from a field in the Gopher State. She still has that car.

"Building harnesses keeps me very busy," says Erickson. "My spouse helps too, mostly with taxes and accounting, but also with cutting wires for harnesses. We did actual restoration work for a short time but decided that our efforts were best directed toward the harness-making part of the business. I like the cleaner, somewhat artistic nature of the work more than restoring a car in a shop that got really hot during Kansas summers."

Her favorite part of the whole process? The research.

"I have a large library of Studebaker and engineering drawings (blueprints) and some from Packard," she notes. "The future is unknown, but for now we just keep building Studebaker harnesses. I also work with other harness shops and provide wiring for other car makes." ***TS***



Factory-match battery cables are another extra-cost option in a custom wiring harness kit. These came with OE-style terminals and terminal protectors.



JOHN GUNNELL *has been writing about classic cars since 1972. He is also the owner of Gunner's Great Garage in Manawa, Wisconsin. He owns 11 cars and seven motorcycles.*

DON'T BE A VICTIM OF **CANBUS** HACKS



A-DRIFT FOR 20 YEARS

Slip-sliding cars earn their place on the American motorsports scene.

By Tony Thacker

Twenty years. Two decades. Time rips by when you're having fun, and there's no doubt the sport of drifting is fun.

Amazingly, the premier American drifting series, Formula DRIFT, turns 20 years old in 2023 and is stronger than ever, with growing entry lists and enthusiastic sponsor support.

The origins of drift stretch back to Japan in the 1970s, but you could argue it really got its start in the World Rally Championship, where drivers steered using a handbrake and gas pedal as well as the wheel.

Drift focused on that cornering technique and created a judged sport. Japanese drivers such as Kunimitsu "Kuni-san" Takahashi, known as the Father of Drifting, were instrumental in developing the tire-smoking technique.

In turn, another Japanese racing driver, Keiichi "Drift King" Tsuchiya—enamored with Kuni-san's exploits—developed his skills and in 1987 appeared in a video called "Pluspy" that catapulted him into the limelight.

The following year, Daijiro Inada from Option magazine in Japan helped develop one of the first pure drifting events called Ikaten (short for Ikasu Hashiriya Team Tengoku) and then the Japanese D1 Grand Prix.

Inada was also famous for drifting through every turn of the Tsukuba Circuit, which grabbed further headlines.

In the mid-'90s, Inada and Option brought the sport to the U.S. by organizing demonstrations, but somehow D1 didn't immediately inspire American fans. It did, however, create a spark that eventually ignited Jim Liaw and Ryan Sage to establish Formula DRIFT as a sister company to their Slipstream Global Marketing (Liaw is now general manager at Performance Racing Industry).

The first FD demo event was held at Irwindale Speedway in 2003. Nestor Cabrera of First Up Graphics in Pomona, California, was there, working on Edelbrock's nitrous line at the time.

"It was crazy. People had to park miles away from the track because it was to capacity and attendance shattered all records," he recalls. "Drifting was exhibition-only back then—they even did an exhibition with the Japanese Touring Car Championship at Fontana, which brought all the crazy-looking prototype Japanese cars from Japan to the U.S. It wasn't until Jim and Ryan made the effort to



Drifting has been called a "melting pot motorsport."



The premier American drifting series, Formula DRIFT, turns 20 years old in 2023 and is stronger than ever.



The origins of drift stretch back to Japan in the 1970s.

turn it into a sanctioned event that it really took off."

A CINEMATIC BOOST

Cabrera notes the first professional Formula DRIFT event was held in April 2004 at Road Atlanta in Georgia.

Many agree "The Fast and the Furious" movie franchise, launched in 2001, helped expand interest, especially in 2006 when the third movie in the series, "The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift" was released.

Written by Chris Morgan and directed by Justin Lin, it featured "Drift King" Tsuchiya and aided in establishing the sport. And, while it's still a fan favorite, it's interesting to note that of all the F&F movies, "Tokyo Drift" grossed the least at $62 million.

Movies aside, for its 20th anniversary year, Formula DRIFT announced a strong program of eight events across the country, kicking off in Long Beach (California), and progressing through Atlanta, Orlando, Englishtown (New Jersey), St. Louis, Seattle and Grantsville (Utah) before returning to its spiritual home at

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A-DRIFT FOR 20 YEARS







The sport continues to grow, thanks to thrilling on-track action and intriguing personalities behind the wheel.

Irwindale, California, where the speedway is now known as the House of Drift.

Besides the schedule, Formula D has also announced some changes it hopes will have a positive impact on participants and spectators. First up, the 2023 PRO Champion purse will be $50,000 plus per-round payouts, which are double what was offered in 2022.

Organizers have also removed the 37 driver cap for both the PRO and PROSPEC Championships to allow more teams to enter the series. This change will make qualifying more crucial, as only 32 drivers can compete in the head-to-head competition.

And, to keep the fans informed, an official Formula DRIFT podcast called "The Outerzone" will be hosted by Jacob Gettins, who will talk to racers as the season unfolds. This builds on the incredible success of the series' free event livestream, which gives millions of fans around the world an opportunity to follow qualifying and competition heats for every round.

NEW HALL OF FAME

Another new initiative is the Formula DRIFT Hall of Fame, designed to honor the people who helped the series reach its 20-year milestone. A hall of fame is a



Grab a handbrake and join the fun!



tricky enterprise to maintain, especially in a sport that is only 20 years old, but FD has a roster of famous names who left their marks and went on to greater things.

The first inductees were to be honored at the 2023 Long Beach opening event April 7-8. Each inductee received a unique diamond and gemstone-encrusted FDHOF ring with a value of $10,000.

Furthermore, Downtown Long Beach will be the permanent home of a Formula DRIFT monument commemorating the sport. And to preserve their places in history, the name of each Hall of Fame inductee will be inscribed on the monument.

From its humble beginnings, Formula DRIFT has evolved into a major motorsports series that enjoys influence beyond its core. For example, Britain's Goodwood Festival of Speed, one of the world's most prestigious motorsports events, has hosted numerous drift alumni including James Deane, Vaughn Gittin Jr., Ryan Tuerck, "Mad Mike" Whiddett and Nobuteru Taniguchi.

They have driven everything from a retro Mazda RX-7 to a Ferrari-powered Toyota GT86 and a Toyota-powered BMW M3.

Speaking for Goodwood, Ethan Jupp summed it up succinctly, saying, "Drifting is a melting pot motorsport for the maddest 'garagistas' to build the most hairbrained machinery. We love it!"

After 20 years, many fans agree. ***TS***



Born in England, ***TONY THACKER*** *is an accredited automotive journalist, author and book publisher, and served as marketing director at the famed SO-CAL Speed Shop.*

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Mustang Twin-Disc Clutch Kits

McLeod Racing, Anaheim, presents RST and RXT Twin-Disc Clutch Kit and Flywheel options for 2018-newer Ford Mustang GT and 2021-22 Mustang Mach 1 applications. Intended for high-horsepower street vehicles, the McLeod RST is an economically priced twin-disc clutch kit that handles up to 800 hp. The McLeod RXT twin-disc is designed for both street and strip use and handles 1,000 hp. It is equipped with ceramic-lined discs that provide smooth engagement with a softer pedal effort.



Fuel Filter and Adjustable Regulator Combo

Aeromotive, Lenexa, Kansas, presents a new Fuel Filter and Regulator Combination. Available for carbureted or EFI setups, the system simplifies the installation process by combining a fuel filter with a regulator into one compact, easy-to-mount unit. Universal fitment and billet aluminum construction allow for use in a wide range of street performance vehicles up to 1,000 hp.

Late-Model Coils

PerTronix Performance Brands, San Dimas, California, presents its expanded line of Flame Thrower Coils with offerings for late-model GM, Chrysler, and Ford applications. Twelve fitments are available in single coil or four-, six- or eight-packs, depending upon the application. Designed to fit factory mounting holes for a direct OE replacement, the coils deliver 15% more available spark energy over stock to burn all the fuel in the cylinders for more power, quicker starting and improved mileage.

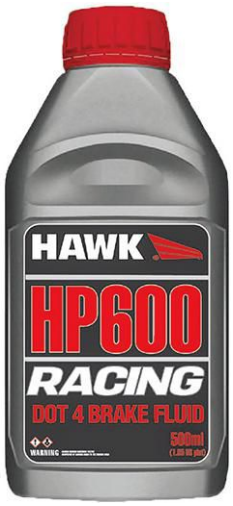




Mustang Climate Control

Vintage Air, San Antonio, presents its Gen 5 SureFit Climate Control Kit for 1964.5-66 Ford Mustang models. The kits showcase an all-new climate control system featuring OEM-quality injection-molded cases and employing a fully electronic microprocessor control unit that eliminates cables or vacuum connections. It is designed to install with minimal modifications to the firewall and dash to minimize engine compartment intrusion while delivering 20% more cubic feet of air per minute than standard blowers.

Brake Fluids

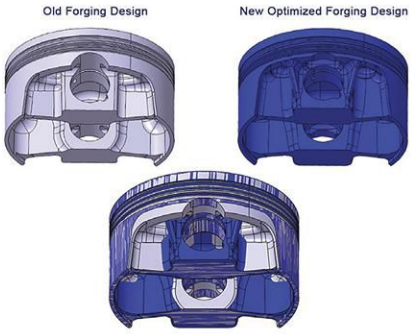


Hawk Performance, Medina, Ohio, offers DOT 4 Premium Specification Brake Fluid in three performance levels for safe, predictable braking. Functioning as an OE replacement, HP520 brake fluid offers quality specifications at an affordable price point for street vehicles; HP600 is specifically formulated to provide high performance under racing conditions where braking systems must operate at high temperatures without compromise; and HP660 delivers class-leading boiling points for reliable performance in extreme environments.

