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TIME Dealer of the Year
Jason Wilson
Kentucky Auto Dealers Association

TIME AND ALLY FINANCIAL HONOR OWENSBORO DEALER

Bruce “Duke” Brubaker III Wins National Recognition for Community Service and Industry Accomplishments

(New York, NY, October 14, 2026) – The nomination of Bruce “Duke” Brubaker III, dealer principal of Champion Ford Mazda in Owensboro, Kentucky, for the 2027 TIME Dealer of the Year award was announced today by TIME.

Brubaker is one of a select group of 48 dealer nominees from across the country who will be honored at the 110th annual National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Show in Orlando, Florida, on February 19, 2027.

The TIME Dealer of the Year award is one of the automobile industry’s most prestigious and highly coveted honors. The award recognizes the nation’s most successful auto dealers who also demonstrate a long-standing commitment to community service. Brubaker was chosen to represent the Kentucky Auto Dealers Association in the national competition – one of only 48 auto dealers nominated for the 58th annual award from more than 20,000 nationwide.

“This nomination is an incredible honor, and I am proud to represent our employees, customers, family and Kentucky’s automotive community,” Brubaker said. “Champion Ford Mazda’s success has been built on trust, strong relationships and a commitment to doing what we say we will do.”

Brubaker earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Richmond in Virginia in 1992. He later graduated from the NADA Dealer Academy in Washington, D.C., in 2014.

Although Brubaker grew up around dealerships, he initially planned to pursue a career in sports marketing. His father, Bruce Brubaker Jr., entered automotive retail after retiring from professional baseball in the early 1970s.

After college, a young salesperson working for his father encouraged Brubaker to try selling vehicles at Champion Ford Lincoln-Mercury Mazda. Brubaker accepted the opportunity and quickly discovered a passion for automotive retail.

"I wanted to find my own path, so I was not certain that the family dealership would become my career," Brubaker said. "Once I began working with customers at a franchised new-vehicle dealership, I was hooked."

Brubaker joined Champion as a new- and used-vehicle salesperson in 1992. He deliberately pursued roles throughout the dealership to prepare himself for future leadership.

He became a finance and insurance manager in 1997, new-vehicle sales manager in 1999 and general sales manager in 2003. He was promoted to general manager in 2012 and became dealer principal in 2022.

"If I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps and eventually become a dealer, I needed to understand the entire operation," Brubaker said. "That meant learning finance, marketing, service, parts, the body shop, personnel management and customer care—not simply vehicle sales."

His professional development has included training through Ford Motor Company, the NADA Dealer Academy and NCM Associates.

Champion Ford Mazda was founded in 1990 as Owensboro Ford Center Inc., doing business as Champion Ford Lincoln-Mercury Mazda. Brubaker owns 43 percent of the dealership. His brother, Tyler Brubaker, owns 40 percent, and their father owns the remaining 17 percent.

"Building on my father's example while establishing my own leadership style has been one of the most meaningful parts of my career," Brubaker said. "Our family shares a responsibility to preserve the reputation associated with Champion while preparing the business for its future."

Since 2010, the dealership has completed numerous facility improvements. Investments include new curbing, a roofing system, repainting and refurbishment throughout the store, and an updated exterior tower.

Champion also installed new Ford and Mazda signage, upgraded its showroom and customer lounge, and created a detail center with a dedicated spray-in bedliner booth.

“Our facility must support the professionalism and efficiency customers expect,” Brubaker said. “These improvements allow our employees to work more effectively while providing a more welcoming environment for everyone who visits the dealership.”

Champion Ford Mazda employs 61 people and recorded 5 percent year-over-year staff growth from 2025 to 2026. Thirty-three employees have worked for the dealership for at least six years, including 22 with more than a decade of service and 14 with more than 20 years.

The dealership contributes toward each employee’s Blue Cross Blue Shield health insurance. It also offers a Safe Harbor 401(k) plan by NADA Empower, matching 100 percent of employee contributions up to 3 percent of income and 50 percent of the next 2 percent.

“Supporting our employees and their families creates a stronger workforce and a stronger community,” Brubaker said. “We want people to develop their skills, build financial security and see Champion as a place where they can establish long-term careers.”

Brubaker credits Champion’s employees, reputation and community relationships with distinguishing the dealership from its competitors.

