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Melanie Funkhouser Awarded WANADA's TIME Dealer of Year

WANADA congratulates Melanie Funkhouser, President and CEO of Fair Oaks Motors, Inc., on her nomination for the 2026 TIME Dealer of the Year Award—one of the most prestigious honors in the retail automotive industry.

Funkhouser is among just 47 dealers nationwide selected for this year's recognition, which celebrates excellence in business performance and deep-rooted commitment to community service. She will represent the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region at the 109th annual NADA Show in Las Vegas on February 5, 2026.

A second-generation dealer, Funkhouser began her career outside the family business as a cashier and service advisor before joining Fair Oaks Motors in 1999. Over the next two decades, she held nearly every leadership role in the store—helping implement its first website, CRM, and internet sales operation—before becoming President & CEO. She is a graduate of the University of Vermont and a two-time NADA Academy graduate (2001, 2021).



“I didn’t grow up assuming I’d work in the car business,” Funkhouser said. “But my father’s example taught me that our business is about people first, processes second, and profits will follow.”

Under Funkhouser’s leadership, Fair Oaks Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram has continually reinvested in its people, facilities, and customer experience. The dealership recently completed a full renovation featuring expanded service capacity, upgraded customer areas, and EV-ready infrastructure with eight charging stations.

Her team’s commitment to excellence has earned numerous distinctions, including the Stellantis Customer First Award for Excellence (2022–2025), Carfax Top Dealer (2020–2024), and DealerRater’s Virginia Dealer of the Year (2022).

Funkhouser’s leadership extends well beyond the showroom. She served on the WANADA Board of Directors (2013–2021) and the NADA Dealer Operations Committee (2022–2023), and continues to champion dealer education and workforce development. She is an active supporter of The Washington, D.C. Auto Show and a vocal advocate for the franchise system and for practical, compliance-focused training across dealership operations.

Her people-first philosophy was especially evident during the pandemic. Rather than furlough staff, she kept her entire team employed—splitting them into two alternating teams to ensure safety and business continuity. “That choice built lasting trust and allowed us to rebound quickly with a full, motivated team,” Funkhouser said.

Fair Oaks Motors’ culture is guided by a written Vision Document and core values—Integrity, Respect, Care, Initiative, and Work Ethic—reinforced through regular coaching and financial wellness programs for all employees. This approach has contributed to record operational results and high retention.

“Our most important change has been building a stronger culture rooted in clear values,” Funkhouser said. “When people are supported and trained, performance follows.”

Funkhouser’s nomination carries special meaning this year, following the recent passing of her father, who founded the dealership. “I accepted the nomination for him,” she said. “This honor underscores the shared responsibility we have to one another and the values he instilled in me.”

The TIME Dealer of the Year Award, sponsored by Ally in partnership with TIME, recognizes dealers who demonstrate exceptional performance in both business and community engagement. Each nominee will receive a \$1,000 donation from Ally to the charity of their choice, and finalists will receive additional contributions to local causes.

Melanie and her husband, Cory, have two children, Roman and Quentin. WANADA congratulates Melanie on this well-deserved honor and thanks her for her continued leadership and service to the dealer community.

MoCo Business Hall of Fame Honors Jack Fitzgerald

The late Jack Fitzgerald, founder of Fitzgerald Auto Malls, was posthumously honored this week at the 13th Annual Montgomery County Business Hall of Fame (MCBHOF) induction ceremony, held at The Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center.

The event, presented by EagleBank and Grossberg Company LLP CPAs, celebrates business leaders who have made significant contributions to the economic and civic vitality of Montgomery County. This year's honorees included Marguerite Chinn (Negril Restaurants), Seth Goldman (Just Ice Tea), Craig A. Ruppert (Ruppert Landscape), George R. Snowden, Jr. (Snowden Funeral Home), and the co-founders of CAVA—Brett Schulman, Ted Xenohristos, Ike Grigoropoulos, and Dimitri Moshovitis.

Fitzgerald, who passed in April of this year, was recognized for his decades-long legacy of innovation, integrity, and advocacy within both the retail automotive industry and the broader Montgomery County business community. Dottie Fitzgerald, accepting the award on behalf of her late brother, warmed the packed audience with her witticisms and reflections.



As one of the county's most respected business figures, Fitzgerald built a regional automotive group known for customer service excellence, employee development, and strong community engagement. He also played a pivotal role in founding and strengthening the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association (WANADA) and served as a mentor and leader to countless industry professionals.

Proceeds from the Montgomery County Business Hall of Fame support student scholarships at The Universities at Shady Grove, helping to fund educational opportunities for the next generation of Montgomery County leaders.

Breakfast with Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman

WANADA members are invited to join us for a special breakfast with Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman on **Wednesday, October 29, 2025, from 8:30–10:00 AM** at **DARCARS 355 Toyota of Rockville** (15625 Frederick Road, Rockville, MD).

Comptroller Lierman, the 34th State Comptroller of Maryland, will share her priorities and recent successes on behalf of families, communities, and businesses across the state. This event offers a valuable opportunity for members to connect directly with one of Maryland's key elected leaders.