Silverado/Sierra Exhaust System



BORLA Performance Industries, Johnson City, Tennessee, presents its Cat-Back Exhaust System for 2022-23 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 ZR2/GMC Sierra 1500 AT4X 6.2L models. Designed to improve horsepower and torque, system 140916 delivers the classic BORLA S-Type sound without drone or resonance inside the vehicle. A “True Dual” exhaust, it is made from T-304 stainless steel and features all-welded construction for durability and long life. A single inlet setup is also available.



SBC Dish Piston Set

MAHLE Motorsport, Fletcher, North Carolina, introduces a redesign of the popular Small-Block Chevy Dish PowerPak Piston set. A lighter forging design removes 29 grams of mass on average while adding strength in key areas such as the pin bore and below the oil ring groove. The new design also has deeper valve pockets to accommodate a wider variety of performance camshafts. SBC Dish PowerPak pistons are available either in a 2618 alloy or 4032 alloy, and the kit comes complete with a 1.0, 1.0, 2.0mm file-fit performance ring set, pins and clips.

Diesel Head & Main Cap Stud Kits



PRW Industries, Perris, California, presents its heavy-duty Diesel Head and Main Cap Stud Kits. Made from aircraft-quality custom 4150 steel, the studs are heat-treated to 190,000 psi, allowing for total heat penetration to add strength. Cylinder head stud kits are available for Duramax, Cummins and Power Stroke applications, and main cap stud kits are available for Cummins and Power Stroke models.



Tri-Five Chevy Spindle

Wilwood Disc Brakes, Camarillo, California, introduces its latest ProSpindle system, engineered to give 1955-57 Chevrolet Bel Airs and related cars a 2-inch lowered ride height and simplify performance brake installation. The precision-machined steel spindles provide reinforced brake caliper mounts and an improved stance while being lighter and stronger than original factory parts. They mount to OE ball joints in stock or aftermarket control arms and reuse factory steering arms with no change to steering or suspension geometry.



Range Rover Wiring Harnesses

Howell EFI, Marine City, Michigan, offers multiple Wiring Harness Kit options suitable for LS swaps into classic Range Rover and Land Rover SUVs. The Howell EFI LS-1 and Gen III/Vortec truck wiring harness is designed for manual or non-electronic transmissions and includes mechanical throttle linkage. Options are available for emissions connections or fan wiring. The basic Howell LS-1 harness is a street rod-type, standalone design available with or without wiring for the electronic transmission and includes all emissions connectors.

Truck Exhaust Systems



Vance & Hines, Santa Fe Springs, California, introduces HoleShot Series Cat-Back Performance Exhaust Systems. Designed to fit popular full-size truck models, the systems add style and feature two exhaust tip options including the classic Twin Slash cut and the race-inspired Eliminator tip. Each exhaust system in the HoleShot Series is designed to replace the stock exhaust after the catalytic converter while delivering a deeper exhaust note through a turbo-chambered muffler design engineered to eliminate unpleasant in-cabin drone.



F-150 Supercharger

Roush Performance, Livonia, Michigan, introduces a Supercharger for 2023 Ford F-150 5.0L V-8 models. The system boosts the truck to 705 hp and 635 pound-feet of torque and includes a Roush TVS R2650 (2.65L) Roots-type, positive-displacement supercharger that utilizes four-lobe rotors twisted 170 degrees. The result is enhanced thermal efficiency, higher-volumetric capacity and improved airflow into the engine. Larger bearings and thicker timing gears further increase durability. ***TS***

INSPIRATION & EMPOWERMENT

How the industry helps support the Austin Hatcher Foundation's mission to serve pediatric cancer patients.

By Stefanie Galeano-Zalutko

Photos courtesy the Austin Hatcher Foundation for Pediatric Cancer (AHF)

In October 2006, Austin Hatcher Osborn was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of brain and spinal tumors called atypical teratoid/rhabdoid tumor (ATRT). The oncologist explained to his parents, Jim and Amy Jo Osborn, that the fatality rate was 100%.

Currently, ATRT still lacks viable treatment options and, at only eight weeks old at the time, infant "Hatch" was too young to withstand prolonged, intensive treatment. The Osborns watched their son's condition quickly deteriorate as the cancer invaded his central nervous system and continued to spread.

Shortly after diagnosis, Hatch returned home from the hospital and, within a week, took his last breaths among the comfort of his parents' unconditional love.

Channeling their heartbreak, the Osborns founded the Austin Hatcher Foundation for Pediatric Cancer (AHF), headquartered in Chattanooga, Tennessee, that provides services nationwide. At AHF, staff members embrace its mission "to erase the effects of pediatric cancer and optimize each child's quality of life through essential



specialized intervention—beginning at the time of diagnosis and continuing throughout survivorship."

As such, the foundation provides critical services through four main divisions: Industrial Arts Therapy, Diversionary Therapy, Psycho-Oncology and Healthy Lifestyle Education.

Approximately 15,780 children, from infants to 19-year-olds, are diagnosed with cancer each year in the United States. While 85% of pediatric cancer patients now survive five years or more thanks to major treatment advancements, The American Cancer Society says overall survival rates still vary greatly.

"For me, our work at AHF is an opportunity to turn tragedy into inspiration and empowerment," says Amy Jo Osborn. "I believe everyone's life has adversities. Some might seem larger than others, but God's grace is sufficient. He had a plan for Hatch and our family—to do all we can (for pediatric cancer patients) in his honor and to allow families the opportunity to survive, succeed and thrive after a pediatric cancer diagnosis."

THE FOUNDATION

Today, 12 full-time and five part-time staff members, along with 150 annual volunteers, partner with numerous hospitals, community organizations and benefactors to help address the mental health and well-being needs of patients and their families.

The stressors of a pediatric cancer diagnosis are vast, from physical exhaustion, pain and side effects to mounting medical bills, neglected household responsibilities and impacts on siblings. The entire ordeal takes a significant toll on patients and their loved ones—a complex burden the foundation strives to lessen as the region's only psychosocial center.

At the AHF Education Advancement Center, staff works alongside an interdisciplinary group of experts to administer evidence-based standards of care, including mental, emotional, social and spiritual support the patients and families require during this traumatic time.

The Austin Hatcher Foundation for Pediatric Cancer (AHF), headquartered in Chattanooga, Tennessee, provides support services for young patients and their families nationwide.



Unique therapy options not only help treat and improve coordination deficits, memory loss and behavioral or learning struggles, but also teach children valuable shop and life skills.

Through clinical and psycho-oncology programming, AHF is committed to helping patients cope in the present and thrive in the future.

In 2020, the foundation expanded services when many businesses were shuttered during the pandemic. Osborn says telehealth was established at AHF prior to COVID-19, but the lockdowns pushed the service mainstream. While other medical and wellness facilities started at ground zero, AHF was already prepared to implement telehealth services into patient care.

Moreover, out-of-pocket funds and insurance are not collected, alleviating some of the disparities of health care for families who cannot afford these types of invaluable services, says director of development Melanie Hammontree.

Since its inception, AHF has treated more than 89,000 individuals across 23 states and 42 children's hospitals. In 2022 alone, the foundation administered 43 neurocognitive tests, coordinated 145 family program events and completed 15,080 clinical hours ($4.7 million in valued ser-



AHF has strong ties to the motorsports community. Founders Amy Jo and Dr. Jim Osborn met at the racetrack, and the foundation has built strong partnerships with many automotive-related businesses.

vices) on behalf of 972 patients.

"The most rewarding part of working at AHF is seeing firsthand the impact the foundation is having on the lives of children and families who are facing a pediatric cancer journey," Hammontree says, "the smiles on the children's faces, the laughter, as well as the relief in a mom's voice to know she is not alone—that she has AHF families who are walking or have walked a similar journey and AHF staff members who pour themselves into this critical, invaluable work."

The foundation is celebrating a company milestone of 1,600% growth, with staff and volunteers spearheading more than $20 million in free, holistic and comprehensive-coordinated care.



COMFORTS OF HOME

What started as a small office grew into a 2,500-square-foot facility and eventually evolved into the current 33,000-square-foot Chattanooga location. Though the space is large, marketing coordinator Shayna Webb says it is still family-friendly and welcoming, featuring plenty of creature comforts to help clients relax.

"No waiting rooms. We want our facility

to feel like home. The whole setup is anything but clinical," she notes.

Visitors are welcomed into an inviting living room with a fireplace and adjacent kitchen where they can help themselves to snacks and drinks. Webb stresses the entire family is invited to attend appointments. Team members are available to "hang out" with younger siblings, while patients and parents meet with clinical staff. A play area, ping-pong tables and a wood shop are available for use as well.

When the pandemic hit and interrupted traditional programming, the foundation still found ways to help patients and their families take their minds off cancer. Activity, art and learning packages were sent straight to client homes, so kids could find a fun escape during quarantine.

AHF even hosted a virtual "camp" with collaborative activities for attendees. History teachers, fitness specialists and dance and art instructors joined the fun, bringing joy to patients and their siblings through virtual classes.

