

Automotive News NOTABLE MILITARY VETERANS

At TrueCar, vets help vets become vehicle owners

Auto-buying program, giveaways are poised to grow their outreach

Lindsay VanHulle
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David Green and Juan Barnett are colleagues with a shared mission: helping military veterans get into a vehicle.

Green and Barnett work for vehicle listings company TrueCar Inc. on an auto-buying program, TrueCar Military, geared specifically to service members, veterans and their families. Both are passionate about another TrueCar initiative, DrivenToDrive, which has donated a new — in some cases retrofitted — vehicle to a disabled or injured service member each year since 2016.

Their passion stems from the fact both are veterans themselves: Green, a Marine Corps corporal who served in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm in the Gulf War; Barnett, an Army specialist who worked on a small policy team in Washington, D.C. Both found their way into automotive retail after leaving the military, albeit through different paths.

"It's almost like you give someone a new lease on life when you give them something as simple as a vehicle that they can get into on their own and just go, even if it's for a morning drive," Barnett said. "A lot of us take that for granted."

Service start

Barnett, 40, joined the Army in February 2001 while he was a student at Ohio State University. He spent six years on active duty and in the National Guard. He never deployed overseas but worked on the policy team in the nation's capital while in uniform. He stayed in Washington after he left the Army in various policy roles, including with the Department of Defense and on Capitol Hill as a congressional staffer.

His policy work included health and safety issues, such as veterans' mental health and access to care. On the side, he became interested in automotive policy and safety and started an automotive blog, which he said led to a connection with former Hyundai Motor America CEO John Krafcik, who became TrueCar's president in 2014.

Barnett joined TrueCar's ALG subsidiary in 2015 as a junior analyst working on residual values before moving into other roles within



David Green, above, a former Marine, and Juan Barnett, right, who was in the Army, say they have big aspirations for TrueCar's initiatives.



Bank planned to end its 13-year partnership and exit the car-buying space.

TrueCar executives say the new program will allow it to reach a larger group of military service members and veterans than it could through the USAA partnership, which had comprised about 30 percent of vehicles sold to buyers who connected through TrueCar's network.

The company is "very, very positive and very bullish" on growing TrueCar Military, Green said.

"Whether you're a veteran, active duty, a reservist or immediate family, our goal is to be that name of choice," he said.

Building up

Green and Barnett say they have bigger aspirations for both the auto-buying program and DrivenToDrive. The company plans to increase marketing support of its military initiatives, including testimonials from veterans who have purchased vehicles through the program, Green said.

And Green said DrivenToDrive, which will give away its sixth vehicle Tuesday, Nov. 9, plans to expand to two vehicles in 2022 — to a veteran around Veterans Day and to a gold star family around Memorial Day — and has a goal of one per quarter by 2023.

Currently, the program is supported by TrueCar in partnership with the Disabled American Veterans and Team RWB organizations and AutoNation, the nation's largest new-vehicle dealership group.

"I hope, if anything, this program just becomes a catalyst for awareness," Barnett said. "And yeah, we'd like to serve a lot more people. And hopefully, at some point, someone's knocking on the door saying, 'Hey, we want to give. We've got 10 trucks here. What do we have to do? Where do we have to park these so you can give them away?'" **AN**

Automotive News' inaugural list of notable industry veterans features 15 people who served in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force or Marines who are making a difference in the auto industry. They were chosen by a panel of *Automotive News* editors and reporters from nominations submitted by our readers. The honorees work in all corners of the industry. Many of them help other veterans transition to civilian life. There's one common trait among them — they tap the wisdom and experience gained from their time in the military to help solve today's auto industry challenges.

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Abraham Razick

- **Age:** 45
- **Title:** President, Hyundai of Yuma, Kia of Yuma, Fullerton Ford Orange County
- **Military branch:** Marines
- **Rank:** Sergeant

Abraham Razick was so inspired by a speech given at his high school by talk show host Montel Williams, a former Navy officer, that he pushed himself to graduate on time and enlist in the Marines.

That decision would take Razick to Japan, Australia and Thailand, and it established the foundation for the core values he carries in his role now as owner of three dealerships, he said.

