



# HUDSON-MOHAWK SECTION Mercedes-Benz Club of America

## **A SALUTE TO KEELER MOTOR CAR'S MERCEDES BENZ DEALERSHIP**



**HUDSON MOHAWK MERCEDES BENZ (HUDMO) CLUB MEMBERS** are very aware of Keeler's Mercedes Benz Dealership in our area since many members purchase or lease their vehicles, have their cars serviced or purchase parts from them. Many Board Members were interested in the inner workings of the dealership, so one sunny, frosty, winter day Kirk Daniels, our photographer, Sandra Griffin, our activities chair, and Vickie Parker, our newsletter editor, took a field trip. We had a scheduled appointment and were greeted with warmth and hospitality. One of the most notable characteristic of the visit was the genuine enthusiasm all of the employees had toward their individual jobs and the company itself. All were proud to be working there and were very happy to share their knowledge with us.



Our first interview was with **Peter Connolly, General Manager**. He supervises all areas/departments in the company and considers himself an Ambassador to employees and to the community. Peter began his career with Keeler in June, 1996, in sales and has held many different positions throughout his 22 year tenure. When we first met with him he had just returned from congratulating the Service Department on setting a record for the month of January. The CSI score (Customer Service Index) was 964, way above Corporate's expected index of 941. Sales' CSI's were 994, easily exceeding Corporate's expectation of 978. Both scores set a record for January, usually a slow month. Keeler is the only MB dealership within 150 miles to the west, 75 miles to the south, 80 miles to the east, and north to the Canadian border. Mr. Connolly answered some questions that we thought members might be interested in learning.

**WHAT ARE THE REWARDS/BENEFITS OF DOING BUSINESS WITH KEELER?** As a MBCA club member you receive a 10% discount on service, parts, and tires. If you have been a member for a year, you receive \$1,000 off the purchase of a new vehicle or \$500 of the purchase of a certified pre-owned vehicle. As a customer you are enrolled in the Keeler Rewards Program which gives points for service visits, parts or a new car purchase that can be used for free gift certificates redeemable at the service department.

Your membership card can be presented to many local businesses for discounts or special offers as per the membership manual. Mr. Connolly pointed out their attempt to involve community businesses into the rewards by "keeping it local." An Elite Concierge Service is also available at the time of vehicle purchase. The phone number for your personal concierge is given so owners can call any time they need for car or travel issues.

**WHAT NEW/EXCITING CARS ARE COMING OUT FOR 2019?** An A car, a sedan a little smaller than the C sedan is new for 2019. Several hybrids and electric cars that look like the GLC's will both include the regular dual hybrids and a plug-in electric car that will have 200 mile "real world miles."

**WHICH IS MORE POPULAR THE SUV MODELS OR THE SEDANS?** Nationally SUV's are more popular, but locally Keeler sells more sedans. The average age of a Benz driver is 56 years old.

**ARE THERE ANY MERCEDES MADE IN AMERICA?** Yes, beginning in 1997 the 1998 ML was made at the plant in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, which also makes the GL/GLE's and some C class editions. This year the National Star event will be held in Alabama, and a tour of the plant is sure to be included. A facility is also being built in Charleston, South Carolina to produce the Sprinter, the commercial van. Mercedes is building a new \$500 million corporate headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia to be completed this year.

**ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL EVENTS SCHEDULED?** Keeler has a customer appreciation party every year. Peter has managed this event for the last five years including this year's 50th Anniversary party. These celebrations are outstanding and live up to the Mercedes' slogan "The Best or Nothing."

**WHAT DO YOU FEEL MAKES KEELER A 'TOP SHELF' DEALERSHIP?** "It starts at the top. Mr. Keeler, of course, and me. That *is* my job. But longevity of employees is part of it. Most people he have been here for 10 to 30 years. We have a management team with over 100 years of experience.



**NORTHEAST  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

Ernie Fancy  
fancyer@cox.net

**Section President**

Jim Wright  
26 Crystal Lane  
Delmar, New York 12054  
518.281.3406  
[HUDSONMOHAWKMBCA@gmail.com](mailto:HUDSONMOHAWKMBCA@gmail.com)

**Vice President**

Chuck Trimarchi  
61 Mordella Road  
Albany, New York 12205  
518.869.6542  
[chucktrimarchi@yahoo.com](mailto:chucktrimarchi@yahoo.com)

**Treasurer**

Chuck Frigon  
[abfrigon@roadrunner.com](mailto:abfrigon@roadrunner.com)

**Newsletter Editor**

Vickie Parker  
[vparker2@nycap.rr.com](mailto:vparker2@nycap.rr.com)

