

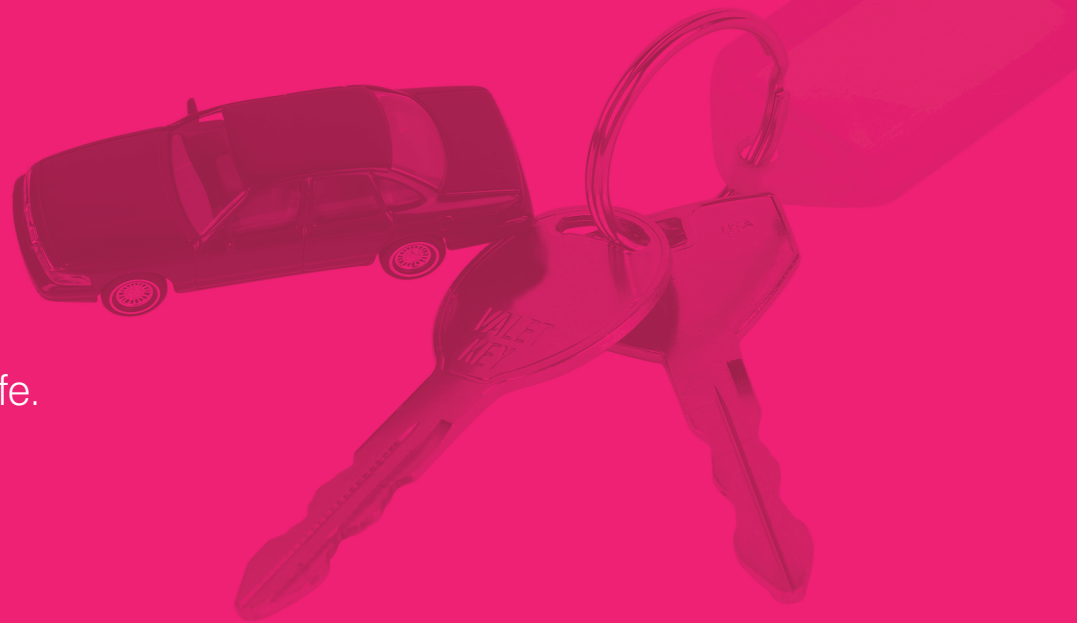


# the **keys** to a new life

by jennifer ortiz

**Giving** back to the community is a New Year's resolution for many, but for one AAIA member company, it has become the focus of a new ongoing nationwide program. Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper has launched a new nationwide program that helps victims of domestic violence and abuse gain their freedom through the donation of refurbished cars. Forming an alliance with 1-800 Charity Cars, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity, the entire group of Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper shareholders, along with hundreds of parts stores and certified service centers, hopes to give away 500 cars to victims of domestic violence in 2007. The program was announced during AAPEX 2006 by the Aftermarket Auto Parts Alliance, Inc., parent company to Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper.

Recipients have told Charity Cars that receiving a vehicle has a profound effect on their outlook on life. They report experiencing a rebirth of hope and self-esteem – many have even expressed the feeling that they have been given a second chance for a better life.



## facts on domestic violence

- **Two out of three women** seen in the emergency room exhibit at least one or more symptoms of physical abuse.
- **Twenty-nine percent** of all lone offenders are husbands/boyfriends/exes.
- **Thirty-four percent** of all adults in the U.S. have seen a man beating a wife or girlfriend.
- **Fourteen percent of women** report that a husband or boyfriend has been violent with them.
- **Ten percent of the victims** are pregnant at the time of abuse.
- **Ten percent** reported that their children had also been abused by the batterer.

"We are proud to be a part of this program, and thrilled at the opportunity to be neighbors helping neighbors," said Steve Marks, senior vice president, marketing and advertising, Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper. "We like being part of something with such a local touch and staying in our own community."

### the starting line

The American Institute on Domestic Violence reports that between three and four million women are battered each year, and the American Psychological Association estimates that 3.3 million children witness their mothers or female caretakers being abused. 1-800 Charity Cars, Inc. was established in 1996 and is the first charity of its kind in the nation, created to provide a free vehicle and vehicle support services to assist disadvantaged families in their transition from dependence to self-sufficiency. The program provides a vehicle that has been refurbished to insure safety and reliability, and the road to a new life for victims of domestic abuse.

"This is a particularly neglected group of people who don't have a champion," said Alliance national campaign chairperson R. Dale Leigh, CPC, AAM, Power Solutions Group, Inc. "The issue of domestic violence is often swept under the rug, and we want to turn up the visibility of this cause any way we can. These people have to make very courageous choices and establish their own autonomy, and this program is the way."

In the program, vehicles are donated directly to Charity Cars and Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper has a week to give them a thorough inspection. If they determine that the vehicle can be refurbished to ensure safety and reliability through the efforts of their partners in the distribution channel, the vehicles are taken to Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper service centers to be restored.