"It's about walking through every step of the childhood cancer journey with them, and that includes the entire family," Webb says. "The positive feedback we receive, the stories people share with us—it inspires us to keep working, to keep going."



The foundation provides critical services through four main divisions: Industrial Arts Therapy, Diversionary Therapy, Psycho-Oncology and Healthy Lifestyle Education.

POWERED BY THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

The foundation is firmly rooted in the auto racing community, as former Southern Living photographer Amy Jo met her husband, orthopedic spine surgeon and race



AHF SERVICES

- **Counseling:** Individual, trauma, grief, sibling and family
- **Neurocognitive Testing:** Measures cognitive abilities, attention, problem solving, memory, language, IQ, visual/spatial skills, academic skills and social-emotional functions
- **S.T.E.A.M.:** Educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering, agriculture and math
- **Occupational Therapy:** Behavioral, physical, sensory or cognitive development
- **Family Programs:** Day camps, parent events, teen events, parents' night out, cooking night and sibling events
- **Music & Art Therapy:** Enhance emotional and physical functions
- **Industrial Arts:** Shop class; treat and improve behavioral, memory and learning deficits
- **Diversionary Therapy:** Involvement of leisure, recreation and play by reducing barriers
- **Healthy Lifestyle Education:** Enhance emotional and physical functions



car driver Jim, years earlier at the track.

Even before Hatch was born, the Osborns felt called to serve pediatric cancer patients, having coordinated trackside attendance at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta for more than 150 families annually.

They view a day at the races as an effective form of Diversionary Therapy, a methodology that provides interactive, specialized activities for young patients and their family members. Through AHF, the Osborns tailored certain services, programs and fundraising to reflect a passion for automobiles and motorsports.

"The founding of AHF is a beautiful example of resiliency and innovation, as the Osborns turned their tragedy into a lifegiving foundation and aligned it with the racing industry to bring in revenue," Hammontree says.

Today, AHF is an official charity of the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), International Motorsports Association (IMSA), Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta and Foothills Title Services.

Hammontree says all four corporate partners contribute thousands of dollars per year through annual givebacks. To date, SEMA and IMSA rank as AHF's most successful fundraising campaigns—garnering national recognition, building strategic partnerships and driving revenue to support the organization's mission.

As a result, Osborn says the foundation now provides Diversionary Therapy at IMSA racing events across the country.

Additionally, youth education is conducted through the foundation's "Fueling Potential – Racing To Win" program, which explains four important steps to help prevent cancer later in life: routine exercise, heathy eating habits, sun safety and being tobacco-free.

AUTO PROJECTS AS THERAPY

In addition, AHF utilizes Industrial Arts Therapy, a STEM-based educational therapy program that encourages children to apply freedom of movement as a form of rehabilitation.

Children learn to fabricate objects in wood or metal using a variety of hand, power and machine tools. Industrial Arts Therapy also includes small engine repair



Industrial Arts Therapy projects include small engine repair and automobile maintenance activities, such as participation in the Driving Performance Improvement Program and custom-building vehicles in the Foundations Auto Shop.

and automobile maintenance activities, such as participation in the Driving Performance Improvement Program and custom-building vehicles in the Foundations Auto Shop.

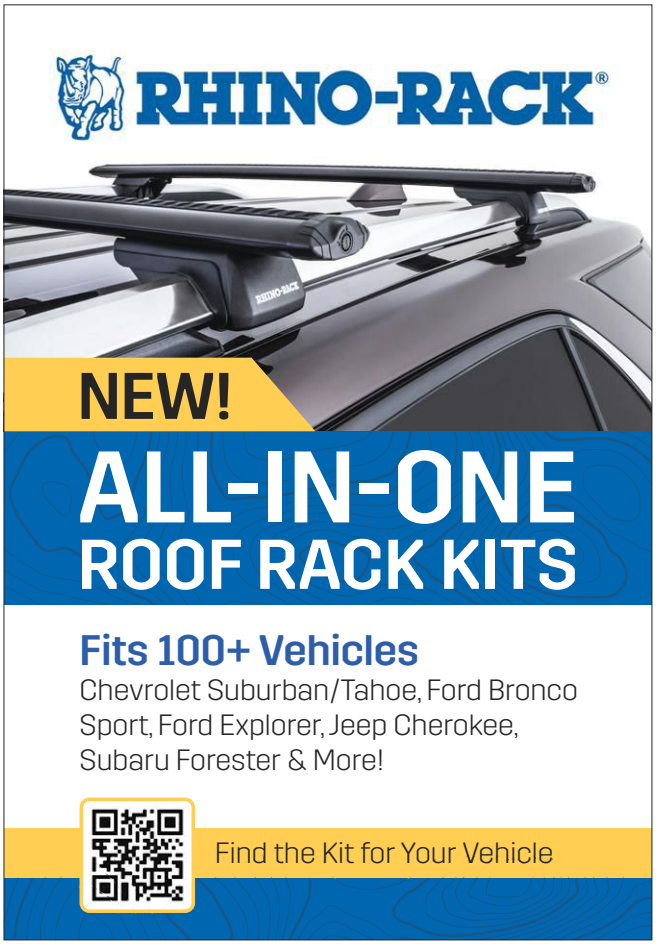
The unique therapy options not only help treat and improve coordination deficits, memory loss and behavioral or learning struggles, but also teach children valuable shop and life skills they can utilize well into the future, from basic home repairs to craftsmanship and machine safety.

Daniel Fosbinder, industrial arts manager, also emphasizes how participants have the distinct opportunity to ignite a passion they might not know exists.

"The program is open to anyone (clients) who wants to participate. With the help of clinical staff, we evaluate where they are developmentally, then cater a project to that child," Fosbinder says, noting the program has the professional facility, tools and staffing to accommodate a one-off or ongoing projects, from full vehicle builds to crafting rocking chairs and picnic tables.

From custom-made highchairs and bird houses to baseball bats, AHF accommodates special requests. For Webb, refining fine motor skills, overcoming adversity, building confidence and experiencing

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a sense of accomplishment are central to any project.

"Three elementary-age brothers completed a custom-built guitar project, which was fun. It took hours and hours of sanding, shaping the neck and hand tapping, cutting, filing and fitting before a final product was in hand, but it was a rewarding project," Fosbinder recalls.

On the automotive side, vehicles and components are donated by sponsors. Participants learn to disassemble, retrofit new parts or complete a full build. The entire program is individualized—some work singularly, while others participate in small groups to tackle an engine, chassis or exhaust project.

"The foundation's alignment with the racing industry is in its DNA, so the industrial arts division is a natural fit," Hammontree explains. "From a therapeutic perspective, industrial arts programming uses tools to inspire creativity and a passion for learning, plus helps patients recover physically, mentally and socially after treatment. The program provides an opportunity to build a brighter future by sparking an interest in pursuing a career in the automotive industry."

One build that stands out to Fosbinder is a Factory Five Type 65 Coupe, designed to be an accurate replica of the original 1965 World Championship Daytona Coupe. Several families worked on the project over more than eight months, including a father and his four boys.

Fosbinder recalls the father expressing sincere gratitude for the one-of-a-kind opportunity to collaborate on the build alongside his children. It's a reminder that beauty and joy are still present among grief and tragedy.

"Another prominent project was a small, 90cc Motoped motorcycle. Several kids had their hands on the project, including an 8-year-old girl who helped assemble and install the carburetor. Two of the young men (participating in the project) finished treatments and came back to work on it, while the other patient was still in active treatment," Fosbinder says. "Some days he didn't feel well, but all he wanted to do was work on that bike. It wasn't a big build like the coupe, but he was so proud of it and the results were so impactful."



Refining fine motor skills, overcoming adversity, building confidence and experiencing a sense of accomplishment are central to any project.

Certain completed projects head to the annual SEMA Show for display and then to auction as a way to further fundraising efforts. To date, AHF has completed 16 vehicle builds totaling more than $2 million in additional funding for the organization.

Among them, Osborn points to a Dodge Viper (VIN 001 2013), which hauled in $300,000. Dr. Jim Osborn gifted his professional race car, a Volkswagen TDI Jetta, that sold three separate times via donors buying and giving it back to auction for a total of $500,000.

In addition, a SATA German Engineering Factory Five custom build led by the Industrial Arts STEM program sold on Bring a Trailer for $137,500.

Fundraising is essential to continuing services, but Fosbinder notes it does not define "the why" behind AHF.

"For me, it's not about completing a project at all. That is not how I define success," he says. "Success is when a child, teen or young adult comes back in the door week after week and wants to keep building the car, the motorcycle, the baseball bat. Success is parents telling you their child couldn't wait to come back and finish what they started. And even then, the program is less about the actual build and more about the time spent and the impact on the children and their families. Success is hearing the testimonies and seeing the smiles firsthand."

Such achievements align with the organization's main mission.

"Everything we do is about lifting spirits and engaging and teaching valuable skills they can apply in their future during and after pediatric cancer," Fosbinder says.