The company combines the inventory, resources and professionalism of a franchised dealership with a personal, hometown approach. Many employees have served multiple generations of customers.

“Our employees understand that earning trust is more important than making a single sale,” Brubaker said. “A dealership’s reputation must be earned again every day through honesty, follow-through and service after the purchase.”

Champion introduced its MVP pricing strategy in 2001 and a four-day vehicle exchange program in 2021. Together, those initiatives support what the dealership calls its “Peace of Mind, No Regrets” customer experience.

Brubaker also personally responds to every online customer review, from one-star complaints to five-star praise, across platforms including Google and Facebook.

“Technology has changed how customers research, communicate and purchase vehicles, but it cannot replace personal accountability,” Brubaker said. “Responding to every review helps me remain connected to the customer experience and understand where we are succeeding or need to improve.”

During the past 18 months, Champion has increased its focus on inventory management, digital marketing, expense controls and advertising efficiency.

The dealership has used performance data to evaluate agreements with third-party vehicle marketplaces and has continued strengthening its used-vehicle and financing operations.

Brubaker is also exploring artificial intelligence tools that can help employees communicate with customers and improve the sales and service experience.

“Artificial intelligence can give employees better tools, but it cannot come at the expense of the personal connection customers expect,” Brubaker said. “Our goal is to use technology to support our people while preserving the hometown service that has defined Champion.”

Champion Ford Mazda sold 504 new vehicles and 570 used vehicles in 2025. Through July 2026, the dealership sold 237 new vehicles and 356 used vehicles.

The dealership received Mazda’s 35-Year Partnership Award in 2026 and was voted Owensboro’s best car lot in each year from 2022 through 2026.

It was also named a DealerRater Kentucky Dealer of the Year in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

“These awards reflect the consistency of our employees and the relationships they have built throughout Owensboro,” Brubaker said. “Recognition is meaningful because it comes from manufacturers, customers and the community we serve.”

Brubaker has been a member of NADA since 1990. He served on the Kentucky Auto Dealers Association board from 2011 through 2023 and held the offices of treasurer, vice chairman, chairman-elect and chairman.

He currently serves on the Kentucky Auto Dealer Services board, the Ford Credit Dealer Advisory Board and the Ford Dealer Advertising Fund board. He is serving as FDAF chairman for the 2026-2027 term.

Through these roles, Brubaker has represented dealers in state and national industry discussions.

During the NADA Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., he met with members of Kentucky’s congressional delegation to discuss legislation and policy affecting automobile retailers.

“Association service gives dealers an opportunity to bring real operating experience into conversations about legislation and manufacturer programs,” Brubaker said. “It is especially

important that rural and community-based dealerships have a voice in decisions affecting our industry.”

On the Ford Dealer Advertising Fund board, Brubaker represents rural dealers and contributes to regional advertising strategies supporting vehicle sales and service.

His work with the Ford Credit Dealer Advisory Board allows him to provide feedback to national leadership and help develop programs intended to serve Ford dealers and their customers.

“Dealers understand their individual markets, and that insight can help manufacturers and financial partners develop stronger programs,” Brubaker said. “Collaboration works best when all sides listen and remain focused on the customer.”

Brubaker believes a successful dealership must be invested in more than its own operations. Throughout his career, he has served organizations including Leadership Owensboro, the Boys & Girls Club, Boy Scouts of America and the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce.

He currently serves on the Owensboro Baseball Committee, which is exploring the development of a mixed-use stadium and the possibility of bringing a minor league baseball team to the city.

“A stadium and professional baseball team could create long-term recreational, economic and entertainment opportunities,” Brubaker said. “The project has the potential to bring people together while contributing to Owensboro’s continued growth.”

Through Champion Ford Mazda and his family’s personal giving, Brubaker supports organizations focused on youth, education, athletics, healthcare and family services.

Beneficiaries include the Boys & Girls Club, Girls Inc., the Opportunity Center, Kentucky Wesleyan College, Owensboro High School and Owensboro Catholic athletics, local baseball and softball programs, the RiverPark Center and Owensboro Symphony Orchestra.

The dealership also supports Kosair for Kids, the Lions Club, OASIS Women’s Shelter and Norton Children’s Cancer Institute.

“A local business has a responsibility to invest in the community that supports it,” Brubaker said. “Our goal is to create opportunities for young people while helping organizations that provide essential services to children and families.”

Two community experiences in 2026 stand out as particularly meaningful to Brubaker.

