



# Two area auto dealers partner up while maintaining separate identities

Two of the area's oldest regional car dealerships have formed a partnership: the **Lally Auto Group**, with dealerships throughout Essex and Kent counties, and **Reaume Chevrolet Buick GMC** in LaSalle. They are sharing resources the dealership principals expect will strengthen each other, while keeping separate identities.

President of the Lally Group, Vince Lally, said he saw an opportunity to invest in Reaume as a result of a change in family generations running the dealership, which dates back to 1931. So, he purchased shares in the business.

"It was a dealership I always admired," Lally said. "It's a long-standing family business, and they look after their customers well. That was really attractive to us."

Lally said he "reached out" to former owner Steve Reaume who, with his brother Richard, were retiring. The succession plan put the dealership into the hands of Steve's son Craig and daughter Jennifer Reaume, dealer principal and general manager respectively.

"Steve Reaume and myself had several meetings – it was amazing

how our business philosophies were the same," he said.

Lally traces his dealership to 1946 as a gas station in Comber. "I'm a licensed mechanic and out of high school I went to work for my dad," he said. In early 1980s the family acquired the Ford brand and, in the 1990s, Vince moved it into the Tilbury Auto Mall.

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Before the Reaume link up, Lally had nine dealerships across several auto brands including Chevrolet, Chrysler and Mazda. Reaume has now been added to the Lally Auto Group.

Lally is also one of the largest dealership groups in southwestern Ontario, with stores extending as far as Chatham. It has some 300 staff and sells 6,000 vehicles

annually. Points of pride include awards such as Lally Ford's winning the prestigious Diamond Club Service Award and the President's Award more than 25 times.

Reaume has also stood out for customer satisfaction awards, said Lally. "Where they rank in customer satisfaction, they're right up there."

For their part, Craig and Jennifer Reaume are more than excited about the new partnership.

"We thought it would be a good fit for our family – same core values, same family values," Craig said. "The history was almost identical with the family history tree. Everything's staying the same. It just felt right."

Jennifer called the Reaume dealership a "well-oiled machine" and, while dealing with the hiccup caused by Covid-19, sales have bounced back and she looks forward to continued growth. Continuing trends include the big move by consumers away from cars to SUVs and pickups. "I can't believe the amount of women buying pickup trucks to use as their family vehicle," Jennifer said. **WB**



# Industrial leaser one of few women in industry

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She launched **Eco WorkSpace Inc.**, a company that started off selling used office furniture, but recently she entered the leasing business itself. She bought her first property, the 7,600-square-foot former **Fastenal** building on North Talbot Road, for \$725,000, and is currently negotiating a potential lease agreement with a national machinery equipment dealer.

She plans to spend up to \$50,000 on interior and exterior renovations, adding the location offers great access to Highway 401 and the U.S. border.

Stephanie is one of few women in the industry. "I'm a 30-year-old female in this industry. I haven't met a lot of young women doing this," she said. "That also poses challenges, but I enjoy them."

Stephanie said she also wants to lease buildings or commercial plazas that have a positive environmental impact, another aspect of the development market she believes is underemphasized.

Her buildings will have details such as ultra-efficient LED light fixtures – saving as much as 90 percent in usage costs over traditional bulbs – high efficiency

HVAC, and double insulated ceilings. "It helps my tenants save on energy costs," she said.

After this, Stephanie would ideally like to build from scratch: "My dream is to build eco-friendly warehouses."

Her father Terry said he "couldn't be more proud" of his daughter entering the traditionally male property business.

"What she needed to learn was the leasing operations, being a landlord, and also the engineering part of it," he told *Windsor Business*. "That's the mentoring that was required. Together with her education, she had the ideal skill set to move forward."

Terry added there's a shortage of high-end lease space locally, for which there is "quite a bit of demand," and "that's where Stephanie wants to be."

Meanwhile, Fastenal, the former building owner, is moving up the road to a 10,000-square-foot site in a newly constructed 70,000-square-foot building owned by Terry's Eco Developments.

Fastenal district manager, Dan Rider, said Windsor is "definitely a great market for our company," particularly since it has a robust construction sector. **WB**

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