"I pretty much promote those three core

values on [my] radio and TV [ads], and that's the mantra of my store," he said. "That's honor, integrity and loyalty."

Following his four years with the Marines, Razick planned to join a police academy. But because he had some time before training began, he took a job at a dealership in Chicago, thinking it would be temporary.

It wasn't.

Razick, who had no prior experience, started off as a salesman and never looked back. He would receive several promotions over his career before becoming a dealer in 2015 when he and a partner bought a Hyundai dealership in Yuma, Ariz.

As a way to help fellow veterans, Razick implemented a policy of free oil changes at the Hyundai dealership and later his Kia store to active military personnel and veterans, no matter the type of vehicle or where it was

purchased. Razick plans to roll out the program soon at his newest store, Fullerton Ford Orange County in California.

Razick, an *Automotive News* 40 Under 40 honoree in 2016, estimates the two dealerships provide 40 to 60 free oil changes a month.

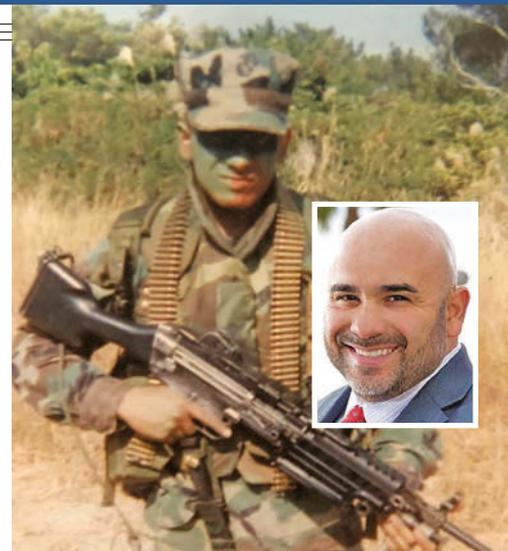
Razick is working with the veteran resource center at California State University, Fullerton to help veterans learn more about the benefits available to them.

"I always look for things that I can do directly," he said.

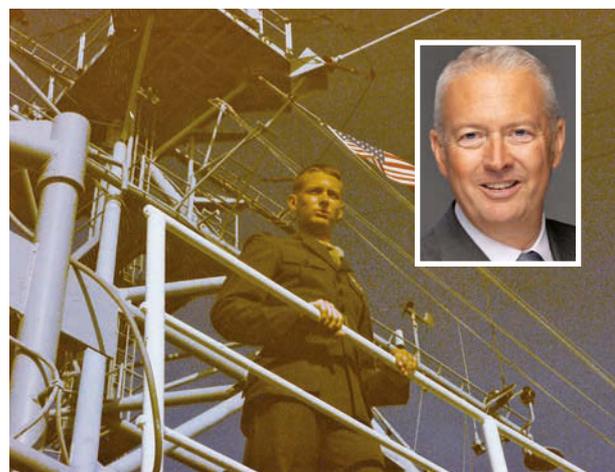
Nearly 30 years after hearing Williams' speech, Razick wants to use his own success story as inspiration to others.

"What I'm trying to do is pass it forward by doing what he did when he came to my school," he said.

— Jack Walsworth



Abraham Razick promotes three core values — honor, integrity and loyalty — at his dealerships.



Michael Colleran says he still relies on his military discipline. "Discipline is necessary right now, given where Nissan was."

Michael Colleran

- **Age:** 60
- **Title:** U.S. senior vice president of sales and marketing, Nissan Motor Co.
- **Military branch:** Marines
- **Rank:** Captain

Michael Colleran spent nearly a decade in the U.S. Marine Corps, during which he did tours of duty in northern Europe and the Mediterranean.

Three decades later, the retired captain is leading a different set of troops in a high-stakes battle.

Colleran has spent more than a year orchestrating a turnaround of Nissan Motor Co.'s U.S. business. Under his watch, Nissan has worked to mend frayed rela-

tions with dealers and transform its product portfolio from one of the industry's stales to one of its freshest.

As the brand's U.S. senior vice president of sales and marketing, Colleran also is steering Nissan's pivot away from a market share-driven sales strategy to one focused on driving profits.