For Night to Shine, an event offering a prom experience to people with special needs, Champion donated the use of a Ford Bronco Badlands RTR Special Edition. Brubaker used the vehicle to chauffeur boys with Down syndrome to haircuts, suit fittings, meals and the event.

“Their excitement and the hugs they gave me were unforgettable,” Brubaker said. “It was a reminder that a vehicle can become much more than transportation when it helps create an experience someone will always remember.”

Champion also provided a 2026 Ford Transit 12-passenger van to help the Daviess County 12U softball team travel to the Little League World Series.

“Seeing a father’s tears when the team received the van made the moment deeply personal,” Brubaker said. “Experiences like these remind me why I love the automotive business and why our connection to the community matters.”

After more than three decades in automotive retail, Brubaker continues to measure success through relationships with employees, customers, manufacturers and neighbors.

“Every challenge—from September 11 to the Great Recession and the continuing transformation of retail—has provided an opportunity to learn,” Brubaker said. “For me, success comes from showing up, working hard, treating people fairly and never being satisfied with simply being good enough.”

Dealers are nominated by the executives of state and metro dealer associations around the country. A panel of faculty members from the Tauber Institute for Global Operations at the University of Michigan will select one finalist from each of the four NADA regions and one national Dealer of the Year. Three finalists will receive \$5,000 for their favorite charities and the winner will receive \$10,000 to give to charity, donated by Ally.

In its 16th year as exclusive sponsor, Ally also will recognize dealer nominees and their community efforts by contributing \$1,000 to each nominee’s 501(c)3 charity of choice. Nominees will be recognized on **AllyDealerHeroes.com**, which highlights the philanthropic contributions and achievements of TIME Dealer of the Year nominees.

“The TIME Dealer of the Year program recognizes dealers who pair excellence in the automotive industry with an enduring commitment to the communities they serve,” said Jessica Sibley, CEO of TIME. “TIME is proud to partner with Ally to celebrate their achievements and spotlight the standard of leadership they set across the country.”

"Great dealerships are built by people, and the 2027 TIME Dealer of the Year nominees prove it," said Doug Timmerman, President of Dealer Financial Services, Ally Financial. "These leaders invest in the teams who help customers through one of the biggest purchases of their lives and show up for the communities they call home. We've seen it firsthand at Ally, where dealers who

lead this way do it not for recognition, but because it's who they are. That's what it means to do it right, and we're proud to celebrate it."

Brubaker was nominated for the TIME Dealer of the Year award by Jason Wilson, president of the Kentucky Auto Dealers Association. He and his wife, Tamara, have two sons: Bruce "Brock" Brubaker IV and Brody Brubaker.

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About TIME

TIME is the 102-year-old global media brand that reaches a combined audience of over 120 million around the world through its iconic magazine and digital platforms. With unparalleled access to the world's most influential people, the trust of consumers and partners globally, and an unrivaled power to convene, TIME's mission is to tell the essential stories of the people and ideas that shape and improve the world. Today, TIME also includes the Emmy Award®-winning film and television division TIME Studios; a significantly expanded live events business built on the powerful TIME100 and Person of the Year franchises and custom experiences; TIME for Kids, which provides trusted news with a focus on news literacy for kids and valuable resources for teachers and families; the award-winning branded content studio Red Border by TIME, and more.

About Ally Financial

Ally Financial Inc. (NYSE: ALLY) includes the nation's largest all-digital bank and an industry leading auto finance business, driven by a mission to "Do It Right" for its customers and communities. Ally is a U.S. financial holding company with \$200 billion in assets and 9.6 million customers (June 30, 2026). Ally Bank, Member FDIC, offers online banking products, including high-yield savings and no hidden fee checking, and was the first major U.S. bank to eliminate overdraft fees. Ally also provides investing solutions through Ally Invest, including online brokerage, automated investing, IRAs and personal financial advice. As a leader in auto finance, Ally provides consumer and dealer financing, insurance, and vehicle remarketing services. Ally's seasoned corporate finance business provides capital to equity sponsors and middle-market companies. Visit [ally.com](https://www.ally.com).

About the NADA Show

The National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA), founded in 1917, represents more than 16,000 light-vehicle and commercial-truck dealerships with 32,500 domestic and international franchises. New-vehicle franchised dealers are directly responsible for more than one million U.S. jobs.