**Membership Chairperson**

Saundra Griffin  
**Photography**  
Kirk Daniels

**Board of Directors**

Kirk Daniels  
  
Lew Decker  
Chuck Frigon  
Saundra Griffin  
  
Brett Kropf  
  
Vickie Parker  
Herb Sodher  
Chuck Trimarchi  
Jim Wright

**Past Presidents**

Ron Tanner  
Ginnette Maslanka

**Technical Advisors**

Rick Walker  
[rick.walker@keeler.com](mailto:rick.walker@keeler.com)  
Dan Rothstein  
[drothstein@keeler.com](mailto:drothstein@keeler.com)  
**Website Address**  
**MBCA-HudMo.com**  
**Website Coordinator**  
**Webmaster Brett Kropf**  
[Brett@kropf.com](mailto:Brett@kropf.com)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JIM WRIGHT, PRESIDENT HUDSON MOHAWK SECTION



The "S CLASS" has always been the flagship of the MERCEDES-BENZ brand. It is expected to be a study in superlatives in engineering, safety, power, style, beauty and class. The S450 is all that, and more. I had the joyful experience of driving one for a week and I am still smiling. When my 15-year-old "S" was at KEELER MOTOR CAR in Latham, New York, for repairs, Peter Connolly the general manager, allowed me to drive a "brand new 2018 S450", until my repair parts came from

It is a spaceship. The cockpit had all kinds of lights, dials, buttons and computer screens. I thought it was ready to go into orbit. Fortunately, Peter, sent the concierge to help me understand the basics and I found out I could ignore all that fancy technology and just talk to it, if I wanted. After you start the car it drives itself. You must pay attention, steer, brake and give it as much gas as you want it to have.

The car has keyless entry and starting. You can also unlock all the doors and open and close all the windows remotely. The car knows who you are and remembers your preferences, even your favorite fragrances. Setting up your choices can be quite involved, but fun. Temperature and cabin comforts are available to the driver and passengers. Exploring the options is like a treasure hunt; mood lights and accompanying music and seat adjustments, are just a few of the creature comforts. There are rainbows and pots of gold at every turn.



(Jim's Loaner Continued )

When you launch your spaceship, there are many features that you would expect in a top of the line luxury car, but some go far beyond what is expected for drivers and passengers. Here are just a few:

- Wide powerful LED illumination to see farther and around curves
- GPS to maintain speed on marked and unmarked roads
- Automatic lane changing
- Monitoring lanes when the lines are not visible
- Distronic Plus, Adaptive Cruise Control
- Camera systems to show all sides of the vehicle
- 362 horsepower V6 engine that gets 28mph on the highway
- Air suspension for extra comfort
- Paddle shifters if you want to be more aggressive and do it yourself
- Active braking
- 9 speed automatic transmission
- Seats that massage and air condition
- Reclining rear seats
- Heated armrest driver's side
- Panoramic Sun/Moon roof
- Phone chargers that are cordless
- Entertainment system that will play your music and sync to your smart phone applications
- Heated rear seats
- If you fall asleep or have an issue that renders you unable to drive the S450 will pull over and call 911
- The S450 can park itself

These are many of the most notable features. If you are impressed and thrilled as I was, BUY ONE! Get an S450 for me too !

