

Illinois Auto Dealer Named the 2024 Ally Sees Her Award Winner for Her Leadership in the Auto Industry and Her Commitment to Community

Karen Sutton-Ford, dealer principal at Sutton Ford inMatteson, Ill., was honored at National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers conference in Miami

MIAMI, Aug. 26, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- Karen Sutton-Ford, dealer principal of Sutton Ford inMatteson, Ill., has been named the winner of the prestigious Ally Sees Her Award. Established by Ally Financial and the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers (NAMAD) seven years ago, the award recognizes the significant achievements of women of color in the auto retail industry and their commitment to strengthening their communities.

"This award reinforces my belief that I fulfill my purpose when I build others," Sutton-Ford said about the award. "My mission is to show that women of color belong and can have a huge impact in the auto business."

Inspired by the Association of National Advertisers #SeeHer campaign to elevate women in media and marketing, Ally created the award to recognize promising, young women leaders in the auto retail industry.

The dealership business was in Sutton-Ford's blood. Her parents, Mallory and Nate Sutton, bought their first dealership in 1989. However, they insisted their daughter get experience outside of the Sutton Auto Team before joining the family business. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in finance from Hampton University, a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in Virginia, in 2010, Sutton-Ford worked as a financial analyst at IBM in New York City.

But her automotive background soon drew her back. In 2012, she joined Toyota Motor Sales in Torrance, Calif. as a management trainee and then relocated to San Francisco where she was promoted to analyst and later District Service Manager.

After earning an MBA at Emory University, she joined Sutton Ford in 2015 as Commercial and Fleet manager. She is a National Auto Dealer Association Academy graduate and served as secretary of NAMAD Next Gen, a program focused on the new generation of auto dealers. She will take on the Next Gen vice president role this year.

"Her commitment to learning and personal growth combined with her knowledge of the auto industry have driven her path in the auto business," said Natalie Brown, senior director of Corporate Citizenship at Ally, who presented Sutton-Ford with the award during the NAMAD ceremony last week. "Her heart and dedication to her community are what makes her a natural for the Ally Sees Her Award."

Sutton-Ford is a member [The Links, Incorporated](#) and [Delta Sigma Theta](#) sorority, two organizations committed to enriching the lives of African Americans. She is also an active member of her church, Emmaus Community, in Olympia Fields, Ill.

To celebrate Sutton-Ford's leadership and community involvement, Ally is donating \$10,000 to [the Seeking Vision, Gaining Success Foundation](#), a charity created by HBCU graduates to provide scholarships for HBCU students. Sutton-Ford credits Hampton and the HBCU experience for broadening her outlook and making her the leader she is.

"I want to open doors for others and give them the confidence they need to never give up. Those are traits of a successful dealer," she said.

Perry Watson IV, president of NAMAD, added, "Karen and her family are the epitome of excellence and the possibilities the auto industry offers. This recognition shows what women of color bring to the industry."

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