

THE WANADA BULLETIN

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR AND ABOUT FRANCHISED NEW CAR DEALERS IN THE WASHINGTON AREA

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Fitzgerald Auto Malls Celebrates 50,000 Free Car Seat Inspections



Officials from Montgomery County, the Maryland General Assembly, and the NTSB, along with traffic safety advocacy leaders, joined Jack Fitzgerald (far right) to celebrate Fitzgerald Auto Malls' 50,000th car seat inspection. The 20-year program, one of the largest of its kind in the country, offers free car-seat safety inspections to anyone who visits a Fitzgerald dealership.

For the last 20 years, Fitzgerald Auto Malls has been providing Maryland drivers with complimentary car-seat inspections. Last week, federal, state, and local government officials came together in Rockville to celebrate the dealership's 50,000th inspection.

Jack Fitzgerald, the dealership chain's founder and namesake, said the complimentary car inspections – which are offered once per month at various locations in the region – have been an important part of his company's commitment to community service. He thanked Montgomery County Fire and Rescue and the County Police Department for their support in

training dealership employees to provide this service to drivers with small children.

“Our government does a lot of good for us, and this is an example of that,” Fitzgerald said. “We couldn't do this alone and we are grateful to have the support of the local government and state organizations to promote public safety. For 20 years now, Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Services and Police have been actively involved at our child safety seat events and I thank them for their support.”

According to National Transportation Safety Board member Jennifer Homendy, nearly 75 percent of all car seats on the road are not properly installed, creating a need for private businesses like Fitzgerald to help keep drivers and their children safe on the road.

“More than 1,200 kids die on our roads annually in this country,” Homendy said. “Our goal is to bring that number to zero...we need trained and certified experts like this team to make sure children are secured in their cars.”

Monty Crown of Montgomery Fire and Rescue, who was on hand at the event, said that Fire and Rescue personnel put all Fitzgerald employees through a three-day training program when they begin working at one of the chain’s dealerships. All Fitzgerald inspections are conducted by two people, who work in tandem to make sure the seats are properly installed according to a [33-point checklist](#) created by SafeKids Worldwide, a child-safety advocacy group.

Fitzgerald vice president Rob Smith said his dealership once inspected 777 car seats in one day at their Gaithersburg location, and he told Bethesda Magazine that the program costs the chain more than \$30,000 annually. Torine Creppy, president of SafeKids Worldwide, said that investment has not only been critical for the drivers Fitzgerald serves directly, but as an example for other dealers on how to effectively and productively provide this vital service.

“We’ve used this dealership as a model for activating programs like this around the country,” Creppy said. “We’ve been in this fight with Fitzgerald for 20 years; [inspecting] 50,000 car seats is an amazing achievement.”

State Sen. Jeff Waldstreicher (D-Kensington), one of the lawmakers who spoke at the event, said the Fitzgerald car seat program was personally deeply important to him. He recounted a time he was driving through a parking lot with his two young children, when he was involved in a collision. His kids’ car seats, he said, had recently been inspected by Fitzgerald employees, and they protected his children in the accident.

“Those car seats saved their lives,” Waldstreicher said. “Jack Fitzgerald saved their lives, and I’ll always be grateful for that.”

Other elected officials on hand for the celebration included Del. Al Carr (D-Kensington) and Montgomery County Councilman Andrew Friedson (D-Bethesda).

New Maryland MVA Tag and Title Service Updates to Note

The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration has implemented some additional service hours for processing dealer tag and title requests, effective this week. As outlined [in this alert](#) published on June 17, all full-service MVA branch offices now feature a designated drop-off area for dealer employees to deliver tag and title processing requests that must be delivered in-person (some examples are provided in the MDOT Bulletin linked above).

Beginning this past Monday, tag and title agents will be able to process tag and title requests on the same day they are received, including on the first and last day of each month, provided that paperwork is delivered to the MVA by 10 a.m. that business day.

While all in-person title requests are processed on a first-come, first-served basis, the MVA’s Glen Burnie location will allow dealers to submit an unlimited number of title/registration and disabled permit applications at a time.