"This is a true partnership between warehouses, stores, WDs and manufacturers that provide parts," said Marks. "Right now we have about 15 vendors stepping up and participating in getting these vehicles ready for their deserving new owners. In our experience with this program, service centers are working on these vehicles on their own time, and we've found that once somebody has fixed one car for a victim, they're chomping at the bit to get started on another one."

Each vehicle leaves with a 12-month, 12,000 mile warranty on the services or repairs performed by the certified service center. Vehicles are registered and titled in the recipient's name. Recipients are required to maintain car insurance, which is covered for at least the first month by 1-800 Charity Cars, which also provides a license plate and covers the cost of the vehicle title transfer and registration. The domestic violence agency providing the qualified vehicle recipient also provides case management services for recipients.

Recipients have told Charity Cars that receiving a vehicle has a profound effect on their outlook on life. They report experiencing a rebirth of hope and self-esteem – many have even expressed the feeling that they have been given a second chance for a better life.

### a proven track record

"In every community, there are victims of domestic violence," said Shelly Miller, sales manager, Lee Auto Parts. "When we were looking to do a charity event in the Chicago area to help our community, we discussed doing other things like charity runs. Then our president Phill Porpora suggested that we do what we do best, which is repair cars."

Lee Auto Parts in Chicago, a Bumper to Bumper member, joined forces with Charity Cars in 2005, and launched their own local version of the program. Of their 115 shops in the Chicago area, 112 participated – and the program was able to provide 101 safe, dependable vehicles to recipients in the Chicago area. Ninety-six were domestic violence survivors in the process of leaving a shelter, and five were victims of Hurricane Katrina who had relocated to the Chicago area.

"I'll never forget October 16, when we gave those cars away," said Leigh. "I've been in the industry for more than 20 years – and there's nothing I can recall that made me feel as good as I did that day."

"The most phenomenal part of this program was seeing the camaraderie among shop owners, technicians, stores, leadership and the community when they came together," said Miller. "The day we gave away those cars was incredible – the recipients told us how these vehicles would change their lives. They were ready to get back into the community, and the only piece that was missing had been transportation. I've never had such an experience. And knowing that this program has gone nationwide is exciting to me."

Because of their success with the program in 2005, and their new affiliation with Auto-Wares, Lee Auto Parts is participating again in 2007 with three large events scheduled for Chicago, Wisconsin and Michigan in the fall, as part of the nationwide Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper program. This year, they hope to provide more than 200 vehicles to deserving members of their communities.

### helping hands across borders

"As soon as we saw what happened with Lee Auto in Chicago, we immediately wanted to get involved," said David Vaughan, sales and marketing manager, Eastern Automotive Warehousing in Fredericton NB, Canada. "We had a huge territory and a lot of hurdles, but this was no question, by far the greatest thing we've been a part of as far as our jobber stores are concerned."

Using the Lee Auto Parts 2005 campaign as a template, Eastern Automotive Warehousing took the concept global in 2006. Since the Charity Cars program is only in the United States, Vaughan and his team handled all the administration and teamed up with a local charity called the Women in Transition House. They partnered with a local radio station and had 12 vehicles donated from local people in Fredericton NB, which has a population of 65,000.

"Auto Machinery, the company that put this on, made sure all the cars were road-worthy, and we took care of them afterward, too," said Vaughan. "On September 27, we gave away all the vehicles. To this day, I get chills talking about it. It's the most moving thing I've ever done."

Because of its success in 2006, the program in Canada has just been kicked off for 2007.

"It's an amazing program," Vaughan said. "I'm so happy we can be part of it."

### neighbors helping neighbors

The unprecedented 2007 program is sponsored by the warehouses, parts stores and certified service centers flying the Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper flags. Each group in the distribution channel will play their own pivotal role. Warehouses and parts stores will furnish necessary replacement parts, and certified service centers will donate the labor.

"We have already started working on cars that have been donated for this year," Marks said. "Once we fix them, we get them to the recipients right away. We already have about 200 locations committed and ready to go for 2007, with more coming in on a regular basis."

"My personal experiences have made me sensitive to the real needs of these victims. These people are ready to become good neighbors and good citizens," said Leigh. "This program provides an opportunity to help real people in the real world in a real community."

"So many times people want to pull themselves up but just don't have the means," said AAIA chairman Richard H. Morgan, president and CEO, Aftermarket Auto Parts Alliance, Inc. "This car give-away will help families within each community rebuild their lives and start fresh. There's no better feeling than being a part of that."

For more information about Auto Value/Bumper to Bumper, visit [www.800autotalk.com](http://www.800autotalk.com). For more information about 1-800 Charity Cars, Inc., visit [www.1800charitycars.org](http://www.1800charitycars.org). ■

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