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Mary Byrne, Advantage Nissan, Named First Woman President of Washington State Auto Dealers Association

June 11 – **Mary Byrne** was named 2009/2010 President of the Washington State Auto Dealers Association (WSADA) on May 16 at the organization’s annual convention. She previously served on the WSADA Board of Directors and Executive Committee before becoming the Association’s first woman president in its 90-year history. Mary began her automotive career as a salesperson and 10 years later opened her own store, Nissan of Fife. She sold that store in 2008 and is now a partner at Advantage Nissan in Bremerton.

Among Mary’s goals as WSADA President are growing the number of dealers and dealership employees who work closely with state and federal elected officials to educate them on the value of franchised dealers to the state and on ways they can help maintain a strong, healthy franchise system. Mary also intends to continue the Association’s partnership with the Departments of Licensing and Revenue and the Office of the Attorney General to develop and maintain a fair and balanced regulatory approach that supports an ethical and level playing field for dealers and consumers, and continue focused training that educates dealerships on how to be profitable while providing the ultimate customer service experience in a changing sales environment. “Car dealers are the most generous, resilient individuals I know and, despite the turmoil the automobile industry is experiencing, we will emerge stronger than ever,” she said.

Being “first” is nothing new for Mary; she was in the first class of females admitted to Bellarmine Preparatory School in Tacoma when it became the first Jesuit high school in the country to become co-ed, and she was the first female to play on the school’s boys’ varsity soccer team.

Mary and her husband, Kevin, have been married 23 years and have two sons - James who is a student at Pacific Lutheran University, and Chase, who attends St. Charles Borromeo School in Tacoma. Yet, in addition to family obligations and her involvement at the dealership, Mary makes time to volunteer. She co-chaired the St. Charles’ annual fundraiser this year, and served as a crossing guard there for three years. “It’s a job nobody signs up for because it’s not glamorous and it’s often cold and rainy,” Mary said. “We were kind of goofy with our vests that have red flashing lights on them, but I loved helping at the school because it was great to see all of the kids.”

Mary also sat on the board of directors of the Greater Pierce County Chapter of the American Heart Association, and she and her husband co-chaired its Heart Ball Gala in 2007 which drew 400 attendees. “I volunteer because it’s the right thing to do,” Mary said. “I was raised that you have to give back and so I do.”

WSADA’s 312 dealer members serve 75 communities in Washington and are responsible for annual sales volume in excess of \$13 billion. Together, they employ over 22,000 people with a combined payroll of more than \$1 billion. Their dealership sales total 15% of the state’s retail sales, generating hundreds of millions of dollars of tax revenue for state and local governments through sales, corporate, and payroll tax revenue.

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