Colleran described his military service as a "foundational experience" that has instilled in him discipline, a trait that serves the executive well in his current role.

"Discipline is necessary right now, given where Nissan was," Colleran said. "I think they were looking for a leader that knew the [industry] landscape but also had the sense of discipline to fix the business."

Developing focus and building trust are key traits for a leader on the battlefield and in the office.

"When people can pick two or three things to do — and sometimes two or three things not to do — they can achieve more," Colleran said. "If you've got a well-trained team, trust them, let them run. They'll knock down walls for you."

Military experience has equipped Colleran with the nerve to handle curveballs, such as the pandemic and the supply chain disruption roiling the auto industry.

"Once you've been in a situation where life hangs in the balance, you tend to gain some perspective [that] things ... could be worse," he said. "We'll get through it, the sun will rise."

— Urvaksh Karkaria

John Savona

- **Age:** 53
- **Title:** Vice president of manufacturing, Ford Motor Co.
- **Military branch:** Army
- **Rank:** Sergeant

As Ford Motor Co.'s vice president of manufacturing and labor affairs, John Savona is in charge of roughly 30 plants that produce components and vehicles around the world.

A lot could go wrong on any given day, especially as Ford tries to launch multiple high-profile vehicles amid a global pandemic and industrywide semiconductor shortage. But Savona says he's especially prepared for the high-stress job after three years as an Army sergeant.

"The military really gave me an appreciation for how important it is to put the work in and have the ability to work as a team," he told *Automotive News*. "We all knew that if any one of us lost our focus or didn't do our job, somebody could pay with their life. If we lose our focus and don't build quality into every vehicle we produce, there's a possibility we could put families at risk."

Savona joined the Army in 1986 out of high school, intrigued by the prospect of military training and the potential to see part of the world. After four months of basic training in Alabama, he was deployed to Germany as a military policeman in the city of Würzburg.

While the overseas assignment was initially a culture shock, Savona said he quickly grew to love the experience — which included trips to spots such as the French Riviera to serve as a rifleman in color guards at various ceremonies.

Almost immediately after he returned to the U.S. in 1989, Savona, whose father worked at Ford, joined the automaker as a security guard at the site of what is now its Michigan Assembly Plant.

His military experience has shaped his career, whether it's the discipline of daily 5-mile jogs or the leadership of visits to plants and dealerships to understand what's going on with the company's products.

"Visiting with them gives me the perspective to understand where the issues are and to help the team," Savona said. "I feel like my job is to serve our customers and our dealers."

— Michael Martinez



Savona: Appreciation for putting the work in, knowing the stakes

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Tony Perkins

- **Age:** 57
- **Title:** General manager of inspection services, ACV
- **Military branch:** Marines
- **Rank:** Corporal

About 12 years ago, Tony Perkins was sitting in an airport restaurant, waiting out a weather delay, when he heard a group of young veterans talking about their return from Afghanistan.

"I heard them talking about how they were nervous about coming home," said Perkins, general manager of inspection services at ACV, adding that the vets were unsure of how people would treat them.

Perkins, a Marine Corps veteran, bought them a round of beers and chatted with them to better understand what they were worried about with returning to civilian life. "And it motivated me," he said.

Soon after, Perkins coincidentally met Ryan Miller, who had just founded Hunters Helping Heroes, which puts together excursions for young veterans who had recently served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Perkins immediately got involved and solicited local businesses to support an event for the organization. After the first event, he received a thank-you letter from a young Army major who had just completed his seventh combat tour. The soldier wrote that the experience gave him a kind of camaraderie that he had been lacking in civilian life.

"It wasn't that big of a deal, right?" Perkins said of the event. "But it was for him."

After that, Miller and Perkins decided to do the events regularly. Hunters Helping Heroes has grown to hosting hundreds of hunting,



Tony Perkins helps organize Hunters Helping Heroes outings to help veterans connect.

fishing and other events spanning the globe — everywhere from Alaska to New Zealand.

The mission of Hunters Helping Heroes is to show the soldiers gratitude for their service, and to provide a place for young veterans and others to meet and share stories. The organization also wants to develop a social network the soldiers can leverage once they separate from the military.