LOOKING AHEAD

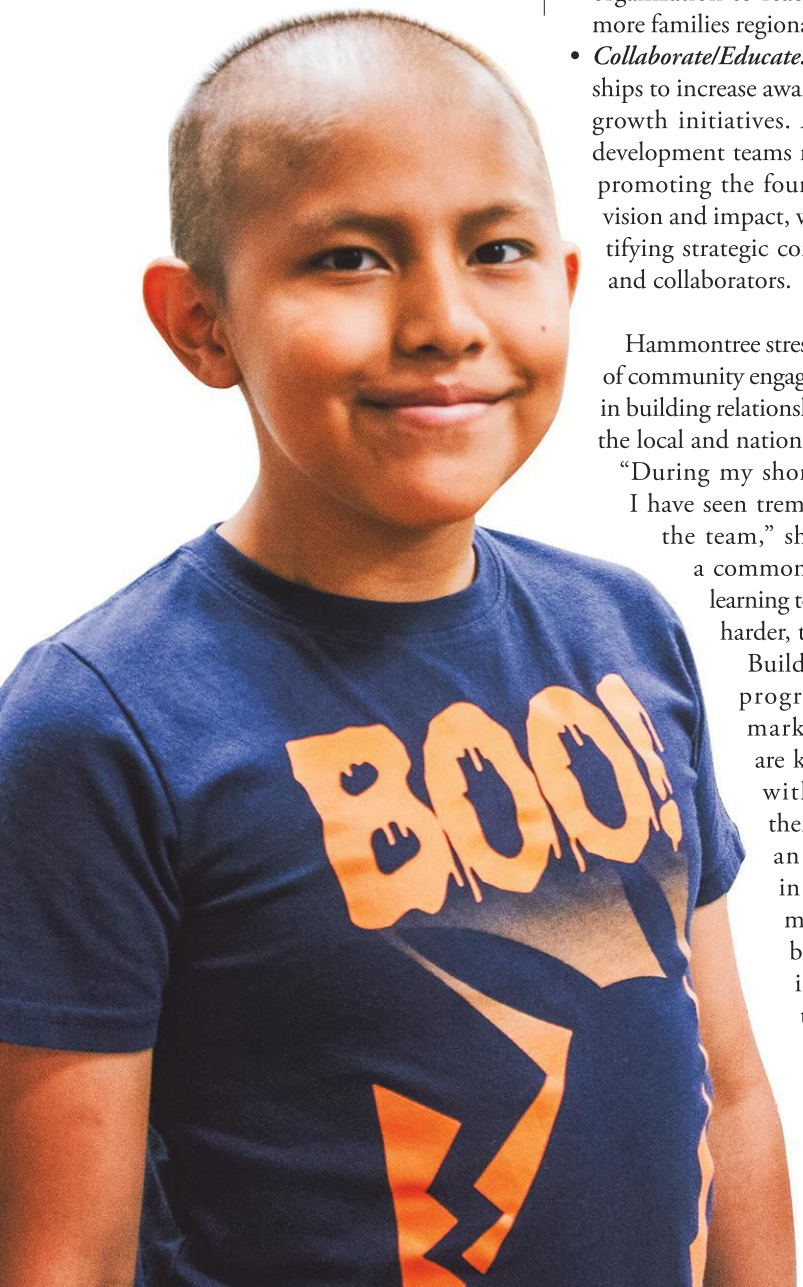
AHF celebrates its achievements in helping children and families navigate the complexities of a cancer diagnosis, but Osborn notes the foundation does not intend to

rest on its laurels. The organization is doubling down on its vision to expand nationally, so more patients and their families can access these important services.

To achieve its goal, the foundation continues to refine its strategic priorities for the road ahead:

- ***Exceed Expectations.*** Providing much-needed services for AHF children and families. Osborn says AHF aims to not only add more clinical staff to meet the higher demand for services, but also provide a more comprehensive road map so the services they do provide have the most impact.

The programs uncover beauty and joy in times of grief and tragedy.



- ***Grow/Expand.*** Extending AHF's reach and impact, so more families can access services. To lay the financial groundwork necessary for achieving this goal, Hammontree says the foundation plans to streamline revenue for short- and long-term sustainability and growth, thereby increasing fundraising and awareness. AHF plans to seed additional locations when funds are available and the timing is right to do so.
- ***Strengthen/Empower.*** Ensuring AHF and the AHF team have the resources and support they need to flourish. Hammontree notes the importance of defining individual and team goals, setting clear metrics for tracking progress and determining clear timelines for objectives to be achieved. Doing so will allow the organization to reach its goal to serve more families regionally and nationally.
- ***Collaborate/Educate.*** Building relationships to increase awareness and support growth initiatives. AHF clinical and development teams remain focused on promoting the foundation's mission, vision and impact, while actively identifying strategic community partners and collaborators.

Hammontree stresses the importance of community engagement, particularly in building relationships and support at the local and national levels.

"During my short tenure at AHF, I have seen tremendous growth in the team," she says. "We have a common goal, and we are learning to work smarter, not harder, to achieve it."

Building the volunteer program and honing marketing initiatives are key areas for 2023, with survivors and their families playing an influential role in both. Webb says many clients stay on board, participating in grief camps and then transitioning to the volunteer program following treatment.

"One cancer survivor used our services, finished chemo in high school and now volunteers as part of the teen ambassador program," she notes, emphasizing these faces of the foundation are also paramount in outreach initiatives.



This year, AHF's marketing strategy is focused on "the who" (the families AHF serves), "the what" (the services provided), "the why" (the need for these vital services for families going through this trauma) and "the win" (sharing successes).

Webb notes services and support continue for families who lose a child, making fundraising efforts all the more important.

"We have an Honoring the Journey wall in memory of those who passed. The siblings still come and touch their family plaque," she says. "It's not just about carrying on the memories and name, but rather a physical reminder that their memory always lives on—just like Hatch."

For more information about how AHF serves pediatric cancer patients and their families across the country, call (423) 243-3471; email: info@hatcherfoundation.org; or follow its social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok. ***TS***

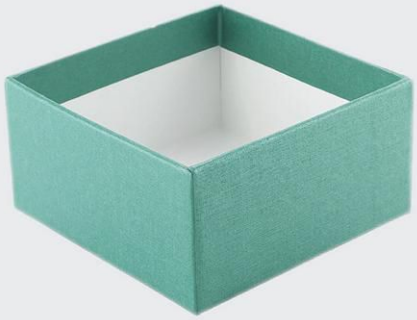


STEFANIE GALEANO-ZALUTKO *heads up Zalutko Business Services and has been freelance writing across multiple industries for more than 12 years. Visit the company's Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages for more information, or contact her directly at szalutko@zalutkobusiness.com to learn more about client services.*



SPIRIT OF GIVING

The specialty aftermarket takes care of its own & others.



Whether it's fundraising for a worthy cause, aiding in efforts surrounding diversity and inclusion, or supporting educational programs for the next generation of professionals, the specialty aftermarket isn't shy when it comes to giving back.

Donating time, money and/or resources is nothing new in an industry known for having a big heart. Efforts large and small are made every day.

Here's a sampling of recent examples.

PORSCHE DONATES TO ATLANTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE



Porsche Cars North America has pledged an educational donation to support students at Atlanta Technical College.

Porsche Cars North America (PCNA) has pledged an educational donation to support students at Atlanta Technical College (ATC), which is located about five miles from the carmaker's U.S. headquarters.

The donation will go toward the Gap Funding Program (GFP) at Atlanta Technical College, which covers the costs of a student's education after federal or state financial aid has been exhausted. The gift was announced at the opening of a second public driving track and new Porsche Classic facility, the centerpieces of the expanding PCNA headquarters campus in Atlanta.

"Supporting educational initiatives is crucial to the success of our community and our company," says Kjell Gruner, president and CEO of PCNA. "In our 25th year in Atlanta, we are proud to support our neighbor, Atlanta Technical College, and contribute to its efforts in providing gap funding to deserving students."

The average Gap Funding aid per student at ATC is $1,000 and helps to bridge relatively modest shortfalls that could hinder students from reaching their education goals. PCNA's donation allows the Atlanta Technical College Foundation to offer Gap Funding to hundreds of students to help continue their education and create opportunities for better-paying jobs with livable wages.

BRING A TRAILER AUCTION FUNDS SCHOLARSHIPS



Bring a Trailer auctioned a 1973 Datsun 240Z to raise scholarship money for the Piston Foundation. (Photos courtesy Bring a Trailer)

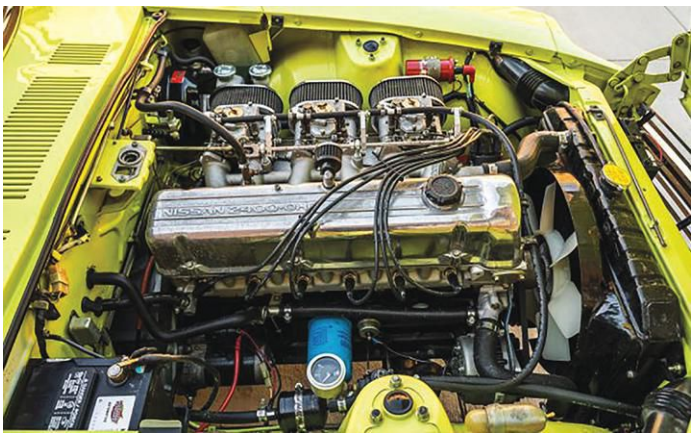
Digital auction platform Bring a Trailer (BaT) recently celebrated its 100,000th listing by selling its own 1973 Datsun 240Z in a charity auction benefiting the Piston Foundation, an organization that works to bring young people into the trades of the collector car industry.

The final bid was $124,240. Along with the $5,000 buyer's fee and another $6,513 raised through individual donations from BaT members, a total of $135,753 went toward the Piston Foundation's Sponsor a Piston Scholar initiative.

