

TIME

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TIME MAGAZINE AND GOODYEAR HONOR MINDEN DEALER

Mike Harper Wins National Recognition for Community Service and Industry Accomplishments at NADA Convention

(Orlando, FL, February 13, 2010) – Mike Harper, Dealer/President of Harper Motors, Inc., a Buick, GMC and Pontiac dealership in Minden, Louisiana, was honored today for his nomination for the 2010 TIME Magazine Dealer of the Year award.

Harper was one of a select group of dealers from across the country honored at the 93rd annual National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Convention & Exposition in Orlando today. The announcement of this year's Dealer of the Year and finalists was made by Mark Ford, President and Group Publisher of TIME Magazine, and Johann Finkelmeier, Vice President & General Manager - Original Equipment N.A. Consumer Tire, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, at the formal opening of the convention, which is attended by more than 25,000 individuals involved in the automobile industry.

The TIME Magazine 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.

Harper, 59, was chosen to represent the Louisiana Automobile Dealers Association in the national competition--one of only 45 automobile dealers, from 17,000 nationwide, nominated for the 41st annual award. The award is sponsored by TIME Magazine 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.

“My father was in the business all of his adult life as both a new and used dealer. I started at 12 working at his used car lot in Shreveport, LA, in 1963,” says Harper, a Vietnam War vet who carried an M-60 machine gun and also served as a “point-man” for his platoon.

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After his stint in the U.S. Army (1971-'72), Harper attended the University of Louisiana at Monroe and at Lafayette before earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Management at Louisiana State University in Shreveport in 1976. He also graduated from the Dealership Management Development School at GMI in Flint, MI, in 1979. "Over the years," Harper explains, "I worked part-time during the school year and full-time during summers doing everything there is to be done on a used lot."

When his father re-entered the new business in 1969, Harper says, "I basically repeated the same activities I had done in the used only business, working in all areas of the dealership. After finishing school in 1976, I became full-time and was the Service Manager until leaving in 1983 to pursue my own store."

"My father and I purchased the store in 1983. He was first the dealer and I was VP-GM until 1989, when I was named Dealer and President," says Harper. Today, his wife and son work at the dealership in Minden with him, making it a fourth-generation family business. "Our local newspaper publishes a list of community 'favorites' annually," Harper says with pride, "and we usually win the category of favorite new car dealer, and also favorite used car dealer."

In the area of community service, Harper has a long and distinguished track record: "I was named Minden's 'Man of the Year' in 2000, the only automobile dealer in our community to have received this honor, and the award has been given for over 40 years," says Harper. Through the decades, he has served on numerous boards and committees covering all facets of the community—from the Minden Medical Center to the Boy Scouts Of America, from the MBL Bank in Minden to the Minden-South Webster Chamber of Commerce to the Louisiana State Fair and the J.E. Harper Elementary School PTO. "I have occasionally tutored fourth and fifth grade students in various subjects on a volunteer basis," he says. He's also been an active supporter of Northwest Louisiana Technical College in Minden, Barksdale Air Force Base in Bossier City and Minden's American Legion Wiley-Pevy Post. Harper is also co-founder of the Minden Charity Foundation. "We raise money with an annual golf tournament and distribute it to those in our community suffering from catastrophic loss, such as a house fire," explains Harper. "Since 2004, we have distributed over \$160,000 to over 100 families. We are totally volunteer-operated, and often fill the void other organizations fail to address."

Nominated for the TIME Magazine Dealer of the Year award by Robert (Bob) C. Israel, President of the Louisiana Automobile Dealers Association, Mike Harper also represents Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Pontiac at his other dealership in Many, LA.

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