Sponsorship opportunities are available at the following levels: **Co-Host – \$6,000 (includes 4 tickets + recognition), Sponsor – \$2,500 (includes 1 ticket + recognition), and Guest – \$1,000.**

Checks may be made payable to “*Brooke Lierman for Maryland*” and mailed to P.O. Box 891, Baltimore, MD 21203, or brought to the event.

To RSVP, visit brookelierman.com/rsvpwanada or email sophia@brookelierman.com.



Joe Koch Elected to WRAP Board of Directors

WANADA is proud to announce that Joe Koch, WANADA's Vice President of Operations, has been elected to the Board of Directors of the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP).

Koch succeeds former WRAP Chairman John O'Donnell, representing WANADA, a co-founding organization of the regional nonprofit dedicated to traffic safety and the prevention of drunk and drugged driving. He was elected as a WRAP Member and subsequently to the Board of Directors as part of the organization's newly approved FY2026 slate.

At the same meeting—WRAP's Annual Meeting and WRAPPY Awards—WANADA was honored with the 2025 Corporate Sponsorship Award, recognizing the association's long-standing partnership and support for WRAP's lifesaving programs.



Joe Koch accepts WANADA's Corporate Sponsorship Award from WRAP Chairman, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Police Chief David Huchler.

WRAP's flagship initiative, SoberRide®, provides free, safe transportation to would-be impaired drivers during high-risk holidays. As Halloween approaches, WRAP has made SoberRide promotional materials available for download to help community partners and businesses spread

awareness of this important public safety program. Materials can be accessed at www.wrap.org/soberride

Prepare Your Technicians for Success with WANADA's ASE Prep Classes!

If ASE certifications can help you strengthen relationships with your factory (OEM) and demonstrate your commitment to employee development, ADEI is offering its final Prep Classes for 2025. We're also holding the Q4 Service Advisor class for 2025. If you'd like to increase hours per RO, enhance communication with your clients, and improve CSI, this is your opportunity!

The ASE test prep course includes the following:

- **In-depth Review of Test Content:** Our expert instructors will guide your team through the key concepts and topics covered on the ASE exams.
- **Test-Taking Strategies:** We'll equip your technicians with the strategies needed to excel on exam day, ensuring they are confident and prepared.
- **Professional Development:** This program shows your staff that they are a valued member of your service department and a key part of your operations.
- **Enhanced Quality Assurance:** Demonstrating your team's expertise through ASE certification showcases the high standard of service you provide to vehicle manufacturers and your customers.

Spaces Are Filling Fast — Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to invest in your team's future! Classes will be held at Montgomery College Rockville Campus on Thursdays starting at 4:30 PM. Dinner will be served. The class begins at 5:00 PM sharp and finishes at 9:00 PM. The fee is only \$100.00 per student. For more information or to register, contact Joe Hemberger at JH@wanada.org or 267-346-1700.

ComplyAuto: Maryland Data Privacy Law in Effect

The Maryland Online Data Privacy Act (MODPA) was signed into law in May 2024 and went into effect on October 1, 2025. The MODPA grants Maryland residents broad rights over their personal data and imposes strict requirements on covered businesses, including data minimization and processing limits.

MODPA applies to entities doing business in Maryland or offering products/services to Maryland residents that process the personal data of at least 35,000 Maryland consumers annually, or process data of at least 10,000 Maryland consumers and earn over 20% of gross revenue from selling personal data. Most dealers do not earn revenue from selling consumer data, but most Maryland dealers are likely to meet the 35,000 consumer threshold.

MODPA does not apply to business data or employee data. It does contain an exemption for entities and data that are subject to the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA). While this exemption should provide an argument for many Maryland dealers that some of their activities are outside

the scope of the new law, the exact contours of this exemption are untested and unclear. In fact, many other states with similar exemptions routinely apply their state privacy laws against dealers.

Many dealers choose to comply with state privacy laws, regardless of the possible exemption, because these laws are becoming the de facto consumer protection standard in their state, in addition to customer expectations regarding privacy rights. In addition, OEM or lender contracts may require dealers to comply. It is also particularly complicated for multi-state dealer groups who must comply with a patchwork of state laws, and therefore often prefer a uniform approach to compliance with MODPA and other state privacy laws. For all these reasons and more, it is prudent for all Maryland dealers to take steps to comply with MODPA.

Continue reading [here](#).

Save the Date: 2025 WANADA Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars now! The 2025 WANADA Annual Meeting will take place on the evening of **Thursday, November 13**, at the **Smithsonian Museum of American History** in Washington, DC.

This year's event promises an inspiring program and an elegant setting in one of the nation's most iconic museums. More details, including keynote speakers and registration information, will be shared in the coming weeks. The 2025 WANADA Annual Meeting is generously sponsored by BG Crovato Products & Services, B&R Associates, CBM, Chesapeake Contracting Group, RBC Wealth Management, and Truist.



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