"Our BaT staff and the BaT community love the cars we sell, and we all drive them and own them. We know the value of technical experts—those that help us keep these vehicles on the road," says Randy Nonnenberg, Bring a Trailer owner. "Contributing to the Piston Foundation's support and expansion of training for technicians will help us to enjoy our current cars for years to come, and also enjoy any that we buy on BaT in the future."

The funds were enough to create scholarships for 27 aspiring technicians, granting them the opportunity to pursue education in a skilled trade. The Foundation's goal is to offer 50 such scholarships in 2023.

The auction lasted from Feb. 27 to March 7, creating enthusiasm on both the Piston and BaT sides and "showing that when two groups come together, they can accomplish a lot to support the future of their community," says Jeff Mason, president and COO of the Piston Foundation. "To be able to provide scholarships to aspiring technicians who are eager to learn a skilled trade is extremely rewarding."



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YOKOHAMA TIRE UNVEILS DIVERSITY RACING PROGRAM



Yokohama All-In is a program dedicated to driver diversity.

Yokohama Tire has launched its Yokohama All-In program, designed to promote inclusiveness in racing. The effort kicked-off in March at the Porsche Sprint Challenge North America by Yokohama at Sebring International Raceway in a joint effort with MDK Motorsports.

"We are collaborating with Megan Kvamme, MDK's CEO, on this partnership," notes Patricia Wall, Yokohama motorsports manager. "She's a supremely successful businesswoman who shares our mutual interest in promoting diversity in racing."

The team at MDK is structured to help drivers progress their careers with the support of driver coaches, a dedicated engineering staff and an in-house racing simulator, the company notes.

Two female drivers were enrolled in Yokohama All-In at Sebring—Ashley Freiberg and Riley Pegram. Freiberg competed in the GT3 Cup class and Pegram in the Cayman class.

"The intention with All-In is to turn it into a recurring program," Wall notes. "Stay tuned for more details regarding the driver selection process for the 2024 season."

HOT SHOT'S SECRET PLEDGES MAKE-A-WISH MATCH

Make-A-Wish®
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Lubricant brand Hot Shot's Secret has pledged support for the Make-A-Wish chapter that serves Philadelphia, Delaware and the Susquehanna Valley.

The Make-A-Wish Mother's Day Truck Convoy and Carnival financially supports 75% of the program's wishes granted in communities located in the Susquehanna Valley, according to the company. The event was scheduled for May 14 on the grounds of the Manheim Pennsylvania Auto Auction.

This year's goal is to raise $700,000 through fundraising efforts of individuals and teams representing independent drivers and trucking companies. Hot Shot's Secret has pledged $5,000 in matching funds.

"We are so excited to continue our partnership with the Make-A-Wish Mother's Day Truck Convoy. It's a wonderful event for a great cause and we really appreciate all of our friends in the trucking industry that have joined the Hot Shot's Secret team for this effort," says Kyle Fischer, director of branding & promotions. "Last year we were one of the top fundraising teams and we hope to raise even more money this year."

The celebration draws thousands of families and community members and features games, entertainment, food trucks and more. Last year nearly 500 drivers and companies participated in fundraising efforts.

GOODGUYS, ASE PROMOTE AUTOMOTIVE CAREER PATHS

The ASE Education Foundation and Goodguys Rod and Custom Association are joining forces to showcase the wide array of career paths available in the world of hot rodding and automotive service.

The effort aims to inform students about automotive careers, with a focus on design and engineering, manufacturing, mechanical, fabrication, paint, marketing, media and sales disciplines, the organizations note.

"There are so many career opportunities within the automotive aftermarket and hot rodding," said Andrew Ebel, COO of Goodguys Rod & Custom. "Working with the ASE Education Foundation gives us the opportunity to introduce students to many of the professional builders, painters and parts manufacturers who attend our events across the nation. It will be a great experience for the students, as well as for the industry professionals."

The ASE Education Foundation and Goodguys will partner with local high schools to identify and recruit students interested in careers in the transportation industry and will schedule Fridays at select Goodguys events as hands-on career exploration projects.

Students will start the day meeting with a panel of experts and industry professionals, and then be paired with a mentor and participate in a scavenger hunt in which they will track down businesses and learn about a wide variety of automotive careers.

The ASE Education Foundation works with more than 2,300 automotive technology training programs and 100,000-plus students nationally, creating standards and credentials and offering career development and workplace exposure.

PPG PICKS UP THE BRUSHES



PPG leaders completed a painting project at a Boys & Girls Club in Florida.

PPG completed a Colorful Communities project in collaboration with Heart of America to revitalize the Florence De George Boys & Girls Club in West Palm Beach, Florida.

More than 100 company leaders spent a portion of their annual global leadership meeting repainting the club's learning center, teen lounge area, art room and auditorium.

PPG provided more than 120 gallons of paint for the project, and the PPG Foundation bestowed a grant to support science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) educational activities.

The club offers after-school and summer programs to more than 220 students from kindergarten through eighth grade, with a focus on character and leadership development, education and career development, health and life skills, and technology.

The employee volunteers beautified the club with paint colors including Swirling Smoke and Puturple, selected by PPG experts to enhance learning and engagement, according to the company. Volunteers also completed murals in the teen area and auditorium.

"The goal was to create inspiring spaces, so every young person who enters the doors of the Florence De George Boys & Girls Club feels motivated to grow and succeed," says Malesia Dunn, executive director, PPG Foundation and corporate global social responsibility. "Color plays a powerful role by creating spaces where students feel comfortable and encouraged to learn. Our leaders put the power of volunteerism and PPG's color and paint expertise to work, aiming to inspire the next generation of leaders." ***TS***



PLAYING YOUR PART

Consider donating your time, money or resources to help those around you. ///// **By Josh Poulson**



When you volunteer, look to recruit others to join the cause. (Photos courtesy Quadratec)

"Giving back" can mean many things. I would like to discuss three ways in which we as aftermarket professionals can give back that benefit ourselves and others.

First, though, why "give back?"

Giving naturally makes us happier and many of us have been very successful in this industry and live pretty good lives because of it.

Thinking about those less fortunate and the struggles they have to deal with in comparison to some of our own problems helps readjust our perspective on things. There are many ways to give, including some that not only make us feel happier, but that can actually help our businesses at the same time.

We all know how things tend to come back around. So, it makes sense to give when we have the means and the opportunity to do so.

DONATE MONEY

The first way in which we can give back is probably the easiest—simply donating money.

Charitable donations are tax deductible and can be bestowed in any amount. So, whether it's a cause or an organization that you feel connected with, just make sure you have done your homework and know that your monetary donation will be put to good use.

Ask simple questions such as, "What



If you participate in a charity build, be sure to document your efforts through pictures and video as the project progresses so that there is a "story" that can be told.

percentage of the funds go to the actual work instead of salaries for the charity personnel?" or "What examples can you show of how funds have helped progress toward your goals?"

This helps ensure that your monetary donation makes the impact you intend.

DONATE SHOP SERVICES

A second way to give back is through work your shop performs, such as contributing to a vehicle build that will be auctioned off for charity or offering free services to someone in dire need.

This great way of giving back lets you donate parts and labor and also allows you to be creative and show off what your shop can do. Such projects usually include some marketing and promotional opportunities, making them well worth your time and expenses.

If you participate in a charity build, be sure to document your efforts through pictures and video as the project progresses so that there is a "story" that can be told. You can easily partner with the charity through social media and draw in different types of followers who may be interested in joining the cause.

DONATE YOUR TIME

The third way I think about giving back is through volunteering. Our time can be our most precious resource, and it is commendable to donate some to a worthy cause.

It isn't as easy to quantify because there isn't a tax write-off or a marketing opportunity. Instead, it's a selfless way to use your knowledge and expertise to help a person, another business or an entire organization that needs it.

The more you volunteer, the more you realize that when everyone gives a little some truly great things can happen. It doesn't matter how much time you have—any you can give is always appreciated. Again, search for charities or causes that are close to your heart.

Inside our own industry, the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) offers plenty of opportunities for you to play an active role in leading the market forward. Check out sema.org/volunteer and try to get involved if you can, even if it's in a small way.

Lastly, when you volunteer, look to recruit others. Many people would like to do more but simply don't know of the opportunities available to them. So, talk to your friends, family, colleagues and employees and encourage them to join you in giving back! ***TS***



Named the 2022-23 SEMA Person of the Year, ***JOSH POULSON*** *is the principal of Auto Additions in Columbus, Ohio, which was named Restyler of the Year, 2012-13. Auto Additions offers a complete line of product upgrades including 12V and appearance packages with a specific focus on the dealership segment. Josh is chairman of the SEMA PRO council.*



Restyling
AFTERMARKET ACCESSORIES

Products p. 60 | One More Thing p. 64

By Jef White

HEIGHTENED
awareness

Rise above the crowd with the latest lifts & leveling kits.



Whether they're planning to tackle the toughest trails or simply want to look good while driving around town, truck and SUV owners continue to enthusiastically support the lifts and leveling kits market.

Offering sophisticated designs to match today's high-tech vehicle innovations, lift and leveling systems and accessories are available for everyone from the highest riders to those seeking a simple, safe solution for their towing and hauling needs.

As evidenced by the number of suppliers interviewed for this article, the market is crowded and competitive, meaning there's a lot to learn to stay ahead of the curve. Here are some tips and trends for shop owners seeking a heightened awareness of a product line that continues to stand tall.

