

GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Auto Shows Go Far To Welcome Deaf And Hard-Of-Hearing

(NAPSA)—Good news for the car enthusiasts among the more than 28 million deaf and hard-of-hearing in the United States is a community outreach program that has been extended to auto shows.

When auto shows roll into 39 cities in 25 states nationwide, thousands of deaf and hard-of-hearing will be treated to a unique experience. Pontiac-GMC is providing opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students of all ages, senior citizens and community members to experience an auto show and its wealth of innovative products with the assistance of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters who are also trained product specialists. Recognizing that not everyone in the deaf and hard-of-hearing community uses sign language as their form of communication, in select cities Pontiac-GMC is looking at providing monitors and kiosks for closed-captioning during the tour.

Ron Swartz, president of the Deaf Community Advocacy Network (D.CAN!), likened the car-buying experience for the deaf and hard-of-hearing to that of a person who speaks only Spanish attempting to learn about and purchase a vehicle from a salesperson who only speaks English.

"The program created by Pontiac-GMC is currently the most extensive program of its kind that is 100 percent accessible for the deaf community," says Swartz.

The program is in its fourth year, having provided more than



In a one-of-a-kind program, auto shows are rolling out the red carpet for the deaf and hard-of-hearing.

3,000 deaf and hard-of-hearing with personalized auto show experiences. The program is also the only of its kind provided by a major automotive manufacturer.

ASL interpreters/product specialists will conduct tours of auto shows for deaf and hard-of-hearing groups ranging in size from five to 100. Each group member is given a complimentary ticket to an auto show and a souvenir as a memento of their experience.

"More than 1,500 deaf and hard-of-hearing school children, senior citizens and community members experienced auto shows through the Pontiac-GMC program last auto show season, and we are proud to extend it once again," said Lynn Myers, general manager for Pontiac-GMC.

The auto show tour, which began in Miami, winds up in Atlanta on April 28. Deaf and hard-of-hearing groups interested in participating in the program can e-mail CarShowsforDeaf@aol.com for more information.