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TIME AND ALLY FINANCIAL HONOR MINNETONKA DEALER

Morrie Wagener Wins National Recognition for Community Service and Industry Accomplishments at NADA Convention

(Las Vegas, NV, February 4, 2012) – Morrie Wagener, president and founder of Morrie’s Automotive Group, a Mazda, Subaru, Kia, Hyundai, Ford, Lincoln, Nissan, Cadillac, Saab, Maserati and Bentley dealership in Minnetonka, Minnesota, was named one of four regional finalists for the 2012 TIME Dealer of the Year award today.

Wagener is one of a select group of dealers from across the country honored at the 95th annual National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Convention & Exposition in Las Vegas on Saturday. The announcement of this year’s national Dealer of the Year and finalists was made by Kim Kelleher, worldwide publisher of TIME, and Tim Russi, executive vice president of North American Operations – Auto at Ally Financial, at the formal opening of the convention which was expected to draw more than 20,000 individuals involved in the automobile industry.

“Auto dealers have a tremendous impact on the vitality and strength of communities across the U.S.,” said Russi. “Ally is proud to support these extraordinary dealers who are truly making their communities better places to live and work.” As part of its support for the program, Ally will make charitable contributions to local community causes on behalf of all 50 nominated dealers across the United States. In addition, the 2012 national TIME Dealer of the Year winner will receive a \$10,000 contribution for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of his or her choice. To celebrate the valuable contributions of dealers across the U.S., Ally has also launched a digital hub (allybizhero.com) featuring engaging content celebrating auto dealers and their philanthropic achievements.

The TIME Dealer of the Year award is one of the automobile industry’s most prestigious and highly coveted honors. Recipients are among the nation’s most successful auto dealers who must also demonstrate a long-standing commitment to community service. Wagener, 74, was chosen to represent the Minnesota Automobile Dealers Association in the national competition – one of only 50 auto dealers, from 17,000 nationwide, nominated for the 43rd annual award. The award is sponsored by TIME Magazine in association with Ally, 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.

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“The one thing I find most rewarding is my customers’ loyalty,” says nominee Wagener. “Forty plus years after opening the doors, I still serve the automotive needs of some of my very first customers. Nothing could ever be a greater testament to doing things right.”

Wagener is a 1955 graduate of Guardian Angels high school in Chaska, Minnesota, and he received a B.S. in automotive technology from Dunwoody College of Technology in Minneapolis. “I’m a car guy,” he says. “And I wanted to pursue what I loved. So at a young age, I chose to turn my passion into a lifelong career.” Throughout high school, he worked at various garages and after college, started at Tom Roddy Imports, where he was the only service technician. He soon created an entire service department for Roddy, who later sold the service and parts department to Wagener, the first step to building Morrie’s Automotive Group.

In the sixties, he became a franchise dealer of novelty import brands like Citroen, Saab and Alfa Romeo. Along with this niche of imports came a growing used-car business sporting then unfamiliar names such as Jaguar, Volkswagen and Aston Martin. Today, he sells an equally diverse group of vehicles from his dealership showrooms. And his daughter, three sons, and son-in-law all work in his successful dealerships.

“I believe that one should always do what is right because it is the right thing to do,” says Wagener. To that end, Morrie’s Automotive Group has created “Morrie’s Gives Back,” an internal initiative that promotes and organizes civic, community and charitable acts. Recipients include Dunwoody Institute (vocational school and Wagener’s alma mater), Courage Center (rehabilitation center for children and adults with disabilities), Perspectives Family Center (transitional housing and support services for homeless and at-risk families), Sharing and Caring Hands (providing shelter and food to the homeless) and Toys for Tots, to name a few.

Wagener credits Dunwoody College of Technology with allowing him to turn a B.S. in automotive technology into one of the premier automotive dealership groups in the nation. And in return, he has served on its board of directors for the last 35 years and spearheaded major fundraising and expansion efforts.

“The Twin Cities have always supported Morrie’s Automotive Group. In return, we’ve always done our best to make the Twin Cities area one of the most special places to live in the country,” Wagener says. “Helping your neighbor is the Minnesota way, and Morrie’s is always proud to do our part. We live by the credo that anyone can ask to help, but the best kind of people jump in and lend a hand with no questions needed.”

Nominated for the TIME Dealer of the Year Award by Scott Lambert, executive vice-president of the Minnesota Automobile Dealers Association, Wagener and his wife, Virginia, have four children and 10 grandchildren.

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