

TIME

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TIME MAGAZINE AND GOODYEAR HONOR NEW ULM DEALER

Rick Jensen Wins National Recognition for Community Service and Industry Accomplishments at NADA Convention

(San Francisco, CA, February 5, 2011) – Rick Jensen, President of Jensen Motors, Inc., a Buick, Cadillac and GMC dealership in New Ulm, Minnesota, was named one of four regional finalists for the 2011 TIME Dealer of the Year award today.

Jensen was one of a select group of dealers from across the country honored at the 94th annual National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Convention & Exposition in San Francisco on Saturday. The announcement of this year's national Dealer of the Year and finalists was made by Kim Kelleher, Publisher of TIME, and Johann Finkelmeier, Vice President and General Manager – Original Equipment N.A. Consumer Tire, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, at the formal opening of the convention, which is expected to draw more than 15,000 individuals involved in the automobile industry.

The TIME Dealer of the Year award is one of the automobile industry's most prestigious and highly coveted awards for new-car dealers. Recipients are among the nation's most successful auto dealers, but they must also demonstrate a long-standing commitment to effective community service.

Jensen, 51, was chosen to represent the Minnesota Automobile Dealers Association in the national competition--one of only 52 automobile dealers, from 17,000 nationwide, nominated for the 42nd annual award. The award is sponsored by TIME in association with Goodyear, and in cooperation with NADA. A panel of faculty members from the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan selects one finalist from each of the four NADA regions and one national Dealer of the Year.

“To this day when I look at my brand sign,” says Jensen, “I still pinch myself making sure it's real. My career has been an American Dream.”

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Jensen graduated from Tyler (MN) High, in 1977, and from Willmar (MN) Area Vocational Institute, where he majored in sales and marketing, a year later. “After graduating in May 1978,” says Jensen, “on job search day, I stopped at several dealerships until someone gave me the opportunity to sell cars.” Jensen’s father had worked in an auto body shop that an uncle owned and another uncle was a mechanic along with Jensen’s grandfather, but Jensen set his sights on a career in sales, not repairs. And that opportunity came at Southwest Ford in Marshall, MN, where Jensen would rise to sales manager by the time he moved on in October 1982.

He spent the next six years as sales manager for Lockwood Motors, also in Marshall. “After working for Bob Lockwood for six years,” explains Jensen, “he agreed to be my investing partner in Jensen Motors,” which opened in December 1988 in New Ulm, MN, in a dealership then known as Heritage Autostrasse. “When in high school, my future wife and I drove a new car in a local parade, and I recall telling her that I thought it would be fun to sell new cars for a living,” recalls Jensen. With the opening of Jensen Motors that dream came true.

In the area of community service, Jensen has a long and distinguished record, particularly in civic affairs. He’s been a member of Rotary International since 1986, and on the board of directors in 2002. Jensen has been a member of the New Ulm Chamber of Commerce since 1988, serving on the board of directors since 2007, and as chairman in 2009. Jensen served 10 years on the Public Utilities Commission, from October 1991 to December 2001, serving both as vice president (1993) and president (1995-2001). He’s also been on the Airport Commission since January 2008, serving as chair since 2009. For 12 years, he was part of the New Ulm Economic Development Corporation, serving as chair in 2000. For his dealership’s role in rejuvenating the business location and a full stretch of six city blocks, Jensen and Jensen Motors were honored as the New Ulm Industry of the Year in 1999, becoming one of the first retail businesses to receive an “industry” honor.

Jensen, a member of Christ the King Church since 1988, has taught confirmation, mentored young men and also served as a youth coach for Pop Warner football, grade school basketball, U12-U16 soccer and Little League baseball. He also supports area high school athletics through the New Ulm Club. But Jensen’s reach and influence goes even further: “We have sponsored and continue to sponsor the Athena award, since 1989,” says Jensen, “which honors an outstanding professional woman each year.”

Nominated for the TIME Dealer of the Year award by Scott Lambert, Executive Vice President of the Minnesota Automobile Dealers Association, Rick Jensen and his wife, Joan, have three children, Nicole Briggs, Benjamin and Zachary, and three grandchildren.

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