Perkins

Meanwhile, Perkins sees his own experience in the Marines as having fostered valuable skills for his career. For example, every Marine is expected to know how to do the work of the rank both above and below him or her.

It's led Perkins to be out in the field for ACV, doing vehicle inspections himself and being involved with pilot groups when new programs are being rolled out.

"It creates just so much more credibility to you as a leader," he said.

Perkins would highly recommend hiring veterans, considering they're process-oriented and have to be tech-savvy and meet certain academic requirements to be in the U.S. military.

Said Perkins, "Veterans for us make phenomenal employees."

— David Muller

Ryan Tocker

- **Age:** 26
- **Title:** Body design engineer, Honda Development and Manufacturing
- **Military branch:** Army National Guard
- **Rank:** Sergeant

Ryan Tocker supports veterans within Honda and the greater Ohio community through activities that range from beekeeping to speaking engagements designed to bridge the gap between veterans and civilian employers that may need help evaluating a military resume.

The Army National Guard sergeant and body design engineer at Honda's Automobile Development Center co-founded the Honda Military Veterans & Supporters business resource group in 2019, and he is chair of the communications and culture events committees.

"Military life can be very different from the world of civilian employment and the transition can be challenging," Tocker said. "Many veterans have experiences from their service that don't translate to the civilian world and this can lead to feelings of isolation and/or a lack of connection."

Tocker joined Honda colleagues in learning beekeeping to teach veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder about the hobby. And in 2020, Tocker volunteered for a mission with the Ohio Army National Guard to support food banks during the pandemic, including a Honda-sponsored food drive.

Tocker is now using his experience as a veteran and his communication skills by participating in a remote speaker series in partnership with the Ohio Department of Veterans Services.

According to Honda, the series will focus on educating managers, group leaders and hir-



Tocker: Many ways at Honda to support vets

ing staff on ways to work with veterans seeking employment. The series will cover topics such as where employers can find veteran employees and how to read and interpret a military resume.

Inside the Honda development center, Tocker is responsible for the design and development of vehicle underbody components such as floor panels, tire pans and underbody shields. He also collaborates with suppliers on design and parts feasibility and manufacturability.

His work with the veterans and support group connects Honda associates within the complex who otherwise may not have met.

"Employees who share common experiences will generally be more productive, work more closely together and produce higher-quality work," Honda said in a statement. "This is especially important when considering the variety of skills veteran employees may possess."

— Laurence Iliff

Honoring



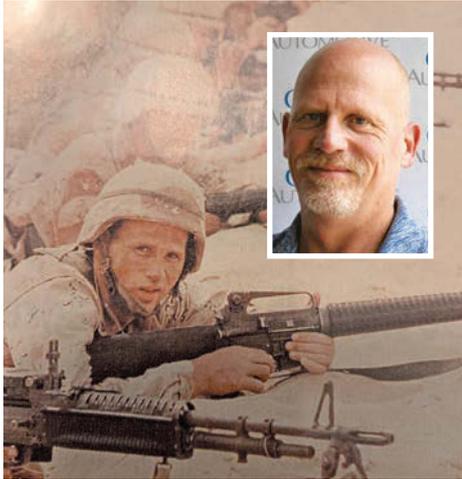
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Dave Rathjens

- **Age:** 52
- **Title:** General manager, Manheim Lakeland
- **Military branch:** Army
- **Rank:** Staff sergeant

Dave Rathjens earned numerous awards and honors in his decade with the U.S. Army, but for him one of the proudest aspects of his military career was becoming a jumpmaster.

Being a jumpmaster requires complex training within an elite, dedicated school of the Army. And what it involves boils down to exactly what the name implies.

"You're basically responsible for the welfare, the safety and the operational [aspects of jumping] to make sure it goes off without a hitch for up to 120 jumpers out of a high-per-

formance jet," Rathjens said.

As an Army jumpmaster, Rathjens not only had to ensure the safety of every soldier's equipment, he also would hang out of the aircraft to check if the air was clear and location correct before his peers made their leaps. The life-and-death trust put in Rathjens helped shape him into the kind of leader he is today.

