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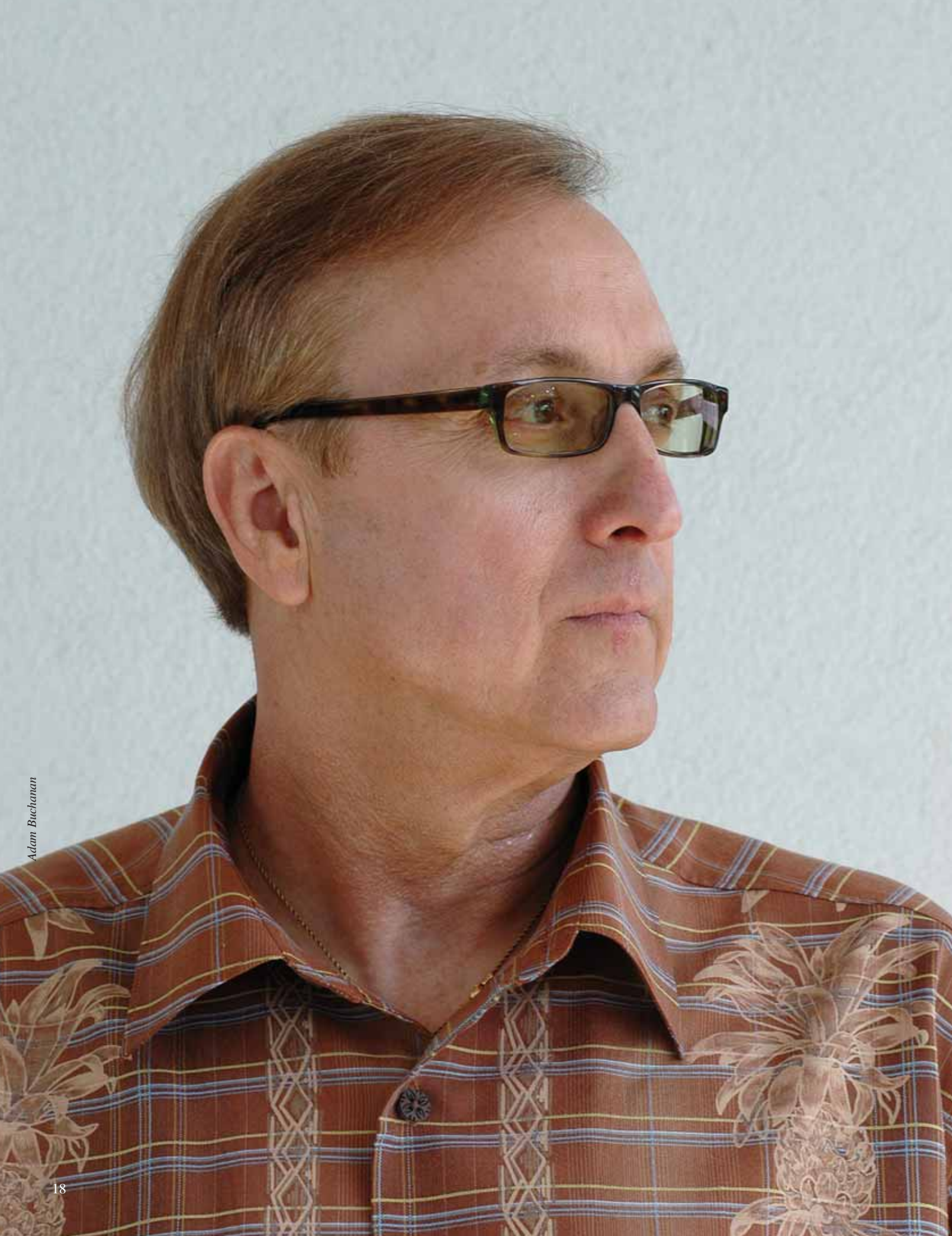
# THE PUGET SOUND DEALER



**Kent Chaplin**  
*Giving goes to overtime!*

1-90 BELLEVUE  
**Chaplins**  
Drivers wanted.   
**Chaplins**

Summer 2007



Adam Buchanan

# Kent Chaplin

## *Giving goes to overtime!*

By Mark Cutshall

There's a reason why Kent Chaplin reached out to an 18-year-old Russian hockey player and gave him the security and love of a family he left behind in Moscow.

There's a reason why Kent and his wife Barb have given several physically disabled and emotionally needy children the camping experience of a lifetime – at no cost to their parents.

And there's a reason why Kent and his dealership team have said “Yes” to virtually every one of the hundreds of Eastside charities, schools and organizations who've come to them wanting to further the life and future of a child.

How can a man who was given so little in his formative years, grow up and discover how to give so much and so freely to so many?

