

Tour newest RVs at fairground show

By Tara Marion

On March 3 and 4, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., select recreational vehicle dealerships from a 40-mile radius will showcase this year's new products at the Kalamazoo County Fairgrounds.

Here, at the last of three RV shows put on this year by the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek RV Dealers Association, visitors at the show will see a variety of campers and area campgrounds.

"Campers" is a term that encompasses motor homes, fifth wheels, travel trailers, pop-up campers, fold-out tent trailers, pick-up campers and truck campers.

Models and displays will be provided by Quality Products Sales and Service, of Plainwell; Ritsema Trailer Sales and Service, of Hastings, Bedford RV Sales and Service, of Battle Creek; Ewing Motor Home and Trailer Sales, of Battle Creek, Beech Grove Trailer Sales, of Marcellus; and Curtis Trailer Center, of Schoolcraft.

"You'll be able to comparison shop within walking distance, instead of driving distance—and it doesn't take a full week," like it would if you had to drive to all of the businesses' locations, said Nicholas Marietti, vice president of Curtis Trailer Center.

The same benefit applies for the campgrounds represented at the show. They include Oak Shores Resort Campground, of Vicksburg, Oak Shores Campground, of Decatur, Camelot Campground L.L.C., of Jones; and American Campgrounds, of Kalamazoo. While people are shopping for campers, they can get a feel for nearby places available to take them. "Some people don't know that 10 or 15 miles down the road was a campground," Marietti said, "so they discover that also."

Given the variety of campers and campgrounds that will be at the show, there will be a lot of competition. "We're not going to have just one brand there, so it's not going to be a knock-down-drag-out fight in price," Marietti said, but it will mean savings and rebates on new models."

The show will be a great place to see the biggest trend in RVs: the slide out, which is a room that slides out approximately 4 feet from the main unit. The slide out is usually used as an eating area or a living room but could also be used as a bedroom or other living space. According to Marietti, the slide out "seems to be the most sought-out product this year."

Another trend is lightweight fifth wheels and travel trailers. Not everyone has a vehicle equipped to tow these campers, so their lighter weight (3,000 to 4,000 pounds, rather than 5,000 pounds) makes them more accessible.

Not only will you be able to shop for a variety of new RVs from a variety of manufacturers, you will also be able to enjoy refreshments from the Gobles Drift Busters, a local snowmobile club that has been running the concession stand for years.

The show is sponsored by the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek RV Dealers Association, to which Curtis Trailer Center and three of the other dealers belong. Admission for the show will be \$2 for adults, \$1 for children over 5 years old and free for children under 5. The association hosted two previous shows in southwestern Michigan, one in January and the other earlier this month.

If those earlier shows were any indication of the one to be held this upcoming weekend, Marietti expects the attendance to be up from last year's show. "The camping industry, the RV industry, has grown tremendously in the past 10 years, and it shows in campground demographics," Marietti said. "It's more of a family atmosphere, and a lot of people tend to get into camping because they want to spend time with their kids."

Whether your plans are for short trips with the family or cross-country travel in your retirement, you are sure to find an RV at the show that will suit your needs and budget.