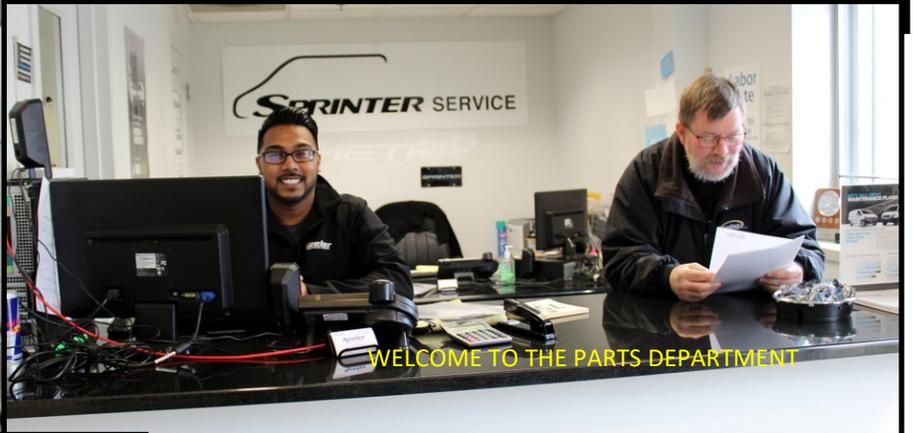
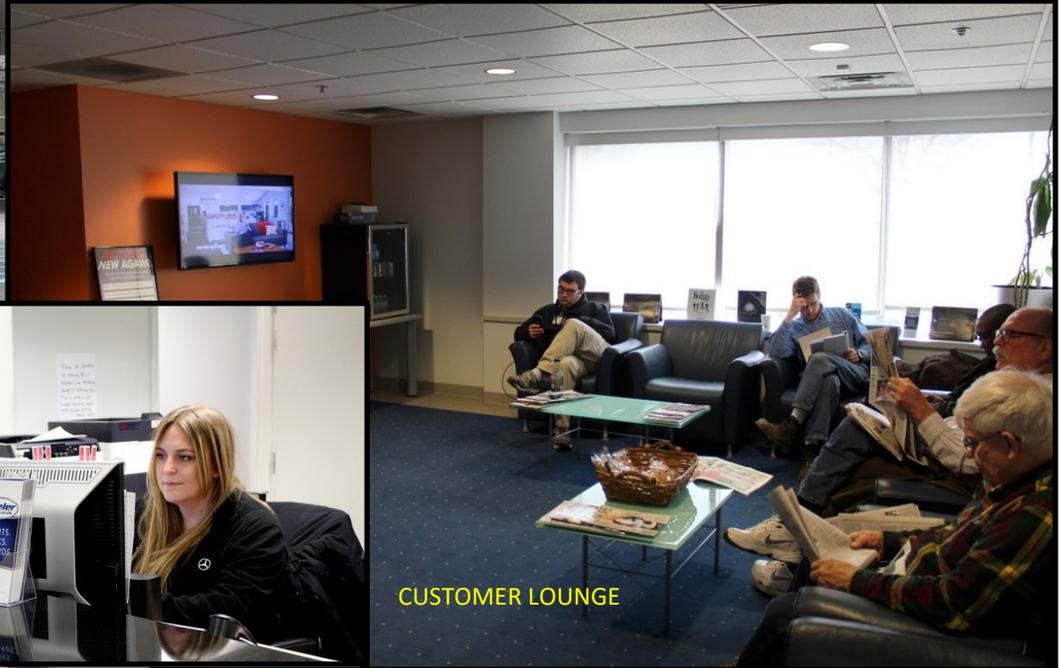
*More information can be obtained from [MBUSA.COM](http://MBUSA.COM) and [YOUTUBE.com](http://YOUTUBE.com)*



Keeler has two Sales Managers. One specializes in Certified Pre-Owned cars and one is primarily involved in new car sales and leases. We spoke with **Nicholas McDonald, New Vehicles and Lease Manager**. He oversees inventory, finance, leases and special orders. McDonald pointed out that Mercedes was the top seller in luxury cars this year surpassing Lexus, Porsche, and BMW's. This could be due to many factors; widespread advertising, product and model variety, or past history. About 70% of customers lease since it makes the quickly advancing technology available to them within three years. Most purchased cars are kept at least five years, and are behind in new electronics. Many Benz customers begin with pre-owned cars and then move into new vehicles. Mercedes Benzes are no longer your "grandfather's car." They have branched to appeal to many demographics. For example, the CLA is geared toward the millennials while the GL class SUV's are more for families.

Do you get confused by all the letters and numbers of the different models? McDonald cleared that mystery up for us. The nomenclatures are simple to figure out. Sedans, from smallest to largest, are given the letters A-C-E-S. The letters GL is the SUV class. Thus, a GLA is the smallest of the SUV's and a GLS is the largest of that model. The numbers that come after the letters signify the size of the engine. Sportscars begin with the letters SL and then get the last letter according to size and numbers according to engine size such as SLC250. Easy to understand once you know that, right?