The reason has something to do with the sobering memories of his youth. “I grew up in an alcoholic family in Worcester, Massachusetts,” recalls Kent. “When the bills came, and the bills couldn't be paid, we kept moving.” The family finally settled in Seattle, a number of changed addresses later, he graduated from Shorecrest High School.

One reason young Kent Chaplin survived is that, when he was 20, he was friended by Bill McCalmon Sr., the owner of Lynnwood Auto-Wrecking. McCalmon told Kent, “I like you a lot. You work hard. Don't let anyone ever stop you from doing what you want to do.” He loaned Kent some money to get by, and when Kent prepared a written promissory note, McCalmon scoffed. “You've given me your word,” he told Kent. “I trust you.”



Adam Buchanan

Kent trusted his instincts and his resolve to succeed. He took a liking to the car business. Determined to start a used car dealership in north Seattle, he asked a banker for a \$5,000 loan. The banker said, "No." Kent asked again, three weeks later — and got another "No." Twenty-five times he asked for the same loan, and each time he was denied. After he made his twenty-sixth request, the banker relented and wrote on the paperwork, "Nuisance Loan."

Kent and his partner, Louis Lamb, not only repaid the loan in 90 days, they parlayed their investment into Kompact Kar Korner in Lynnwood. After a successful twenty-year run, Kent sold his share of the company to his business partner and then set his sights on buying a new car dealership. A year later, in early 1993, he met Jerry Kenney, who owned a Mazda dealership in Eastgate. Kent's cold call visit turned into a three-hour discussion. "We drew up the buy-sell contract on a piece of butcher paper and consummated the deal on a handshake."

Chaplins Automotive Group, which today includes Volkswagen, Subaru and North Bend Chevrolet, has flourished. "We don't want to be the biggest, but we do want to be the best and treat people like you want to be treated," says Kent.

Living out the Golden Rule has given Kent Chaplin priceless blessings in life — loyal employees empowered to make their own decisions and satisfied customers who expect (and receive) nothing less than courtesy, service and total satisfaction.

With the same determination he deepened, thanks to a stubborn banker, with the unwritten trust of a handshake, and with a heart to help to those whose circumstances in life are not so golden, Kent Chaplin has discovered a reason for living.

He watched as his youngest son, Tyson, took a liking to hockey. "Everything it takes to be successful in business — the work ethic, team spirit — Tyson learned through playing hockey." Because of Tyson's achievements on ice and because Barbara, Kent's wife, loves the sport, Kent helped find fellow investors to purchase the Seattle Thunderbirds hockey team. The Seattle Thunderbirds play in the western hockey league where every player receives a year of college tuition and expenses for every season they play on the Thunderbirds if they do not sign a professional contract.

Nine years ago, Oleg Saprykin was a teenager who barely spoke English when he came from Moscow to play with the team. "We're his U.S. family, and he's like my fourth son," says Kent, ever mindful of his three boys, Brandon, Nick and Tyson. On her birthday, Barbara receives roses from Oleg. Such is the priceless, lifetime bond of friendship forged by the Chaplins' generosity.

If life were a hockey game, you would need countless overtimes to consider all the individuals and families they have touched. The Forgotten Children's Fund is one. Picture children from working families who have suffered a temporary setback. Then picture a new toy or new bike, along with food, clothing and other necessities arriving at a family's home in time for the Big Day. It continues to happen because the Chaplins remain involved.

Then, there is the M Bar C Ranch Experience program for children with mental, physical and emotional handicaps. Nine months out of the year, the ranch's gates swing open and, as "cow-boys," Kent and Barb welcome children to a full day of activities, all at no cost to the family, of course.

M Bar C Ranch's motto is, "There's nothing better for the inside of a kid than the outside of a horse."

Whether it's the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation where Barbara serves on the board, or the Overlake Service League through which the dealership has funded numerous local charitable causes, the reason for the Chaplins' generosity is quite simple:

"You want to have a profitable dealership. When you're young, you want the whole pie and the contents. As we get older," says Kent, "our priorities change. Society measures your success by money, yet being successful is really all about helping other people."

There was the mother who wrote Kent about her boy's medical needs after his face had been disfigured in an automobile accident. They didn't have the means to get the medical care they needed. So Kent Chaplin stepped forward. He did what others have so generously shown him, taught him, and inspired him to do. He gave out of his bounty.

Today, he trusts the same generosity that Bill McCalmon, Sr. and others extended to him will flourish in all three of his sons — Brandon, like his two younger brothers, is a college graduate; Nick is a service manager in the Subaru store, while Tyson is an assistant parts manager.

The dealership's longtime controller, Gale Caroon, has opened the envelopes of countless charitable requests. "I can't remember the last time we turned someone down."

Kent Chaplin remembers what he learned long ago in front of that banker: Never, ever give up.

And someday, if you're fortunate to make it in the auto business, never say "No" to a giving opportunity guaranteed to make the heart say "Yes." ■