Suspension upgrades are an off-roading staple. (Photo courtesy DPI Off-Road Brands – ToyTec Lifts)

GOING UP

Long a staple in the off-road community, today's lift and leveling kits must keep pace with the latest OEM advancements.

"Innovations to OE vehicle technology—sensors, active dampers and safety equipment—continue to have a huge impact

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HOT PRODUCT:
Ford E-Venture System
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Active chassis control delivers stability for heavy-duty trucks; extended-travel 2.5-inch-diameter custom-tuned dampers handle on- and off-road obstacles.

Carli Suspension
Dan Tourino
VP

HOT PRODUCTS:
New Ram TRX 2.7-Inch PRO-LIFT-KIT Springs
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Optimized to work within the specific damping zones of the factory-equipped Bilstein shocks; side-specific design for more consistent lift height to reduce lean; manufactured in the U.S. with off-road race-proven materials and craftsmanship.

Eibach
Mark Krumme
Head of Marketing, North America

HOT PRODUCTS:
Sway Bars
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Reduce body roll and sway on lifted vehicles; made of 4140 heat-treated solid chromoly steel; durable hammertone powder-coat finish features divots that hold grease and keep the included polyurethane bushings lubricated; adjustable.

Hellwig Suspension Products
Mike Hallmark
Marketing Manager/International Sales Manager







Partnerships and pre-selected packages featuring products that work well together are attractive to suppliers and shops. (Photos courtesy Synergy Manufacturing)



A comprehensive approach should include consideration of the lift, wheels and tires all in the same package. (Photo courtesy Synergy Manufacturing)

on the suspension aftermarket. The old days of throwing on a set of taller springs and shocks have become much more technical and precise," notes Carter Reed, PR specialist for BDS Suspension. "While 2-, 4- and 6-inch, and in some cases even taller, lift kits are being requested, the electronics on modern vehicles designed for safety and comfort introduce new challenges for engineers. Government standards like FMVSS No.126 raise the bar and set higher standards for how vehicles (stock and after-

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LIFTS & LEVELING KIT PRODUCTS (CONT.)

HOT PRODUCTS:
2.5- and 3.5-Inch Lift Kits Matched with Lynx Control Arm Kits

FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Available for Jeep JK, JL and JT applications; packages include everything needed to lift Jeeps; on-road comfort; tackle any trail.

Quadratec
Ed Donovan
Category Manager

HOT PRODUCT:
2019-23 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 3-Inch Lift Kit

FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Replacement upper control arms with upper strut spacers; King coil-overs and rear reservoir shock options for true high performance.

RealTruck – Superlift
Mike Morris
General Manager of Superlift, RealTruck

HOT PRODUCTS:
Journey Better Leveling Kits

FEATURES & BENEFITS:
First two offerings in a brand-new line are for Ram 2500 and Ford F-150 models; specifically built for leveling the truck and keeping it level when loaded and towing.

SuperSprings International
Tom Bateman
Director of Marketing

HOT PRODUCTS:
Leveling Kits for Late-Model 3/4- and 1-Ton Ram and Ford Super Duty Platforms

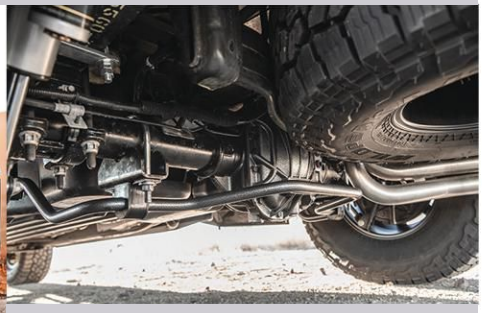
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Progressively wound coil springs (gas- or diesel-specific); tuned FOX Performance Series shocks; all necessary parts so that the vehicle drives correctly after being lifted; competitive price point; attractive dealer margins.

Synergy Manufacturing Inc.
Dave Schlossberg
President/CEO



If products perform as well as advertised, sales will follow. (Photo courtesy Hellwig Suspension Products)





Today's systems offer innovative ways to lift and level a vehicle. (Photos courtesy Hellwig Suspension Products)

market) must perform."

Suspension systems are therefore naturally evolving, says Mark Krumme, Eibach's head of marketing, North America.



Shops appreciate kits that are easy to install and work as intended. (Photo courtesy DPI Off-Road Brands – ToyTec Lifts)

"The leaf-sprung trucks that we know and love are now being replaced with high-travel rear coil springs. This opens up an opportunity to offer customers multiple variations of coil spring solutions," he says. "(Shops can offer) leveling springs for the front of the vehicle, lift for all four corners, and even HD (heavy-duty) springs for those who are loaded down with gear or (are facing) extra tongue weight towing toy haulers and trailers."

A comfortable ride is important to today's enthusiasts, making it a priority for vehicle manufacturers, says Tom Bateman, director of marketing for SuperSprings International.

"Particularly as it relates to leveling kits, trucks are getting softer and softer in their suspensions, which is awesome for ride comfort, but it exacerbates the sagging and body roll on the truck when you load up and tow," he says. "There's a heightened need for a kit that solves for the leveling and at the same time solves for the rear

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Many consumers choose to have professionals install the systems.
(Photo courtesy Timbren Industries)

LIFTS & LEVELING KIT PRODUCTS (CONT.)

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:**
2005-Newer Toyota Tacoma 2.0 Aluma Series Coil-Overs
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Adjustable from 2 to 3 inches of lift; fully rebuildable shocks; shock bodies made from hard anodized aluminum; nitrogen-charged design with internal floating piston; sway bar relocation brackets; no spring compressor or special tools needed for installation.
ToyTec Lifts
Mitch Kistner
Director of Marketing – DPI Off-Road Brands

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:**
Timbren SES Suspension Enhancement Systems
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Progressive helper spring system that doesn't require running a compressor; helper springs offer all the benefits of an air bag system without the maintenance; set it and forget it.
Timbren Industries
Andrew Hodgson
Sales & Marketing Director

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:**
Daystar Comfort Ride Leveling Kits
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Popular applications for 2010-21 Toyota 4Runner and 2009-21 Ford F-150 models; lift the front of the vehicle 2-2.5 inches; aggressive off-road look; quick, efficient installation process with no need for strut disassembly; high-density polyurethane.
Tuff Country Suspension
Troy Davis
National Sales Manager – DPI Off-Road Brands



Aftermarket lifts and leveling kits need to match changing consumer preferences.
(Photos courtesy Timbren Industries)

end sag and roll."

The changes are affecting the business approach of lift and leveling kit suppliers, says Mitch Kistner, director of marketing – DPI Off-Road Brands, for ToyTec Lifts.

"As new vehicles continue to incorporate more advanced technology, especially in terms of suspension, it presents both challenges and exciting opportunities for us to enhance their performance even further," he says.

Along with the vehicle trends, aftermarket lifts and leveling kits also need to match changing consumer preferences, adds Andrew Hodgson, sales and marketing director for Timbren Industries.

"Families getting into the RV lifestyle and looking to turn their daily driver into a tow vehicle are a huge factor in the market," he notes. "They need products that deliver on safety and provide a maintenance-free, zero-upkeep solution to keep their travels fun and avoid the repair bay. They want simple products that deliver."

Unsurprisingly, the economy can also play a factor.

"With the recent increase in gas prices, we've noticed a surge in sales for leveling kits and smaller 3- and 4-inch lift kits, as opposed to our larger 6-inch lifts," says Troy Davis, national sales manager – DPI Off-Road Brands, for Tuff Country Suspension. "This is likely due to the fact that bigger lifts, paired with bigger tires, can result in lower fuel economy and a larger bill at the pump."

Asked about the outside factors most affecting the market, Dan Tourino, vice president of Carli Suspension, identifies "increased fuel and vehicle costs."

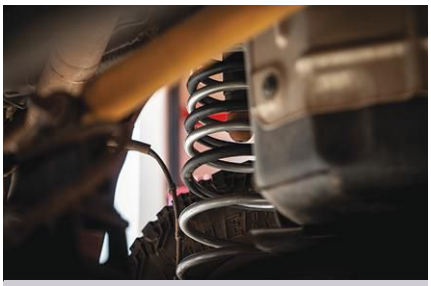
GIVE IT ALL

With the amount of information available to consumers regarding lift and leveling products, the upgrades shops sell and install need to deliver performance and ride quality.

"The best thing an aftermarket manufacturer can do is put out honest content on its products and offer value for the products being sold," says Mike Hallmark, marketing manager and international sales manager for Hellwig Suspension Products. "If your products perform as well as advertised, then the sales will follow. Value is key when offering any type of performance product."

Much of that information is being shared among like-minded enthusiasts, says Mike Morris, general manager of Superlift/RealTruck.

"This isn't just about looks anymore; it's



Adjustment capabilities allow for tire size upgrades. (Photo courtesy Eibach)

a lifestyle," he says. "There are hundreds of social media groups you can join, and there are truck, Jeep and off-road clubs in most towns for people to join and show off their rides. It's a social outlet for a lot of truck and Jeep owners."

Another positive trend is that product availability remains relatively high, says Ed Donovan, category manager for Quadratec.

"We are still seeing some supply chain issues from manufacturers, whether they are waiting on supplies or simply playing catch-up," he says. "The good news is things are getting better. It's just a matter of time."



Lift and leveling products are naturally evolving. (Photo courtesy Eibach)

Many consumers choose to have professionals put these systems in for them, making a trouble-free installation an important feature, says Hodgson.