"Generally, in the military you lead from the front," he said. "You're expected to be able to walk the walk."

Rathjens is general manager of Manheim Lakeland in Florida. He joined the company 21 years ago after his service in the military, and started as a vehicle inspector. He was named a manager just six months into the job.

Rathjens, a former staff sergeant who fought in U.S. conflicts in Panama and the Middle East, has been involved in several volunteer efforts for veterans, such as the Patriot Guard

Riders and Veterans Alternative.

He has spent much time with Wreaths Across America, which involves thousands of motorcycle riders escorting trucks to national cemeteries to make sure every military grave has a wreath on it.

His message to the auto sector is clear: Give veterans a shot.

"Every one of them has sacrificed something to be a veteran," he said. "And I feel like if you're looking to hire, and especially in today's world, with today's labor shortages and everything, they're always worth giving a second look. They're always worth getting through the first round to have discussions with. Even the guys in the military that struggled with the disciplinary part of it — when they get in the civilian world, they stand up above and beyond their peers."

—David Muller

Quintin Siemer

- **Age:** 44
- **Title:** District sales manager, General Motors
- **Military branch:** Marines
- **Rank:** Corporal

Quintin Siemer relies on a tried-and-true military strategy when problem-solving for General Motors: the *kai-zen* method, which emphasizes continuous improvement fueled by teamwork.

In the U.S. Marine Reserves, when the lieutenant commander or colonel set a goal, Siemer said, the sergeant, corporals and others would figure out together how to achieve it.

Siemer, now a district manager for GM, applies a similar approach in the auto industry. "You want to be able to find those solutions by brainstorming with folks that you may not be working with," he said. Involving representatives from manufacturing, distribu-

tion and the dealerships is key to solving certain issues, he said.

"I love the teamwork in it, and I love using that method to come up with an action because it involves everyone," Siemer said. "Everyone has a say in it."

Siemer was a corporal when he left the Marine Reserves in 2001, after six years in the service.

He enlisted with the National Guard from 2010 to 2016.

After leaving the service, Siemer became a flight instructor for Aviation Services Worldwide. He joined the auto industry in 2006 as a salesman at a GM dealership and in 2009 became a general sales manager for a Hyundai-Subaru dealership in Nashville. After moving to a Chevrolet store in 2012, he decided he wanted to work for GM directly. He became a product trainer through GP Strategies Corp. before GM hired him in 2016 for roles in Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama and Michigan. Today he oversees 12 Buick-GMC dealerships west of Detroit.

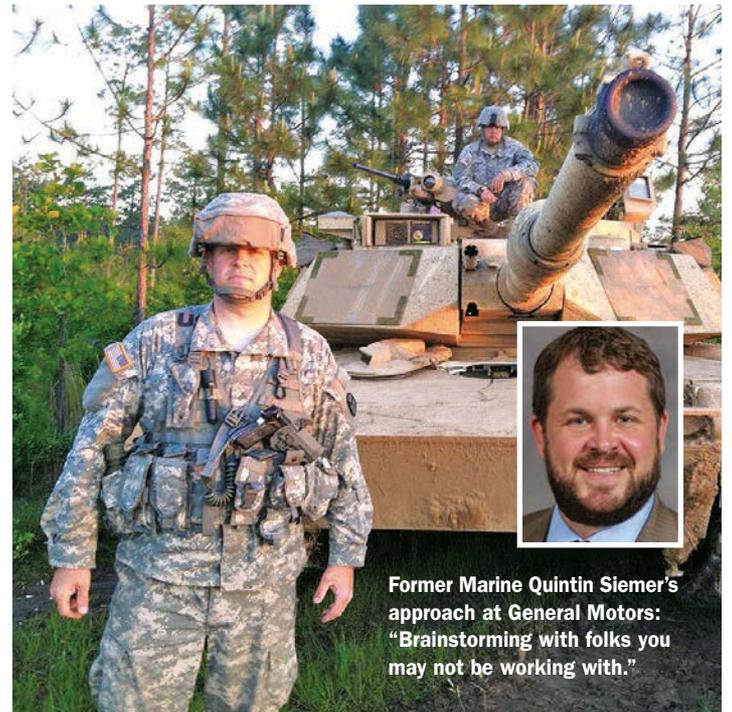
"I absolutely love the auto industry. I couldn't do anything else," Siemer said.