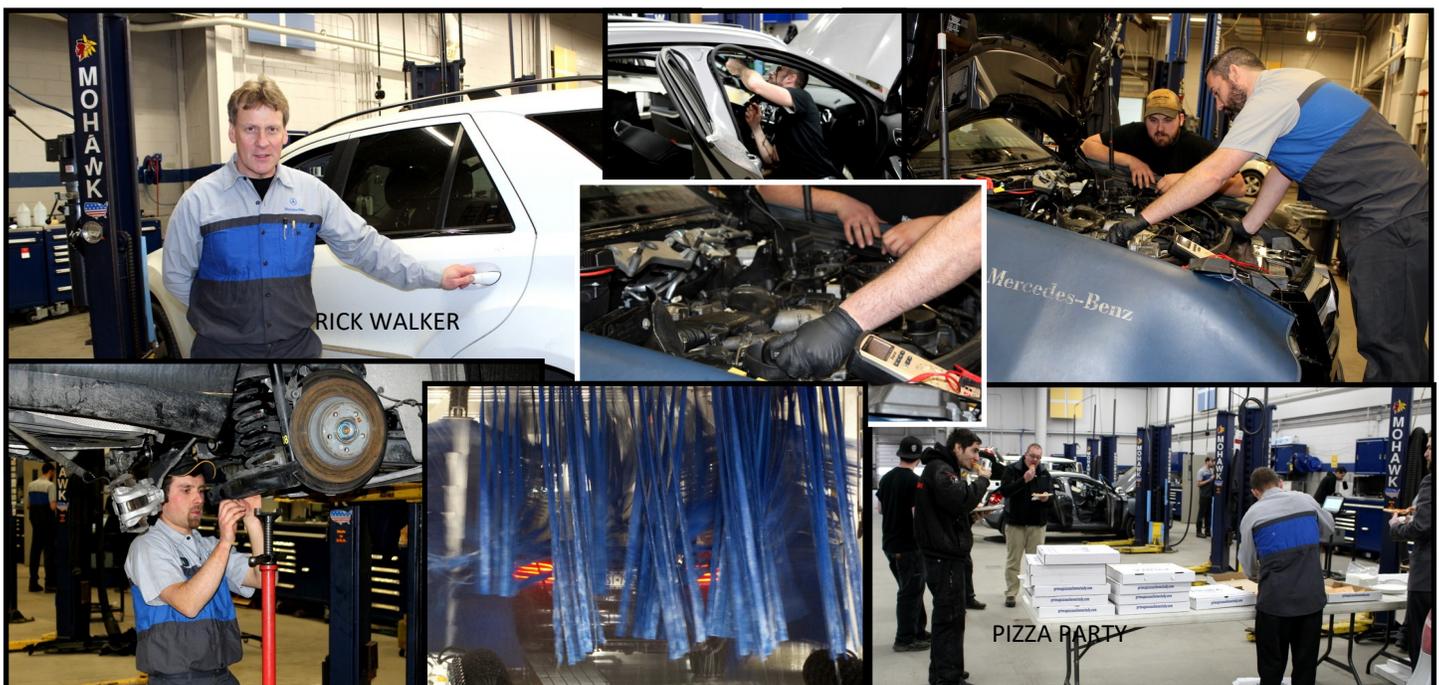
Next on our journey through Keeler's we met **Tim McKenna, Parts Manager**, an effusive, energetic and enthusiastic person who loves his work. He drives one hour each way from Massachusetts to get here. Tim has worked for Mr. Keeler for twelve years in different positions and has held his present job for three years. The parts widow is only one small piece of the Parts Department. There is a huge warehouse behind that little window housing tires, parts, logo merchandise and a shipping and receiving area that is bustling. Keeler has four parts trucks delivering wholesale merchandise to many body shops and service centers throughout a large area while still and foremost supplying their own service center's needs. They deal only with original parts, and if parts have to be ordered from Germany, it takes two weeks at least to be shipped, go through customs and be sent from Memphis, TN, their main warehouse. Sometimes it takes even longer. Presently they are dealing with air freight issues. There is a physical inventory once a year in their department and cycle counts four times a year to keep stock accurate. Since parts change rapidly, all employees often receive online training from corporate. At the conclusion of the interview McKenna supplied us with an array of logo merchandise that our club will use for raffles and door prizes, and we thanked him for that nice gesture.



The Service Department is managed by Dan Rothstein and assistant Mike Severino. We talked to **Rick Walker, Shop Foreman**, who most HUDMO members are familiar with because he runs our Tech Event every year. Rick has been at Keeler's for 28 years. He was Shop Manager for four years, but enjoyed working on the cars more, so he switched back. When asked what's new in Mercedes mechanics, he explains that the combustible engine is still based upon the same principle, but the electronics and technology have become more advanced. Cars are on the threshold of assistive driving; they now can park themselves as seen on the E class, and there is a movement toward self-driving cars in all autos. Much of a car's functionality is computer-based. Since technology changes so rapidly, all technicians must have constant training. There is training online for both older and new vehicles available, and there are five Mercedes Benz training facilities in the country, but with over 5,000 technicians it is difficult to get them all in for training. In order to be hired by Keeler, technicians must have Benz training or experience with a Mercedes training-specific program. Universal Technical Institute, located near Boston, offers training classes, but it is pricey. There have been a few women technicians who have worked at Keeler, but only a few. It is very do-able for a woman to work there because presently the job is more problem solving rather than the physical work of previous years. They do not do restorations which are slower paced and require more historic artistry and research. The service department is late model oriented and time sensitive with an eye toward customer convenience and troubleshooting. A fleet of loaners is available for customer convenience while cars are being serviced if you request one when making your appointment, shuttle service is also available to and from work or other locations or you may enjoy the quiet of the waiting room where treats, coffee and drinks are offered while you wait for your car to be pampered. Plus, all vehicles are returned to you newly washed and shiny.

