



**News Release**



**National Independent Automobile Dealers Association**

**[www.niada.com](http://www.niada.com)**

For Immediate Release

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## **Kirk Brown Named to NIADA's Ring of Honor**

*AutoZone Executive Is 31st Industry Leader Selected for Association's Highest Non-Dealer Award; Scholarship Recipients, Crystal Eagle Winners Honored*

**Las Vegas (June 20, 2019)** -- AutoZone director of strategic accounts and program development Kirk Brown, whose commitment to independent dealers forged a relationship that has moved the used vehicle industry forward, has been named the newest member of the National Independent Automobile Dealers Association's prestigious Ring of Honor.

Brown became the 31st auto industry leader to be inducted into the Ring of Honor, NIADA's highest award for non-dealers, during Wednesday night's National Leadership Awards Banquet, part of the 73rd annual NIADA Convention and Expo at the Venetian Resort in Las Vegas.

NIADA's Ring of Honor recognizes allied industry leaders who have contributed to the professionalism and growth of the automobile industry through outstanding performance and leadership.

"Whenever he speaks about his position or his company," NIADA CEO Steve Jordan said, "he is quick to move toward speaking about the partnership with NIADA that has grown over the years and how that relationship has been instrumental in growing our segment of the business through collaborative efforts aimed at providing greater value to dealers.

"That relationship became a catalyst and an accelerator for implementing ideas that create local partnerships well beyond just another on-demand parts provider."

Brown's career in the auto industry began while he was still in college and spans 35 years, during which he has become a leader on the commercial side of the auto retail business. He has spent the past 16 years with AutoZone following stints with NAPA and CarQuest.

In those years he has managed national sales teams, and headed up commercial operations. In his latest role, Brown leads AutoZone's national account team, which includes a major focus on Buy Here-Pay Here in addition to the new and used car segments.

In conjunction with sister company ALLDATA, AutoZone has helped create competitive differentiators that ensure independent dealers have the technology to better repair vehicles and keep customer loyalty.

Brown said the partnership between AutoZone/ALLDATA and NIADA has created "a unique advantage that allows us to not only service the parts needs of dealers but ultimately to provide repair information that ensures each dealer keeps their customers satisfied by providing quality used vehicle repair or recon.

"When we hitched our wagon to NIADA 10 years ago, we were still learning about this segment of the business. We've come a long way. ... I'm really excited to see how the coming years bring a more collaborative effort."

The banquet also honored recipients of NIADA scholarships and winners of the Crystal Eagle award for their efforts in increasing association membership.

Chad Palmer of Clarkston, Mich., was recognized at the banquet as the winner of the NIADA and Cox Automotive Scholarship Presented by Manheim, a \$10,000 scholarship for a student at Northwood University.

A junior majoring in automotive marketing and management at Northwood, Palmer says he is always thinking and doing something auto-related, from attending Cars and Coffee on weekend mornings to helping friends with their automotive projects.

Since enrolling at Northwood in the fall of 2016, he has spent his summers at auto dealerships, working and interning with Bowman Chevrolet in his hometown of Clarkston. This summer he is an intern in Penske Automotive Group's 10-week rotation program in the Atlanta market.

On graduation in May 2020, Palmer plans to enroll in Penske's manager program.

The NIADA Foundation also awarded scholarships to deserving students from each of the association's four regions. The recipients were Eric Yang of Ellicott City, Md. (Region I), Ian Hall of Nashville, Tenn. (Region II), Taylor Akin of Purcell, Okla. (Region III) and Samuel Griffith of Lodi, Calif. (Region IV).

In addition, 12 NIADA members were presented with the Crystal Eagle award in recognition of their outstanding efforts in generating new members for NIADA.

From the Carolinas IADA: Kim Bradshaw of 1st Nations Auto Sales, Darryl Jackson of Crown Auto Sales & Finance, Steve Matthews of Matthews Motors, Kevin Pendergrass of Carolina Auto Sales of Myrtle Beach, Steve Wetmore of McAdenville Motors, Jerry Padrick of M&M Auto Sales, Michael Threadgill of Van's Auto Sales, Marshall Perry of Marshall's Used Cars, Martha Brown of Dris/Vista Holdings Group and Sammy Bernardo of ProGuard Warranty; from Georgia IADA: Dennis Pope of People's Financial; and from Texas IADA: Jose Engler of Irving Motors Corp.



**Kirk Brown (left) receives the Ring of Honor award from NIADA CEO Steve Jordan.**