



Karen McKemie named as General Manager of Mercedes-Benz of Houston, Greenway. Champion Automotive Group names female general manager for prestigious Houston dealership

Ms. McKemie, one of only a handful of female general managers, earns top spot at large Houston dealership.

([PRWEB](#)) May 25, 2004 --Greenway Plaza Mercedes-Benz, a member of the Champion Automotive Group, named Karen McKemie as its General Manager this month. McKemie brings over 20 years of professional experience to the position.

Ms. McKemie is the first woman to be appointed general manager of the Greenway dealership. She says of her new title, "It is an absolute privilege." McKemie is part of only a small percentage of women who hold operational positions in the automotive industry. "Being a woman general manager—especially of such a high-profile dealership—is still something of an anomaly in the industry," says McKemie. "People are often surprised when I introduce myself as the general manager."

However, it wasn't being a woman that moved McKemie to the top spot at Greenway. She has years of proven analytical, problem-solving skills and solid business background.

Prior to her position with Mercedes Greenway, Ms. McKemie held the title of Market Vice President for AutoNation, Inc. AutoNation owns Mercedes-Benz of Houston Greenway. Ms. McKemie graduated from Albion College in Michigan with a BA in Economics. She says that she worked as a college intern for a Detroit auto maker, but moved to Houston after college and concentrated developing a career in the energy and oil industries. However, when AutoNation offered her a position, she was eager to get back into the auto industry. With one condition. "I really wanted to work in the operations side of the business," she said. "Retail, manufacturing, operations—they are the exciting part of the auto industry. You get hooked."

Mary Mattis of Catalyst, a New York non-profit organization that work with businesses to advance women, would like to see more women in positions like McKemie's. Mattis says that women still tend to work in more of the "soft" disciplines of the auto industry, like human resources, corporate affairs, and public relations. Operations is considered a "hard" discipline, along with manufacturing, engineering, and sales. It is these "hard" positions that have direct influence on core business operations and are more likely to lead to top executive positions says Mattis.

With women purchasing 32% of all new cars and light trucks and influencing 80% of car purchases, the auto industry is becoming less of a man's world though. "I try to make sure I am visible on the [dealership] floor. I think women appreciate seeing other women on the sales floor," says McKemie. Ms. McKemie also says that the dealership has female service managers and sales staff in addition to the expected male workforce.

She is quick to point out that she is not catering to women only. "I want everyone to feel comfortable when they walk through the doors of my dealership," she says. "I hire my sales and service staff not based on gender but on their skills and how well they reflect the philosophy of Mercedes-Benz of Houston, Greenway."



And what is the dealership's philosophy? "We are very committed to providing an exceptional customer experience, laden with integrity, in sales and service. We always endeavor to do the right thing for our customers," says Ms. McKemie. "My goal as general manager is to restore customer confidence and to renew our outreach to customers. I think all of our customers—men and women—will be impressed with our culture changes."

AutoNation, Inc., headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is America's largest automotive retailer. Ranked No. 97 on the 2004 Fortune 500 and a component of the Standard and Poor's 500 Index, AutoNation employs approximately 28,000 people and owns and operates 365 new vehicle franchises in 18 states. Champion Automotive Group is the brand name for the more than 25 AutoNation stores operating in the South Texas region (Houston, Corpus Christi, and Austin.) Champion employs 2,500 associates and has more than 10,000 vehicles for sale. For additional information about AutoNation or Champion Automotive, visit their websites at <http://corp.AutoNation.com>, www.AutoNation.com, or www.championdealers.com.

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