When we left Rick the service area was set up for a pizza lunch for all employees (and us) compliments of the management because of the good month they had in January. We were told this is a common occurrence throughout the dealership, a nice treat.

We left with a very positive feeling toward Keeler Mercedes. All employees were quick to praise Sandy Keeler who began the dealership 50 year ago. He certainly must be doing something right! Everyone has pride in their workplace and can't say enough about the cooperation between departments. Keeler Motors is service oriented and respected, and they transfer this respect to their customers. Their vehicles are pretty nice too!





**Congratulations to John and Theresa Behrendt** of Saratoga Springs, NY for their recent “Best of Class” win at the Amelia Island Concours d’ Elegance. Their 1961 Mercedes Benz 190SL was recently restored by the local artisans of Ensign Autobody. John and Theresa also participated in the sanctioned road tour the day prior to the Concours. The tour left the Ritz Carlton, traveled to the Little Talbot state park, then North to the Fort Clinch State Park, then concluded with a public display and lunch in beautiful down town Fernandina Beach, Florida.



# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

## **MAY - MAY 14 - 21, STARFEST 2018, MAY 14 - 21 BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA**

HUDMO members planning to go? Contact Brett Kropf, Brett@kropf.com to possibly meet up or organize in Alabama

## **JUNE - JUNE 16, 2018 FASNY MUSEUM OF FIREFIGHTING**

. There are several interactive and virtual displays for the youngsters however this is not just an event geared to the young as most visitors are adults unaccompanied by children. If you go online to <http://www.fasnyfiremuseum.com/> you will find a wealth of information about the museum. Event organized by Ron Tanner. RSVP to Sandra Griffin by June 10, griffin\_16810@msn.com

Here are our plans for the visit:

- Time: 11:00 AM
- Meeting place: Golden Harvest Farm, Niverville, NY (may also be listed as Kinderhook)
- Caravan to Fire Museum @ 117 Henry Howard Avenue, Hudson, NY 12534
- One and half to two hour visit
- Brunch in downtown Hudson at the Red Dot on Warren St. (weather permitting we will do brunch in the garden)
- Child friendly activity and restaurant
- Children under 3 must be accompanied by an adult

Admission for adult is \$10.00 for children between the ages of 4 and 17 is \$5.00 (children 3 or younger can not participate in all youth activities)

## **JULY - July 15, 2018 , SARATOGA POLO, Sunday, 4:30, 2 Bloomfield Road, Greenfield Center NY 12833. More info to follow.**

## **AUGUST - AUGUST 8, 2018, BREAKFAST AT SARATOGA RACE TRACK MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW**

## **SEPTEMBER - SEPTEMBER 9th, CAR SHOW AND FAMILY PICNIC Glen Doone Picnic Area, Thatcher Park. More details will follow.**

## **OCTOBER - OCTOBER 19-21, CAR RALLY, A three club event starting at Jiminy Peak. Details to follow**

## **DECEMBER - DECEMBER 1, 2018, HOLIDAY PARTY Details to follow.**

**LEAD FOOT LUCY CAR CRUISE - AT Kohl's Plaza, Colonie, 6:00 pm some sunny Wednesday in July or August will be announced *via* email on Monday of that week, weather dependent. We've done it for the last 2 years and had a fun evening.**

## **TECH SHOW - DETAILS and DATE TO FOLLOW**

# The GLC300 4MATIC Coupe

Capable of captivating.  
Driven by desire.

Starting at \$45,950\*<sup>MSRP</sup>



\* Excludes all options, taxes, title registration, \$925 transportation charge and dealer preparation fees.



**Keeler**  
MOTOR CAR COMPANY

Rte. 7, Latham, New York  
(518) 785-4197  
[www.keelermercedesbenz.com](http://www.keelermercedesbenz.com)



HUDSON-MOHAWK SECTION  
MERCEDES-BENZ CLUB OF AMERICA

James Wright, President  
P.O. 38294 Albany, NY 12203

Need Roadside Assistance? Call: 1-800-FOR MERCEDES  
Please renew your membership. HUDSON-MOHAWK SECTION