"For shops that install the product, our kit can be done in less than 30 minutes, leaving plenty of time to get to more jobs while making good margins on the installation," he says.

Davis has also spotted this trend.

"One of the best features of our lift and leveling kits is ease of installation. This





The automotive aftermarket is getting smarter as the OEMs develop more sophisticated vehicles. (Photos courtesy Carli Suspension)

means that you won't have to struggle with fitment issues, and it can save you money on labor charges."

Partnerships and pre-selected packages featuring products that work well together can be of great value to suppliers and shops, notes Dave Schlossberg, president/CEO of Synergy Manufacturing, noting his company has brought together a quality, consistent spring manufacturer and a reputable shock supplier.

"Fortunately, we are able to deliver both of those things," he says.

While new vehicles are impressive, recent factors have affected some consumers' ability to drive one home.

"The lack of light truck and SUV production from automotive manufacturers has impacted dealership and new vehicle accessory sales and has been further exacerbated by the rise of inflation and gas prices," says Kistner. "However, we view this as an opportunity to increase sales of legacy lift kits for popular applications. With increased inflation, consumers are choosing to further upfit their existing vehicles rather than purchase new."

WHAT'S ON THE MENU

A big benefit for shops is that customers seldom come in looking solely for a lift or leveling product, allowing for package and add-on sales.

"Once the lift is installed, there is the opportunity to sell the customer larger tires, new wheels, upgraded brakes and upgraded sway bars," Hallmark explains. "When you lift a vehicle you change its center of gravity, which directly relates



Many of today's lift and leveling kits are ready to install right out of the box. (Photos courtesy BDS Suspension/FOX)

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to how much body roll the vehicle will experience when turning. A performance sway bar is a great way to enhance control, comfort and driver confidence."

Other popular add-ons include steps, running boards, mud flaps and fender flares, says Donovan.

"When a customer is interested in these items, then this is the perfect time to really get them excited about the look of their vehicle and all the changes they can make," he explains.

Tourino advises shops to take advantage of "the ability to sell ancillary parts to complete the customer's vision for the build that began with a simple height alteration. Think wheels, tires, lighting, bumpers, winch, etc."

Among them, wheel and tire options, in particular, are driving the market, says Morris.

"The number of wheel sizes, colors and styles available in today's market is at an all-time high," he says. "A lot of wheels require a lift for clearance—especially the wider, heavy offset options. Aftermarket tires and wheels, combined with the appropriate lift kit, drastically change the appearance of the vehicle."

And with wheels and tires, along with suspension enhancements, come alignments, adds Krumme.

"One consideration is an upgrade to alignment hardware. Though our lifts are designed to work in conjunction with factory control arms and hardware, customers may still want some additional adjustment capabilities to allow room for those larger tire configurations," he says. "The ability to adjust caster angles helps to better center oversized tires in the wheel well."



A comfortable ride is important to today's enthusiasts, making it a priority for vehicle manufacturers. (Photos courtesy SuperSprings International)

Schlossberg recommends this type of comprehensive approach that includes consideration of the lift, wheels and tires all in the same package.

"If you have good, talented salespeople working the counter, closing these upsells should be easy," he predicts. "Another thing that is becoming very popular with these sales is warranties using third-party companies like Extend. Any shop not offering this service should be looking into it immediately."

Customers come to trust businesses that steer them in the right direction from the beginning, Bateman observes.

"When a shop sells and installs leveling kits, it's likely that it's establishing a relationship very early on with the truck owner and has the opportunity to serve the customer for the whole build—lights, steps,



New chassis offerings keep lift manufacturers on their game. (Photos courtesy Superlift)

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Engineers continue to push the envelope on designs and features. (Photos courtesy Quadratec)

racks, you name it," he says." In addition, if the shop can educate the customer on the negative effects of a front-end lift on rear end sag and then be the one to recommend, sell and install the airbag alternative from SSI, they become a trusted partner."

Unsure of the perfect package for a customer's specific needs? Look to your suppliers for help.

"BDS and FOX take pride in building lift and leveling kits that are ready to install right out of the box," says Reed. "Shocks/coil-overs come pre-tuned and preset for the right ride height, so there's no need to make adjustments. Hard parts are prepped, and hardware packs come labeled to ease with installation."

MARKET CHANGES

Producers and suppliers continue to flood the lifts and leveling kits marketplace. Hellwig's Hallmark, for one, sees it as a positive trend.

"We are excited about the opportunities the new lift and level kits offer," he says. "With more manufacturers offering more products, the competition is getting fierce. This means new, innovative ways to lift and level a vehicle."

It enables a real-life opportunity to move the industry and the products forward, says Morris from Superlift.

"It's constantly evolving. The days of the OEMs keeping a chassis the same for 10 years are over. We don't get complacent. The more change that happens, the more knowledge we gain."

Davis believes Tuff Country is also up to the task.

"With new options and ever-changing body styles coming from the factory, we relish the challenge of designing and building products that allow our customers to upgrade and customize their vehicles," he says.

Advancements on all fronts will continue, predicts Quadratec's Donovan.

"The technology that goes into lift and leveling kits is really incredible and will only get better over the next few years," he says. "From shocks where you can electronically change the damping by either using a controller mounted inside the vehicle or having adjustments made automatically with an ECU, to stronger springs, control arms and steering components, the future of lift kits will be defined by just how far engineers are willing to push the envelope."

High riding means high tech, agrees Carli's Tourino.

"The automotive aftermarket is getting smarter as the OEMs develop more sophisticated vehicles. Five years ago, I wouldn't have imagined a system like our E-Venture. The future will only see more tech."

Different choices will always appeal to different customers, says Hodgson from Timbren.

"More and more consumers are turning from traditional helper spring methods to the set-it-and-forget-it alternatives," he observes.

Schlossberg from Synergy Manufacturing notes that delivering a quality, reliable lift package to an enthusiast can lead to repeat sales.

"It's a doorway for customers to come in and see all of the other products our company manufactures," he says. "Getting a customer stoked on a leveling kit or suspension system will hopefully make them look at our other product offerings, like our heavy-duty steering kits and components."

Meanwhile, carmakers are doing their part to continue producing exciting vehicles, notes Eibach's Krumme.

"The technological advancements happening in the truck, SUV and CUV markets are amazing. Vehicles are now equipped with damper and suspension technology that was only seen on race vehicles a short time ago," he says. "The OEMs are pumping out some very capable vehicles from the factory—that said, there is always room left on the table for improvement."

And enthusiasts remain, well, enthusiastic.

"It's a huge market that isn't going anywhere," says Bateman from SuperSprings, "and it's a fun market. Big, lifted trucks are fun."

As such, opportunities for growth in the market remain, says Reed from BDS/FOX.

"We're excited for the challenge of innovating and continuing to bring modern solutions to future 4x4 vehicles to enhance on- and off-road capability, while helping owners stand out from the crowd and get the most out of their trucks." ***TS***



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Miata Transmission Tunnel Shields

Design Engineering Inc. (DEI), Avon Lake, Ohio, offers new Transmission Tunnel Heat Shield Kits for 2006-15 Mazda Miata NC models. Designed to reduce the heat entering the driver and passenger areas from the transmission tunnel, the kits provide a direct replacement for a missing or damaged factory heat shield. Precision-cut for a precise fit and easy installation, the shields feature a highly reflective, durable outer layer that can withstand temperatures up to 1,750 degrees bonded to a finely woven glass fiber composite.

Tacoma Front Winch Bumper



Magnum, Hayward, California, presents the Magnum Front RT Style Bumper for 2016-23 Toyota Tacoma applications. Built for serious off-road enthusiasts with thick 3/16-inch steel plate construction and 1/4-inch support braces, the bumper provides a greater approach angle, higher clearance of obstacles and front-end protection. It accommodates mounting of a 20-inch dual-row light bar in the middle opening with included brackets, and an integrated winch plate allows installation of up to a 10,000-pound winch.



Ford Pickup Accessories

EGR USA, Ontario, California, offers its line of Truck Accessories for 2021-newer Ford F-150 and Lightning pickups. Available upgrades include the EGR Electric RollTrac bed cover, EGR RollTrac manual bed cover, SlimLine in-channel window visors and a paintable Cab Spoiler. The electric RollTrac bed cover fits current F-150 and 2022-23 Lightning crew cab models with 5-foot-7-inch bed lengths. It includes all-aluminum construction and is equipped with a Smart ECU that offers variable speed management, integrated central locking and other features.

Ford Super Duty Steering Stabilizer



ICON Vehicle Dynamics, Riverside, California, introduces the 2.5 Centerline Steering Stabilizer with Piggyback Reservoir for 2005-22 Ford Super Duty pickups. Featuring a through-shaft design to eliminate the push/pull sensation associated with traditional steering stabilizers, the product delivers consistent damping and a symmetrical steering feel throughout the input range. The large 2.5-inch-diameter stabilizer body and piggyback reservoir increase fluid volume to prevent performance fade due to heat and cavitation.



Bronco Console Safe

Tuffy Security Products, Cortez, Colorado, presents a new Console Safe for 2021-23 Ford Bronco models that conceals valuables while keeping them protected yet easily accessible. Made of welded steel with a double-bitted cam lock, the slide-in console safe is ideal for storing electronics, documents and firearms. The safe, which blends with OEM styling, is built with a patented Pry-Guard II locking system with a steel latch that allows the lid to be latched without locking.