He has stayed involved with veteran causes as a member of the Civil Air Patrol, which provides first aid for downed pilots or lost campers and sends out aircraft for search-and-rescue missions. The group also hosts STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) events.

"Folks like me with a commercial pilot's license, I can help provide math and engineering and physics and science training to these kids and to other adults that may want to do it," Siemer said.

Siemer also is a member of the Marine Corps League. He meets with the group monthly for ceremonies such as final rites or weddings, and he helps veterans cope with struggles post-service by helping with rent payments and in one case, building a wheelchair ramp at a veteran's home.

—Hannah Lutz



Former Marine Quintin Siemer's approach at General Motors: "Brainstorming with folks you may not be working with."

Robbie Cortis

- **Age:** 46
- **Title:** Area fixed operations director, Hendrick Automotive Group
- **Military branch:** Marines
- **Rank:** Corporal

Robbie Cortis' father and grandfather were Marines. Naturally for Cortis, also joining the Marines "was something I always knew I wanted to do," he said.

As he got older, "I felt it was what I needed to do," Cortis said.

He enlisted in 1994 as part of the infantry and served four years.

That time in the military imbued him with discipline and leadership qualities. The most impactful, Cortis said, was the idea of servant leadership.

"I learned quickly it's not about me," he said. "It was about my team. Get well acquainted with them — they have your back. And you have theirs."

It's a philosophy he has applied during his 17-year auto career with Hendrick Automotive Group. He started out washing cars, moved up to service adviser, did a stint as service manager and now oversees seven fixed ops locations for the group in the Carolinas and Kansas City, Mo.

Along the way, the customer was always top of mind.

"It's always been about the people; it's never been about me," he said.

That same thinking has led him to volunteer with programs that aid fellow veterans. He helps feed homeless veterans in Charleston, S.C., and twice has won the Patriot Award from the National Guard for supporting the families of guard members who are deployed.

For about the past dozen years, Cortis has informally hosted disabled vets at his 87-acre farm in South Carolina. He takes them hunting and fishing and gives them access to the land to explore. The reason why is simple for Cortis.

"Because the Marine Corps had such a big impact on my life," he said. "Vets reentering society have it tough. They're used to so much structure. It's hard to describe."

Being able to get outdoors gives them an outlet, Cortis said.

He added: "I tell them, 'I know it can be tough, but let's go fish.'"

—Dan Shine



Cortis: "I learned quickly it's not about me."



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Christine Collins

- **Age:** 42
- **Title:** Director of incident response and investigations, KAR Global
- **Military branch:** Navy, Navy Reserve, Indiana Army National Guard, Army Reserves
- **Rank:** Captain

Christine Collins has served her country in two branches of the military and in the FBI.

Collins, director of incident response and investigations at automotive remarketing company KAR Global, served in the Navy and Navy Reserve, including during the Afghanistan War. After attending college, she entered Officer Candidate School for the Army National Guard and has risen to the rank of captain in the Army Reserve.

She currently is on Individual Ready Reserve

and plans to return to service when her children are older.

In the meantime, she supports service members and veterans at KAR.

Collins, whose day job involves overseeing cybersecurity responses and fraud investigations, said she has worked “pretty heavily” with the company’s Military@KAR Employee Resource Group.

KAR Global spokeswoman Jill Trudeau said it’s one of multiple employee resource groups the company has created to “foster a culture of belonging” for workers — in this case, the company’s military and veteran community.

One of the group’s initiatives is to bring a “missing man table” to KAR dining areas, Collins said. The empty table with a formal and symbolic place setting is meant to represent prisoners of war and missing-in-action personnel.

Collins also has focused on mentoring service members and veterans, particularly former enlisted personnel.

“I’ll mentor everybody,” she said, but added that her time as a captain and senior enlisted officer allows her to have the largest impact on that group.