For more information, please consult the [MDOT Bulletin](#), or contact the MVA at 410-787-2950.

Dealer Protection Laws Take Effect in Virginia

As of Monday, manufacturers may no longer exercise a right of first refusal to block a sale of a multi-franchise dealership chain, provided that the prospective buyer is a licensed dealer anywhere in the United States, while adding provisions designed to promote increased ownership opportunities for minorities.

The amended version of [Senate Bill 1464](#), which was introduced by Sen. Jeremy McPike (D-Dale City) and sponsored by Sen. Lionell Spruill (D-Chesapeake), passed the Senate unanimously and passed the House by a vote of 96-2.

Virginia dealers are now more protected if their manufacturer elects to discontinue a line make. As was noted in the [WANADA Bulletin published May 7](#), if a dealership's manufacturer does not honor dealer agreements, dealers have the right to payment for franchise assets, franchise goodwill value, and real estate assistance. This legislation, [House Bill 2174](#), was introduced by Del. Jason Miyares (R-Virginia Beach), and passed both chambers of the General Assembly unanimously.

WANADA Supports Regional Sober-Ride Program for 4th of July

WANADA is proud to once again be a supporting sponsor of the [Washington Regional Alcohol](#) Program's (WRAP) SoberRide initiative for Independence Day. Anyone age 21 or older in the Washington region can visit [SoberRide.com](#) and get a promo code valid for \$15 off one Lyft ride between 7 p.m. Thursday, July 4 and 2 a.m. on Friday, July 5. This offer is available to both new and existing Lyft riders.

The promo code will be published on the [SoberRide.com](#) website at 6 p.m. on Thursday. Please [click here](#) to view the WRAP promotional flyers, which you may print and display at your business or on various social media channels.

Montgomery County Students Auto Trades Foundation Adds John Comunale to Board

The Montgomery County Students Automotive Trades Foundation (MCSATF), which has been a long-time supporter of WANADA's Automobile Dealer Education Institute, has added John Comunale to its board, effective this past Monday. Comunale, a Senior Vice President at the CPA/advisory firm (and WANADA Kindred-Line member) Councilor, Buchanan & Mitchell, P.C., chairs the firm's auto dealer division, and will be a valued addition to the board.



John Comunale, CPA

"I appreciate the chance to work with the Foundation to help the next generation of leaders enter the automotive industry and establish its successful future," Comunale said in a news alert published on CBM's website. "Montgomery County's economy relies on the people employed by thriving dealerships to serve the county's transportation needs, and I look forward to providing my expertise in a meaningful way."

WANADA congratulates Comunale on his selection, and thanks him for his years of supporting the organization's dealer members. The MCSATF is one of ADEI's most significant supporters, and a plurality of all ADEI participants are graduates of Montgomery County Public Schools.

WANADA Board Members Attend Fundraiser for Sen. Van Hollen



L to R: WANADA President and CEO John O'Donnell; U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.); WANADA Board of Directors Chairman John Bowis; WANADA Board Member Tom Parsons; DARCARS CFO Jennifer Parsons; Sport Automotive President Robert H. Fogarty, Sr.

WANADA Board Members John Bowis and Tom Parsons, along with Jennifer Parsons of DARCARS and Sport Automotive's Robert H. Fogarty, Sr., recently attended a fundraiser for U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen of Maryland. WANADA President and CEO John O'Donnell was also in attendance, as the group thanked Sen. Van Hollen for his continued support of the organization and issues of importance to auto dealers.

The organization is happy to support officials on both sides of the aisle who have been favorable to the franchise dealer system, and thanks member dealers who do the same.

WANADA Wishes Everyone a Happy and Safe 4th of July

WANADA wishes our member dealers, Kindred-Line members, Bulletin readers, supporters, and friends a happy and safe Independence Day weekend.

Staying Ahead...

"I think that if you live long enough, you realize that so much of what happens in life is out of your control, but how you respond to it is in your control. That's what I try to remember." – Hillary Clinton