

SMOKER CRAFT MEETING ATTRACTS 32 CANADIAN DEALERS

BY CRAIG RITCHIE

Smoker Craft Inc. marked the largest dealer meeting in the company's history this August when representatives from more than 200 dealerships worldwide converged on its New Paris, Indiana manufacturing centre – including 32 dealerships from Canada.

In all, more than 600 people attended the event, in which Smoker Craft Inc. – parent company to the Smoker Craft, Starcraft, Sunchaser and Sylvan boat brands – presented its 2016 lineup. Dealers were split into two groups, each arriving on site two days apart in order to relieve congestion during the business meetings and on-water testing. The majority of Canadians attended the second flight, and were treated to spectacular summer weather.

A total of 178 different boats were presented on static display in and around the company's plant, with an additional 22 models available for on-water evaluations on nearby Lake Wawasee. New boats for the 2016 model year include new aluminum fishing boats, new pontoons and new fibreglass runabouts, plus minor upgrades and revisions to dozens of existing models – including a Sylvan S5 Extreme pontoon with twin Yamaha F250 outboards, and a new Starcraft SCX powered by Volvo Penta's new Forward Drive, both of which drew line-ups for on-water trials.

Attending dealers were treated to tours of a brand-new 90,000

square-foot addition to the company's pontoon manufacturing facility. "We've seen over 260 cement trucks in here over the past several months as we expanded our facilities," says Smoker Craft President Doug Smoker. "That includes our new pontoon plant addition, plus a large multi-use platform located adjacent to our main building." A presentation on digital marketing strategies and a keynote from US Air Force major Dan Rooney, proved popular with dealers in attendance, as did an evening social featuring local craft beers.

"It was a very satisfying and gratifying year for Smoker Craft, in spite of losing our CFO, Joe Blackburn, early in the year to brain cancer," said Smoker. "We've made significant investments in human capital, bringing in a number of talented young men and women who will help drive our business moving forward in the coming year."

Two Canadian dealerships – Tru-North RV, Auto & Marine, located in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and Marine Management, in Edmonton, Alberta – were recognized during the annual business meeting for recording sales high enough to rank them among the top 20 Smoker Craft dealers worldwide for the 2015 model year.

"To be recognized as a Top 20 dealership is a significant accomplishment," said Smoker Craft's Senior VP of marketing, Peter Barrett. "We salute these dealers who have demonstrated an extraordinary level of professionalism, and we are proud to include them as part of the Smoker Craft family." 