Collins said her guidance centers on encouraging veterans to maximize the benefits available to them. Many service members will use medical benefits due them but overlook other opportunities, she said.

Education is one example. Collins used three separate GI Bills to pay for college.

She said many officers helped her during her career, and “I’m just paying that forward.”

On top of being the right thing to do, “it makes me feel better, and it gives the work force a better service member,” she said.

— John Huetter



Collins: Focus on mentoring veterans

Blake Salinas

- **Age:** 37
- **Title:** General sales manager, Friendly Ford of Crosby
- **Military branch:** Marines
- **Rank:** Captain

Three words from his time in the Marine Corps sum up Blake Salinas’ philosophy as a dealership sales manager: Set the example.

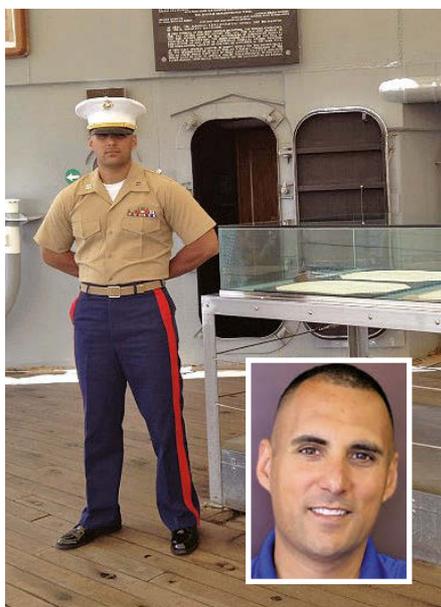
“That was preached to me in the Marine Corps from day one,” Salinas said. “When you’re a leader of Marines, they’re going to look you up and down and judge you — do you know your stuff? They’ll look for a reason to criticize you. Don’t give them a reason.”

Salinas says he tries to set the example at Friendly Ford of Crosby every day by being on time to work, knowing the products and embracing the processes.

And while Salinas says the Houston-area dealership business is fraught with pressure because he is judged every 30 days by sales numbers, he can shake off the small stuff thanks to time as an artillery officer in Afghanistan.

“Military service gave me that perspective,” he said. “I’ve been in a lot more stressful situations in the Marines.”

Salinas supports his fellow veterans by raising money for the Semper Fi & America’s Fund, which benefits members of the U.S. Armed Forces who have been wounded or critically injured while serving. He raised money for the fund when he ran the 2017 Marine Corps Marathon. He also helped Friend-



Blake Salinas’ military experience helps him keep the pressure of car sales in perspective.

ly Ford of Crosby sponsor and organize a golf tournament that benefited the fund.

He said most of his generation who served in the Marines are combat veterans. Some were killed; others lost limbs. Many have been affected by post-traumatic stress disorder.

“Those are my brothers,” Salinas said. “Anything I can do to support the Semper Fi Fund I will do. I just think it’s important. We’ve served together; we’ve been through a lot.”

“It’s good that we don’t forget about them.”

— Dan Shine

Kevin Carson

- **Age:** 51
- **Title:** President of Denso’s Battle Creek, Mich., thermal manufacturing facility
- **Military branch:** Navy
- **Rank:** Petty officer first class

When Kevin Carson was mulling a return to civilian life in 1999 after 11 years in the Navy, entering automotive manufacturing wasn’t top of mind.

But Carson, president of supplier Denso Corp.’s thermal manufacturing plant in Battle Creek, Mich., said he was ultimately drawn to the industry because its fast pace and team-focused work environment reminded him of the military.

“I’m not comparing the two as far as significance or severity of risk,” he said. “What I’m comparing is, they’re very volatile, fast-paced organizations. You have to adapt to change. You need to be flexible. You need to be team-oriented.”

Carson joined Denso in Battle Creek as a team leader overseeing radiator assembly on the factory floor. During the next two decades, he worked his way up to group president, overseeing 2,500 employees. Denso North America’s thermal division supplies air-conditioning and engine-cooling components to automakers.

Carson, who led submarine logistics teams in the Navy, said he frequently draws upon his time in the military while at work, especially as it relates to building a strong team out of a group of individuals from differing backgrounds.



