

WEEKEND WAVE

08-12-16



Friday Economic Roundup

New Fuccillo Kia of Port Charlotte taps growing market

By GARY ROBERTS STAFF WRITER CHARLOTTE SUN

PORT CHARLOTTE - Within the first hour of Saturday's opening-day festivities for Fuccillo Kia of Port Charlotte, J.D. Horvath was sitting with a salesman talking turkey. Although just 21, the North Port resident is an experienced car owner and knew what questions to ask.

But most of his reservations had already been satisfied.

"My parents and friends all have Kias," he said. "They're comfortable to drive, good safety features and great gas mileage, of course."

Indeed, the reputation of Kias, like that of Billy Fuccillo of TV commercial fame, is already well-known. In J.D. Power and Associates' latest survey of new-vehicle quality, Kia was ranked first in the U.S., becoming the first nonluxury automaker since 1989 to top that list.

Fuccillo also has made a HUGE impact.

Fuccillo Automotive Group, which comprises 27 dealerships and 33 franchises in New York and Florida, now has its newest outlet on U.S. 41, just south of the Sarasota County line. For Fuccillo, the Port Charlotte-North Port market is a great fit.

"It's a good feel for us," he said. "It's a middle-income area and that's where we like to be."

Fuccillo Kia of Port Charlotte, which includes a two-story, 50,000-squarefoot sales and service center, offers a selection of 1,200 vehicles on its lot, but can hold up to 6,000, allowing it to become a distribution point for Fuccillo's other Florida dealerships.

With 150 employees, Fuccillo eventually expects to create up to 250 jobs at the new location.

Like his customers, Fuccillo does his homework before committing to a new product. His market research told him 30,000 new people arrive in the Sunshine State every month, and many of them are locating in Southwest Florida.

"North Port in a couple years is really going to explode. All the growth is coming this way," he said.

Fuccillo also wanted to offer more convenient service to customers who have already purchased a vehicle at his Cape Coral store, many of whom live in this area.

Lucian Cook of North Port is one such consumer, sitting comfortably Saturday morning, waiting for the oil to be changed on his 2013 Kia.

"I've been going down to Cape Coral the whole time. This is a lot closer," Cook said.

Although the 35-acre Port Charlotte location surpasses Fuccillo Kia of Cape Coral as the world's largest Kia dealership, the new store will have a ways to go to exceed its sales.

Last year, the Cape Coral Kia sold almost 10,000 vehicles, including 7,300 new cars and trucks, earning Fuccillo the company's National Dealer of the Year for the fifth year in a row.

Fuccillo Kia of Port Charlotte is Fuccillo's fourth Kia dealership in Florida, with locations in Cape Coral (opened in 2010), Wesley Chapel (2015) and Merritt Island (2016).

Apparently, rowdy, rapid-fire advertising works.

"Most people like it," Fuccillo said, "but it's not for everyone."

22nd Annual Blue Chip Community Business Award

The 22nd annual Southwest Florida Blue Chip Community Business Award, coordinated and sponsored by BB&T-Oswald Trippe and Company and BB&T Bank will take place Thursday, Nov. 3 at Harborside Event Center, located at 1375 Monroe Street in Fort Myers. The annual Blue Chip Award program recognizes successful, small business owners who have overcome adversity to achieve success.

Larry Brudnicki, legendary U.S. Coast Guard Captain, has been selected as the keynote speaker for the 22nd Annual Southwest Florida Blue Chip Community Award luncheon.

Captain Brudnicki was the Commanding Officer of the USCGC TAMAROA in New Castle, NH where he performed two dramatic rescues during the worst weather in more than 100 years. This event became known as "The Perfect Storm" and inspired The New York Times best-selling book and the blockbuster movie starring George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg.

Captain Brudnicki retired from the Coast Guard in March 2002 after 30 years of active duty. During his career he supervised more than 15,000 search and rescue cases, which saved property valued at \$135 million and more than 1,600 lives. He also supervised the search for survivors of the Alaska Air Flight #261 tragedy.

Brudnicki holds a Merchant Marine Master's license and has won numerous awards for his accomplishments including, the Legion of Merit, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (two time winner), the Coast Guard Commendation Medal (four time winner), the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Coast Guard Achievement Medal and the Humanitarian Service Medal (two time winner).

Now that he has retired, Brudnicki uses the experience he gained from leading successful high-risk missions with international visibility to deliver his message of leadership, teamwork and risk management. Brudnicki speaks to corporations, associations and organizations so that they can implement the steps necessary for success while avoiding pitfalls.

Charlotte, Collier and Lee County for-profit businesses that have been in operation for at least three years under the same ownership and employ five to 400 people are eligible for the Blue Chip Award. Applications must be submitted no later than Sept. 6, 2016 and independent judges will select the winning entry.


For information on attending the Blue Chip Award program or for submitting an application, please contact Stacey Mercado at 239- 433-7189 or SMercado@BBandT.com.

FLORIDA ECONOMIC NEWS

- Pennsylvania firm plots jobs, growth in Tampa ([Business Observer](#))
- Asurion will hire 350 for new Orlando call center ([Orlando Sentinel](#))
- Florida's explosive population growth driving economy ([Cushman & Wakefield](#))
- Sprouts Farmers Market confirms Florida expansion ([Tampa Bay Business Journal](#))
- Florida trailed only California in adding private jobs last month ([South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#))
- Kissimmee advanced manufacturing site lands federal grant ([Orlando Sentinel](#))
- Cushman & Wakefield acquires Taylor & Mathis of Florida ([Florida Trend](#))
- More than 1,000 jobs coming to Titusville area ([Florida Today](#))



ENTREPRENEUR NEWS

- Before starting a business (and losing your shirt), do this homework ([Jerry Osteryoung](#))
 - Get organized ([Florida Small Business](#))
 - The hidden cost of helping your co-workers ([UF News](#))
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