

use of a diesel engine Touareg V10 units. Deadline is May 31.

TO NEXT CAR BUYERS WANT ALL

recent online poll at www.cargurus.com. NewsWire asked readers to choose their top priorities for their next car. The top priority was for first place in fuel economy and mileage and performance. New technologies and Bluetooth got few votes.

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biofuel standard for widespread use in the marketplace. The non-profit corporation, founded in 2002 to fund and promote the growing need for alternative energy research and development in Michigan, opened the National Biofuel Energy Lab in the fall of 2006 on a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. The ultimate goal in building the lab was to develop a national fuel specification for B20 biodiesel blends for automobile manufacturers who are putting their resources into the production of diesel-powered vehicles.

The March 12 meeting (titled the NextEnergy Biodiesel Fuel Summit), which NextEnergy CEO Jim Croce described as a "who's who of the biofuel industry," not only served as a forum for NextEnergy to report their year's worth of research, but also provided alternative

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the UAW members at GM's Tech

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Solar Energy Program to Benefit Uni-Solar, Dow



By Gerald Scott
Staff Reporter

On March 8, the sun shined brightly on the fledgling Metro Detroit solar energy industry. That's both literally and figuratively speaking. This is because that Thursday was a much-welcomed sunshine day outdoors. And indoors, at United Solar Ovonic (Uni-Solar) in Auburn Hills, it also shined brightly because the U.S. Department of Energy launched a

UNI-SOLAR EXECUTIVE Stan Ovshinsky, left, takes Assistant Secretary of Energy Alexander Karsner on a tour of the solar cell plant.

- Photo: Bruce A. Pollock

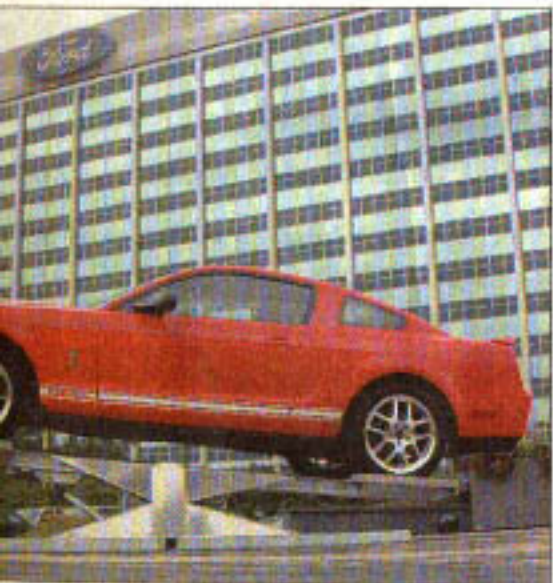
major national solar energy program there called the Solar America Initiative (SAI).

The DOE initiative invests some major tax dollars into 13 promising commercial solar projects nationwide, a program that involves two Michigan companies - Uni-Solar and Dow Chemical based in Midland. Executives from those companies gathered at the Solar Ovonic solar cell manufacturing plant across from the Palace of Auburn Hills to announce the initiative together with DOE Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Alexander Karsner.

"We expect solar technology

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Rampboss Lets Users Display Vehicles from Any Angle



By Irena Granaas
Staff Reporter

Todd Stoney feels he has what auto dealerships need to enhance the "curb appeal" of any product they put on display. Invented by an Australian who specializes in ramps and lifts for the handicapped, the Rampboss lets cars be presented with nose pointing up or down, with a left or a right lean, both ends high or both low, and it's all hand-operated. The ramp can be transported to a shopping mall, golfing event, car meet or other venues.

Stoney, owner of Rampboss-USA, holds the exclusive U.S. license to market and sell the system from Australian-based Rampboss-Pty. Ltd. The U.S. branch of the company is headquartered in Commerce Town-

ship, with its manufacturing facilities in Dearborn Heights.

A former internal communications administrator for General Motors Co., Stoney took a buyout in the late 1990s and spent time in various jobs and business ventures before getting an e-mail from Neil Senior, who holds the world patent for the Rampboss.

"One day (Neil) was sitting at a car dealership and was waiting for service ... and he saw the angle-in ramp on the lot, and thought he might be able to do better," Stoney said. "He put his pen to paper and came up with this design."

Senior spent a year developing the Rampboss. Through a mutual friend Stoney was doing business with in Australia, Senior got Stoney's name as someone in the States who might consider marketing it in

the U.S.

Stoney did extensive market research which convinced him there was no similar product available before taking on the Rampboss. He demonstrated the Rampboss to several dealers around the area.

"I got a pretty positive reaction from just about everybody," he said.

Stoney worked out the license agreement two years ago and launched Rampboss-USA in August 2005. He felt encouraged by the positive response from the dealers and from its unveiling at the 2005 Detroit Autorama.

"(Autorama) was not the ideal venue, but it gave me general public feedback - what would customers think of this product on a car dealership lot, and almost unanimously, they were pretty impressed with the

product," Stoney commented.

Rampboss-USA's first V1 ramp was delivered in August 2005 to Corvette King Les Stanford Chevrolet in Dearborn and the initial production run was bought out by three dealers in Michigan and Florida. The Rampboss was displayed last February at the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) 90th Convention in Las Vegas and has also been seen at Ford Motor Co. headquarters, the Suburban Collection in Troy, at Super Bowl XL in Detroit and at a South Beach, Fla. nightclub to display a \$100,000 Cadillac during Sports Illustrated magazine's 2007 Super Bowl party.

The company now has a heavy-duty V2 they affectionately call The BOSS that can handle heavier vehicles like the Hummer, for example.

SS V1 cradles a Shelby GT-500 Mustang on display Motor Co. world headquarters in Dearborn last September. The V2 version of the auto display ramp, the V2, is now on display in February.