The auto industry’s fast pace and team-focused environment reminded Kevin Carson of his time in the military.

“In the military, I could be on a submarine with people from 40 different states that have varying backgrounds and varying ages, and you’ve got to come together and be one team,” he said. “I think the auto industry is somewhat similar.”

Carson works with the Denso Veterans Network, which raises money and serves as a resource group for former, current and reserve service members.

He said he is proud of the fact about 10 percent of the workers at the Denso Battle Creek plant are veterans, and he urged the auto industry to do more to bring vets into the work force.

“I really implore all of us to take a good look at veterans. It’s not easy leaving the military and coming into civilian life,” he said. “I encourage all of us as employers to open our doors and open our minds to seize the opportunity to hire some really high-character people to make a difference in your organization.”

— John Irwin

Joseph Anderson

- **Age:** 78
- **Title:** CEO, TAG Holdings
- **Military branch:** Army
- **Rank:** Major

At his core, automotive industry executive and Army veteran Joseph Anderson wants to ensure other veterans are given seats at the business table.

Anderson’s propensity to lead manifested during his 13-year military career. As an infantry officer, he commanded troops in the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division. He served two tours of duty with the 1st Cavalry Division.

In 1979, Anderson resigned his commission and early selection for promotion to lieutenant colonel to join General Motors. He stayed with the automaker for 13 years. He worked several manufacturing assignments and as a plant manager in the Pontiac division.

His work with GM culminated with his appointment as director of its Inland Fisher Guide Division’s 7,000-employee body hardware business unit.

In 2001, Anderson founded TAG Holdings, a Wixom, Mich., holdings company that acquires businesses in the automotive, aerospace and defense, agriculture and heavy equipment sectors.



Anderson also serves on the board of directors for the Sterling Heights, Mich.-based Veteran Owned Business Roundtable, a non-profit organization that advocates for veteran-owned businesses and encourages corporations to include them in supplier diversity initiatives.

“What we do, as a federal business roundtable, is try to create an environment for veteran businesses to have access to revenue,” Anderson said.

The roundtable has a corporate advisory board of industry officials that work on opportunities for veteran-owned businesses.

“We’re building those relationships with those companies and others to support veteran businesses,” Anderson said.

— C.J. Moore

Sean Fortier

- **Age:** 42
- **Title:** General manager, Lexus of Woodland Hills
- **Military branch:** Air Force
- **Rank:** Senior airman

The lessons Sean Fortier learned as the child of a U.S. Navy veteran, and absorbed again when he joined the U.S. Air Force, stayed with him through his venture out of the military and into the auto industry.

His father’s military career spanned 20 years and included time in Vietnam. Thus began a family tradition of sorts: Fortier and two of his brothers went on to join the Air Force.

From 1997 to 2001, Fortier served in the branch as a firefighter. He was stationed in Korea and Italy and traveled the continental U.S. before fully transitioning out in August 2001, mere weeks before the Sept. 11 attacks.

In July 2001, while on terminal leave but still technically in the military, Fortier took a job at a Dallas-area Nissan dealership. He applied the lessons drilled into him from the Air Force — teamwork, no excuses, accountability — and his career took off.



Fortier: Vets’ skills translate

Twenty years later, he is the general manager of Lexus of Woodland Hills, a California dealership. And in the four years he’s been with the store, he’s made it his goal to hire, train and mentor fellow veterans.

“Their skill set really translates via their discipline, their mentality, their willingness to do the things that are uncomfortable,” Fortier told *Automotive News*.

Education degrees certainly play a part in his hiring decisions, but Fortier said he gives great consideration to military background.

“If people that have great work ethics come in here and grind it out, and they hustle ... it really translates well to this business,” Fortier said.

A large number of the veterans he has hired have succeeded in the industry.

“One to two are actually running stores at this point,” Fortier said. “So people that were technicians [went] all the way up through upper-level executive management to running their own stores.”

Fortier was named to the *Automotive News* 40 Under 40 list in 2015, after he led every department at his then-dealership to double-digit or triple-digit percentage growth.

— C.J. Moore