

Dawson Living

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Megel family expands

Longtime Chevy dealership moves north, opens John Megel Ford

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JOHN MEGEL CHEVY | JOHN MEGEL FORD



Driving The Future

Left
and
John



Jonathan Megel, dealer principle and owner of John Megel Chevy and John Megel Ford and right, Shawn Boyd, executive manager for John Megel Chevy and John Megel Ford. - Photo by Jeremy Coleman

John Megel Builds on the Family Business

Story by Jennifer Colosimo

As a third-generation car guy, Jonathan Megel will tell you, being in this business is just in his blood. It started with his grandfather and a little Ford dealership in Buckhead.

Then his dad, who joked he “sold enough Fords to finally buy a Chevy dealership,” bought a small dealership in Dahlonega in 1998.

When he outgrew that space, he purchased John Megel Chevy in Dawsonville; and that was where Jonathan Megel whet his whistle for selling cars and decided he couldn’t get enough of working with people.

Megel worked his way through the business starting in the service department washing cars. From there, he began to write service orders, and eventually spent nearly a decade on the sales floor.

A brief stint in finance and in sales management prepped him for NADA School, and when he graduated in 2009, he took over as General Manager working for his dad at the Chevy store, and today serves as dealer principle and owner.

“The one thing that I wanted to do when I got here was create a culture and an environment that was a good experience for both the customers and the employees,” said Megel.

“Without our employees, we have nothing – that’s what I had learned — so I worked hard to keep a core group of people with very little turnover, and grow the store from about 35 employees to more than 100 employees.”

The next growth spurt came when Jacky Jones decided to sell his Ford dealership in Cleveland. Amidst stiff competition, Megel purchased Jacky Jones Ford in December of last year, updating the sign out front, but vowing to leave most everything else the same.

“The appeal of Jacky’s store was because it’s the same kind of thing we have going on at our dealership in Dawsonville,” said Shawn Boyd, executive manager for John Megel Chevy and

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Photos by Jeremy Coleman

John Megel Ford.

“They have a lot of repeat and referral customers, loyal customers, and most of the employees have been here between 15-30 years. It’s like family there, and that’s how we like to do business, too.”

By no means was anything wrong with the Ford dealership before Megel took over, but they were excited to build on what Jones had established, and provide more for their own customer base out of Dawsonville.

“We love the lineup that Ford offers to our customers, it gives us more to show them,” Megel said. “And Jacky knew us well enough to know that we’re going to come in here and keep up his good name and take good care of his people. You don’t really see that in this industry, but he trusts us, because we do business the same way.”

That way of doing business includes tremendous repeat and referral business, something that stems directly from the way employees are treated to the way those employees then treat the customer. It’s personal, it’s convenient, and it’s mean-

ingful.

“It’s also a lot of fun,” added Boyd. “When you walk into John Megel Ford or Chevy, you’ll hear people laughing, our sales people will be joking with customers, they’re playing with their kids, customers are sitting by the fireplace. We make the process fun, we provide a good atmosphere, and we keep the customers involved.”

The team at Megel recognizes that buying a car is the second biggest purchase a customer makes in his or her life, so it’s not lost on them to make it feel important.

“Just because we sell cars every day doesn’t mean we don’t really believe that this is a major purchase,” says Berrong Kimsey, General Manager at John Megel Ford. “We try to make it easy and happy for them so they’ll want to come back and do business with us.”

Megel will be the first to admit that nobody really loves to go buy a car. But, as someone who has been selling cars to people for more than 20 years now with incredible



Jonathan Megel, dealer principle and owner of John Megel Chevy and John Megel Ford with father, John Megel, left.

“It has not always been easy, but it has been very rewarding to see the growth of our team and business over the years.”

- Jonathan Megel, dealer principle and owner of John Megel Chevy and John Megel Ford

repeat rates, he knows treating customers well builds a really big sales team at large. For that reason, they strive to always take care of their customers up front, always give them a fair, good deal, and provide great service after a deal.

“Something that Jonathan says all the time is that it takes a couple of hours to buy a car, but it takes 5-6 years to own one,” said Boyd. “We want to focus on helping people through that entire process of owning it, not just selling it to them. When they have a problem, we want to be there for them.”

That vision for customer service is what Megel has wanted to ignite within his employees since the beginning.

“Seeing is believing,” said Megel. “Our employees in every department see that the people in management, ownership, and all the way down the line, are involved on the daily. They know I’ll drop anything to help a customer or help them. They know I’ve got their back, and that makes a huge difference.”

While the teams celebrate a beautiful auto union, Megel is excited about what they can bring to the Ford dealership. They’ll expand the online presence, offer more variety in their used vehicles, and build a better service experience for the customers, similar to John Megel Chevy. What won’t change are services like the Quick Lane for oil changes, batteries, etc., a main repair shop for repairs, warranty work, etc., as well as new and used car sales. And for the loyal customers of Jacky Jones, the faces are still the same, too.

“The people in Cleveland have come to know these sales-people and these managers like family, kind of like the ones in Dawsonville are to us,” said Boyd. “It’s a huge deal for us to have that roll over into John Megel’s business and have these customers who are used to seeing Kris, Hal, Bill, and Berrong, etc. still work with them. They’re all still here.”

That’s so important to the Megel business model, because above all they strive to truly know their customer. The sales-people spend time talking to and getting to know the customer, so that they fully understand what a customer wants and needs before trying to sell them something they don’t. It’s also a lot to do with keeping their finger on the pulse of what’s happening in the car industry and keeping those customers abreast of it. The ultimate goal is to get customers the car they want as fast as they can, so communication is pivotal to making that happen — and to making it a good experience. With inventory at an all-time low across the nation, keeping clients up to date with timelines, expectations, and availability is what’s made customers stick it out, rather than shop elsewhere. There are no games here, just good business.

John Megel doesn’t just do that good business from the dealership floor. In fact, they strongly subscribe to the notion that you can’t really make a name for yourself unless you’re getting your hands dirty helping out in the community. To that, they’ve sponsored numerous local youth sports teams, been heavily involved in the outdoor sports world sponsoring tournaments or providing truck giveaways. They work with rotary



clubs, local charities, and the educator purchase program to give back, as well.

“It’s been a great start to a new relationship,” said Kimsey. “And we’re going to keep it that way. The customers that are coming back after the sign has changed have seen for themselves that it’s the same as it’s always been and they’re happy with that. That’s what we’re shooting for. The philosophy is just about the same — taking care of the customer and making sure they’re happy. So we’re going to keep doing that.”

“For generations, it has been our philosophy that the people make a difference at John Megel and a testament to our Leadership that has created long-standing customers and happy employees,” said Megel. “I hope this inspires future generations to go above and beyond for our customers and employees, continuing the John Megel legacy.”

“My dad, John Megel, gave me a great opportunity over 20 years ago to be a part of the family business,” he continued. “It has not always been easy, but it has been very rewarding to see the growth of our team and business over the years. It comes with great pride to say we have finally sold enough Chevrolets to become a Ford Dealer.”

John Megel Chevy

Where: 1392 GA-400, Dawsonville, GA 30534

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John Megel Ford

Where: 2742 US-129, Cleveland, GA 30528

Contact: megelford.com, 706-865-2168