Bronco Bumpers & Tire Carriers

Scorpion Extreme Products, Phoenix, one of the **DPI Off-Road Brands**, offers new Bumpers and Tire Carriers for 2021-up Ford Bronco models. Manufactured from high-quality cold rolled steel and crafted using high-precision lasers, the bumpers were designed by off-road enthusiasts to deliver protection and function. Meanwhile, the spare tire carriers add structural integrity to safely hang a 35- or 37-inch tire on the Bronco's rear.



VW SiriusXM Add-On Adapter

VAIS Technology, Englewood, Colorado, presents new Satellite Radio Integrated Solutions specifically designed for 2022-23 Volkswagen Atlas, Atlas Sport, Tiguan, Taos, Jetta and Golf vehicles. Offering the ability to add SiriusXM satellite radio to the existing factory stereo without compromising factory functionality, the systems are compatible with the GSR-UV01 universal unit that can be flashed using online software. The setup allows for full control of satellite radio functions.

Lightning Front Sway Bar



Hellwig Suspension Products, Visalia, California, introduces a new Front Sway Bar for 2022-newer Ford Lightning pickups. Designed to improve stability and comfort for daily driving and while towing, the bar features solid heat-treated chromoly steel construction for increased stiffness. With a simple installation, it can drastically improve handling by reducing a vehicle's tendency to pitch from side to side during cornering, thus improving stability and providing a smoother ride.



Wedge-Style Rooftop Tents

iKamper, Kent, Washington, presents its Blue Dot Voyager wedge-style rooftop tent. Available as the Solo with one-person capacity or the Duo fitting two people, the tent is offered unassembled or fully assembled. The BDV features an exo-shell design that backs the fiber-reinforced plastic (FRP) hard shell. The system is load-bearing, allowing for gear or integrated solar panels to be easily mounted.



Wrangler Bumpers

Quadratec Inc., West Chester, Pennsylvania, introduces its new Carnivore bumper line exclusively for Jeep Wrangler YJ/TJ models. The front and rear bumpers are engineered to withstand demanding on- and off-trail conditions with enhanced recovery points, auxiliary light mounting solutions and winch mounting options. Full width or stubby Carnivore bumpers offer robotically welded 5mm steel plating and 6mm frame mount brackets and feature a durable black powder-coated finish to guard against corrosion. ***TS***



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‘McGee Roadster’ Heads to the Petersen

A recent donation to the Petersen Automotive Museum will ensure that future generations can enjoy one of the quintessential American hot rods.

Car collector Bruce Meyer recently handed over the keys to his 1932 Ford “McGee Roadster” to Terry L. Karges, executive director of the Petersen Automotive Museum. Constructed by noted hot rod builder Bob McGee, the “McGee Roadster” introduced an aesthetic that quickly became nearly ubiquitous in the roadster community.

The popular hot rod will become part of the Petersen’s permanent collection.

“Hot rods are vital to the entire automotive industry, and Robert Petersen is the man who really brought hot rodding to the people. This car is an important piece of automotive history, and there is no more worthy destination than the Petersen Automotive Museum,” says Meyer, who is also founding chairman of the Petersen.

The Petersen Automotive Museum and the “McGee Roadster” share an origin story that stems from HOT ROD magazine, founded by Robert E. Petersen in 1948. The roadster’s popularity skyrocketed after appearing on the magazine’s cover, and Petersen’s subsequent success in publishing allowed him to launch the museum in 1994.

The iconic roadster has raced on the Bonneville Salt Flats, served as a daily driver and originated many of the design cues synonymous with hot rodding today. McGee, who started working on the roadster in 1947, created the signature look with plenty of customization, including a lowered suspension, larger Lincoln Zephyr rear wheels, a three-piece louvered hood, peaked and filled grille shell, hidden door hinges and shaved door handles, all painted bright red with a custom interior.

“The McGee Roadster is so much more than just a car. It is the symbol of an entire era and generation of innovative hot rodders,” says Karges.

In 1956, McGee sold the roadster to Dick Scritchfield, an avid hot rodder. Scritchfield, who had contacts in the film industry, started leasing the car to movie producers and television shows for use in their productions. It appeared in many films and classic TV shows including “Happy Days,” “Dragnet” and “Fantasy Island.”

Repainted in Candy Apple Red with silver metal flake, the roadster also became the first non-experimental metal-flake paint job in the automotive industry.

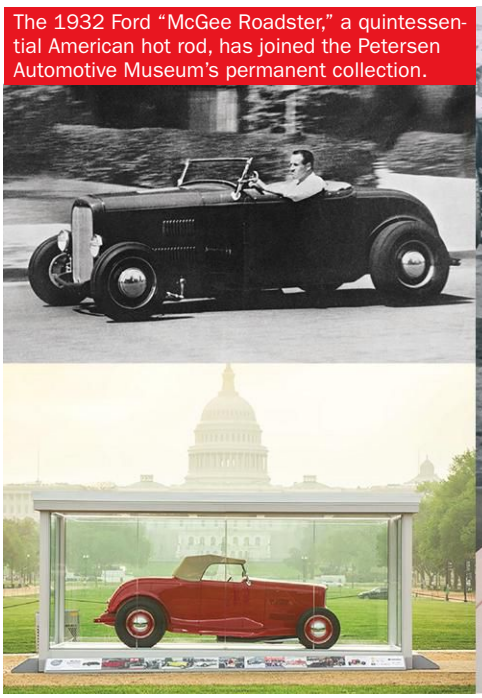
The car underwent many additional modifications before Meyer restored it to its original 1948 configuration in the late 1990s.

It was included in the U.S. Postal Service’s “Hot Rods Forever” commemorative stamp series in 2014 and has been shown and won in its current configuration at the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance and the Grand National Roadster Show.

On April 12, 2017, the “McGee Roadster” became the only hot rod added to the National Historic Vehicle Register.

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The 1932 Ford “McGee Roadster,” a quintessential American hot rod, has joined the Petersen Automotive Museum’s permanent collection.





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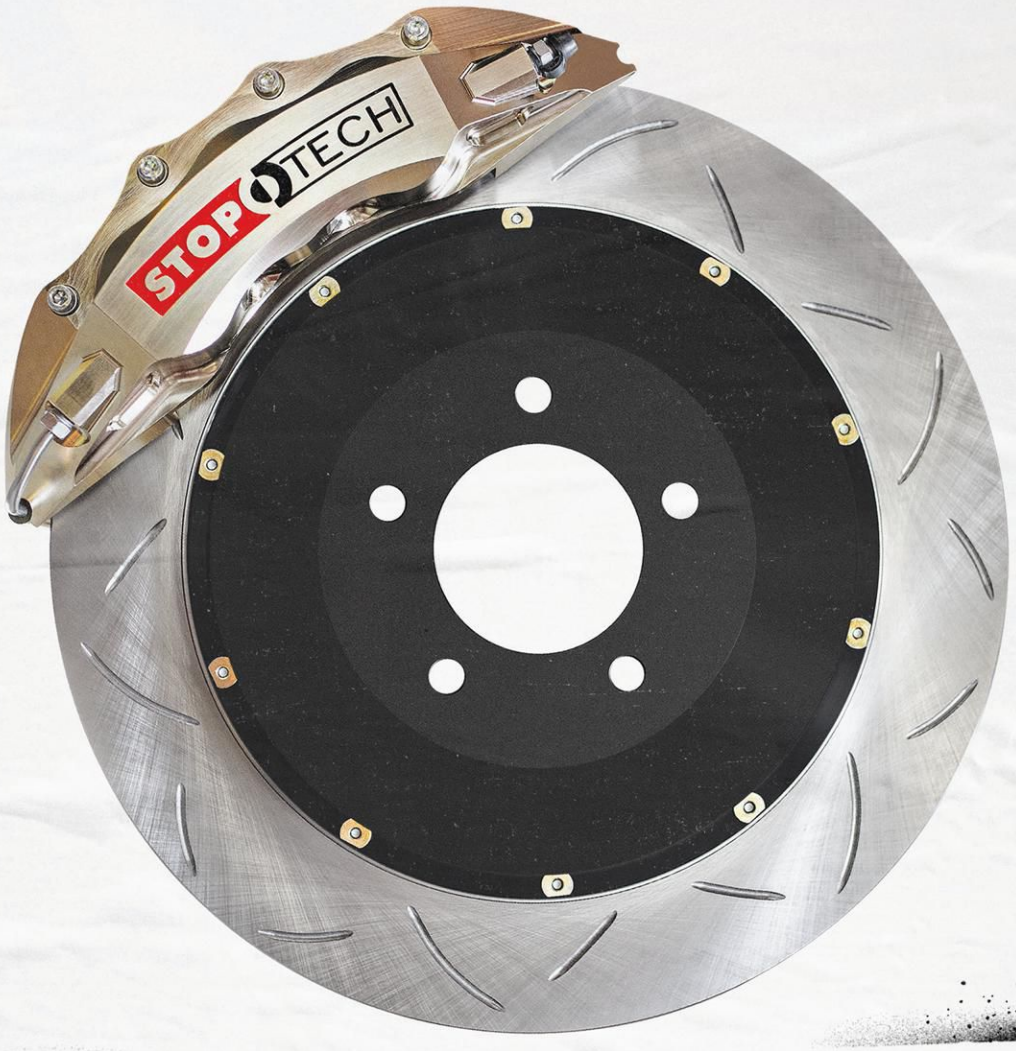
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