

PARTNERS IN COMMON GOOD

NCMA and the Automotive Aftermarket Foundation

The essential, fundamental ‘raison d’être’ of the NCMA is *common good*. The common good purpose of the NCMA is to support the efforts of its aftermarket company members and their individual practitioners, to share knowledge and collectively discover and share best practices for the efficient, effective production of comprehensive, accurate catalogs, in support of the sale of aftermarket products, which is the ultimate end-goal of the industry.

And who could reasonably argue that it has not been successful in that respect? While there are many other influences, other thought-leaders, vendors, technology providers, etc., the NCMA has, for many, many years, been providing the quintessential forum for knowledge exchange and pursuit of best practices and, as we all know, our annual conference is actually called the ***NCMA Knowledge Exchange Conference***. (And by the way, the 2012 conference will be held from April 21 to April 24 at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Las Vegas, offering a program not to be missed.)

This forum has advanced even further since coming under the umbrella of the AAIA, and has ensured that; with the evolution and adoption of industry data standards, and the capability of much more sophisticated systems for overall Product Information Management (PIM), the role of the catalog manager is recognized to be evolving and changing. The NCMA Knowledge Exchange also maintains a healthy agenda for re-examining, discussing, and provoking and leading thought on technological advancements to enable members to capitalize on, and benefit from, every opportunity that arises.

And on top of this, the NCMA has, for many years, acted as the coordinator and catalyst to challenge its members to compete and innovate, and has used its awards program, concerted peer recognition, and now, the Northwood University ACP Certification, as the incentive instruments. All of these things embody the essence of pursuit of ‘common good’.

Another ‘common good’ in which the NCMA has been involved for many years is its support of the Automotive ‘***Aftermarket Foundation***’. Many of us are aware of ‘The Foundation’, where it came from, what it does and the extent to which the NCMA has been a supporter, but it is also true that many of us are not. Given that the NCMA is, itself an instrument of industry common good, it will likely appear as a quite fitting alliance as we explore just a little what the Aftermarket Foundation is about.

The Aftermarket Foundation is a charitable organization, originally founded back in 1959, devoted strictly to people who have chosen an automotive aftermarket career, and their dependents and families. The Foundation’s motto is: ***If we don’t look after our own . . . who will?***

Its sole purpose is helping people of our industry (and their families and dependents) who have fallen into dire circumstances due to death, serious illness or accident, or other serious financial hardship, with nowhere else to turn. It is the only charity focused exclusively on the people of our industry. The Foundation provides financial assistance but, in many cases, is able to channel claimants to other established, conventional sources of help and support, including consultations and counselling, where applicable. The Aftermarket Foundation is organized under IRS 501(c)(3), and contributions are therefore tax deductible. “But,” - you may ask, - “what does it actually do?”

The Foundation is very careful to protect the privacy and dignity of its recipients, and space is limited here so, without identities, let's look together at just one example of what The Foundation does. Earlier this year, two young men in our industry who were partners in a speed shop and service and parts outlet, were out together testing a 'four-wheeler' and had a tragic accident. One of the partners was killed instantly but, at least, was well insured. The other's injuries left him quadriplegic and without a medical or disability plan. When this case was brought to The Foundation, its Recipient Committee met by telephone the same day and approved immediate interim assistance. The Foundation continued to assist with regular monthly sustenance, and was just about to provide the funds for a special hoist to enable this young man to get in and out of bed independently, when he died from complications. Despite this, The Foundation is continuing to provide monthly sustenance to his immediate dependents. And there are numerous other, diverse cases where help was and is being provided in cases of major tragedy, and others where only interim help is needed, where there is nowhere else to turn.

Because it has been an informal alliance motivated by 'common-good', and primarily by volunteers in both camps, it is a little difficult to get precise details of how the NCMA and the Aftermarket Foundation came together; but former NCMA President, Mark Seng, now senior VP of R.L. Polk told us that there were two separate ideas came together at around the same time: "Back in about 2003 or 2004, as President of NCMA, I was looking for something new to spice up one of the nights of the conference, and was discussing some of my thoughts with a number of other NCMA associates," he recalled, "I was thinking of a special 'President's Dinner' and something to actually make it special."

"Around that same time, one of our very supportive Service Providers, Nick Porrini of Technologue, had recently lost his wife, Sandy, to cancer, and had asked, instead of flowers or other recognitions, that memorial contributions be made to the Aftermarket Foundation." Nick Porrini told us: "For me it was that simple; I couldn't think of anything that could have made the President's dinner more meaningful, and the idea struck a harmonic chord with Mark Seng, the NCMA President at that time." Seng added: "Those two things came together, and we launched the President's Dinner with a Silent Auction and Raffle, with all funds raised going to the Aftermarket Foundation."

"We did pretty well with that," said Seng, "and we had some terrific and interesting contributions to the auction, but I think the most unique was one particular year, when we actually had the hood from a NASCAR race car, which had been autographed by its driver." "As I said, we were doing pretty well, but then, out of the blue, when we were at the awards luncheon, and announcing the actual tally of funds raised; another great NCMA supporter and Technology Provider, Pricedex Software, stepped in and started its tradition of 'rounding-up' whatever funds we raised with its own additional contribution, and bringing our totals to another level."

Mark also pointed out that the Foundation had been very appreciative of the NCMA contributions and that, for a couple of years, the NCMA conference had been the second highest single fundraising event for the Foundation. "We had some fun, and we added some excitement, but underneath it all, I think we all knew that we were supporting a very worthy cause, and felt good about what we were doing." "In retrospect," he added, "I'm certainly proud of what we've done for The Foundation, as I will always be proud of my years involved with the NCMA"

So it appears that this was a kind-of 'made-in-heaven' partnership of a 'common-good' industry-organization, going another step beyond to also make its stamp on another common-good organization of an entirely different kind.

It occurs to us that Mark Seng is quite right. We should all be proud of our involvement with the NCMA, but we can also be especially proud of being part of the NCMA's support of the Aftermarket Foundation. After all, - *"If we don't look after our own . . . who will?"*