



(Left) Pictured from top, 2013 Ford Fusion, 2013 Ford F-150, and 2013 Lincoln MKZ. (Right) The 2013 Mazda CX-5 in the Art Hill showroom in Merrillville.

LEFT: PHOTOS PROVIDED. RIGHT: TONY V. MARTIN | THE TIMES

ART HILL FORD, LINCOLN AND MAZDA: INTEGRITY, SINCERITY, AND SERVICE SINCE 1948

Northwest Indiana residents are sure to recognize the yellow and red arrow sign of Art Hill Auto Group on Lincoln Highway. "That sign has been around since the beginning, it represents a lot of history for us," said Pete Blagojevic, general manager of Art Hill Auto Group. "Art Hill opened his dealership in 1948 in Crown Point. Then seeing the expansion coming to the US 30 corridor, he moved it out here to Merrillville in 1970. In 1990, Art Hill's grandsons Art Fairchild and Bill Fairchild took over. Bill is still active in the dealership today. This family has built a solid longstanding business by treating people in an honest, upfront fashion, and we try to instill that in our entire staff. I've dedicated my professional career here - over 19 years. I know 80 percent of the people who walk in the door. If you are in the other 20 percent, I'll get to know you. Repeat customers and referrals are a huge part of our business. We have third generation families coming in. We take good care of our customers."

"Last year we saw a 30 percent increase ... One reason is Ford has the right product at the right time. The other reason is our customer satisfaction keeps people coming back."

**Pete Blagojevic, General Manager
Art Hill Auto Group**

The Art Hill Auto Group team is really excited about Ford's new product line. "Ford has the hottest vehicles out there right now," Pete said. "They made major investments in new technology and new vehicles that are really paying off. The quality is top notch, and the emphasis is on fuel economy. They are all selling well, but the Fusion, Escape, and Focus are the top sellers right now. Our F-150 has been the best selling pickup for the last 36 years. It has a 45 percent market share. Explorer sales are always up there. That has been a really important product for our region since it's built at Ford's Chicago assembly plant. It brought a lot of jobs to the area."

The Ford Fusion was completely redone for 2013, following up on the introduction of the all-new Focus last year. It has a sharp new look and lots of powertrain choices, including EcoBoost, Hybrid, and Plug-in Hybrid versions. It



Art Hill Mazda sales team (L to R) Ben DeStjean, Charlie White, John Svejda.

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Art Hill Lincoln sales staff (L to R) John Mauer, Pete Blagojevic, Jim Kerabetsos, Borce Nikolov, Jerry Pedtke, Carl Holsapple, Dan Schultz, Bob Zima, E. J. Viking, Robin Purnell.

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has a number of interesting in-car technologies like blind spot monitoring with cross-traffic alert, adaptive cruise control, active parking assist, lane-keeping system, and is available with MyFord Touch, to name a few.

The 2013 Ford Escape is completely new as well, and offers two different EcoBoost four-cylinder engines along with the base 2.5 liter. EcoBoost is Ford's name for a family of new engines combining the technologies of turbocharging, variable valve timing, and gasoline direct injection to increase fuel economy. Through more precise fuel metering and the extra turbo boost, they have succeeded in delivering on the inherent efficiency of a smaller engine size along with the power levels of a larger engine. EcoBoost V-6

engines are proving extremely popular choices in the Chicago-built Taurus, Explorer, and even the F-150.

Pete said the Art Hill crew is paying close attention to the recent rebirth of the Lincoln Motor Company. "What you are seeing is the same thing they did with Ford," said Pete. "Three years ago Ford went through a revival led by Alan Mulally. That's why you are seeing all these new Ford products now. Because after all, in this business, you can have excellent customer service, but it won't matter if you don't have great product to sell. You'll be seeing the new Lincolns over the next few years. In fact, the new 2013 Lincoln MKZ has already arrived, offering a look at what's to come in the years ahead."

But don't forget there is another lineup

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at Art Hill Auto Group. "Mazda is off to a great start," said Pete. "It's going to be a big year for Mazda. They have a lot of advanced new technology and new products. They have been going through a brand revival just like Ford and Lincoln. The Mazda3 is the best seller and the CX-5 crossover is selling very well. The new-for-2014 Mazda6 is really good looking car."

Mazda has been recently introducing new innovations. Mazda has a new technology called SKYACTIV, which is a whole new concept on how the cars are built for customers. It's engineering for performance and efficiency, with social, economic, and environmental concerns in mind. The 2013 Mazda3 has a new SKYACTIV engine and transmission that gets 40 mpg with an internal combustion engine, without having to go to a hybrid. Mazdas are built around sportiness, with fuel economy in mind.

Even if you are not looking to purchase a new car, Art Hill Auto Group has a large selection of used vehicles. "We have a comprehensive selection in the used department," said Pete. "You can find just about anything here. We also have some excellent lease deals because the residuals are so high."

Art Hill is always offering service specials for Ford, Lincoln, and Mazda. They send mailers to regular customers, and current coupons are available on the website. Art Hill Auto Group also has a body shop, making it a true full-service dealership. The service department and body shop open at 7:30 am Monday through Friday. The body shop stays open until 6:00, as does the service department on Fridays, staying open until 6:30 the rest of the week.

As a longtime business leader in the area, Art Hill has a tradition of giving back to the community. They support local youth sports programs, church groups and various other causes. "We do whatever we can to help the community."

Pete sees the economy picking up in the local community and the Art Hill Auto Group team is staying busy. "Last year we saw a 30 percent increase, and we expect we'll do it again," said Pete. "One reason is Ford has the right product at the right time. The other reason is our customer satisfaction keeps people coming back."