

Automotive Trends

From Soccer Moms To Gearheads: Auto Owners Get Personal

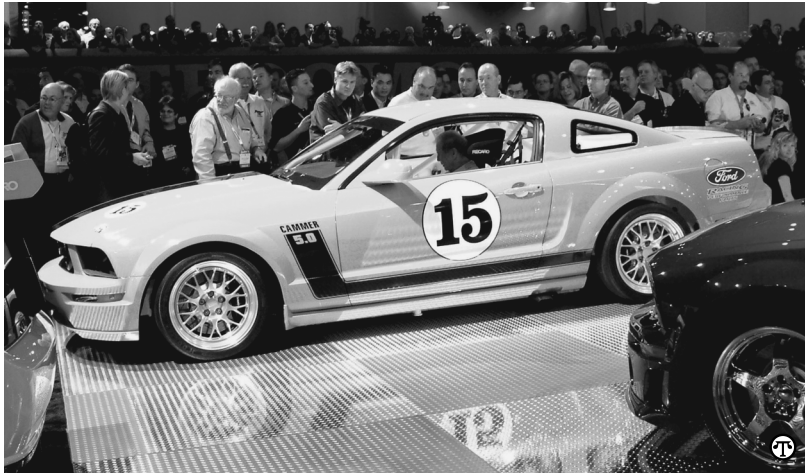
(NAPSA)—At first glance, a soccer mom in a minivan may not seem to have much in common with a hipster in a souped-up El Camino. However, chances are they share at least one trait: They both personalize their cars.

Auto accessories, from chrome rims to backseat DVD players and surround sound systems, have helped drive the auto market as a growing number of consumers realize they can turn their cars into personal statements, personal offices or family fun rooms.

Experts say just about any car can be accessorized from bumper to bumper—and today's accessories don't just improve form, they improve function as well. Drivers can find easy ways to improve their car's performance, looks and storage capacity. The Web site EnjoyTheDrive.com offers a look at some of the hottest accessories for different groups:

- **Soccer Moms**—Moms can make their vehicles more useful and spruce them up at the same time. New rims, paint and eye-catching floor mats can change the look of a car or van, while cargo nets can increase the amount moms can store in their vehicles. Moms can keep kids entertained on road trips with DVD players and monitors. A cooler installed in the console may help keep kids happy, too.

- **Teens**—Young people driving mom and dad's old car can make their hand-me-down hip with the right accessories. Teens can add



From DVD players to chrome wheels and sunroofs, auto owners are personalizing their vehicles.

spoilers and ground effects to make their autos sportier. Bumper covers are available, too, and are common on sport compacts. Teens looking for a little more power and a racier sound can use add-ons such as cat-back exhaust, which is an exhaust replaced from the catalytic converter back to the tailpipes. Cold air intakes improve power as well.

- **Commuters**—Installing a navigation system can help make the drive to work easier. The systems help you know where you are at all times—and some even help reroute you past traffic jams. People can also use wireless accessories to connect their phones to their cars.

- **Outdoor Enthusiasts**—Suspension add-ons and tires

made for dirt and sand can give a truck a better feel when it's riding through the rough. Off-roaders can protect trucks with headlight covers and adhesive films that prevent scratches. Shell caps protect things stored in the bed of a truck and bed spray liners can protect the bed itself. Camping fans can find pickup bed tents and install DC outlet adapters on their receiver hitches to run small stoves or other appliances. Other practical truck accessories include roll-out toolboxes, tailgate lifts and running boards that help them get in and out of larger vehicles. GPS technology and backup cameras are also available.

For information on more than 1,100 auto accessories, visit www.enjoythedrive.com.