

Hershey Show: More Signs of an Industry Upturn

RV Business.com : Posted By [Bob Ashley](#) On September 22, 2009 @ 1:21 pm

The Pennsylvania Recreation Vehicle and Camping Show drew a record 31,710 visitors Sept. 16-20 at Hersheypark in Hershey, Pa., an increase of 14% over last year.

And by all accounts, manufacturers exhibiting at the East Coast's biggest annual trade and retail show were pleased with the outcome.

"Traffic was real good," said Tim Tiffin, general manager of [Tiffin Motor Homes](#), Red Bay, Ala. "It was a good bit over what we had last year. We were very pleased. It concreted our assertion that business has been getting better over the last few months."

Although space of 440,787 square feet sold before the show was a little more than half of what it was last year, 59 manufacturers represented by 47 dealers displayed about 700 units while 117 suppliers occupied indoor and outdoor booths.

"We weren't off on the number of manufacturers, but many of them downsized their display a lot," said Heather Leach, director of education and marketing for the sponsoring [Pennsylvania RV and Camping Association](#) (PRVCA). "But people were there to buy. From the dealers and manufacturers that we talked to, they all had an excellent show. Some told us it was the best show they had had in years."

"It was a fabulous show," said show Chairman Dan Saltzgiver, owner of [Reichart's Camping Center](#), Hanover, Pa., who sold all 17 Forest River Rockwood travel trailers Reichart's brought to Hershey. "Hopefully it's an indication that the economy and industry is turning around."

The Chicago area-based [Camping World](#) dealership network sold almost 400 units at its nine dealership display in Hershey, said Marcus Lemonis, chairman and CEO.

"We sold 393 units for the show," Lemonis said. "The bulk, more than 150, were Keystone (towables). What was most surprising, though, was the number of motorized we did. We did 68, most of them Class A's."

"Their displays did very well for us," said Bob Martin, [Keystone RV Co.](#) executive vice president. "We don't have our tallies in yet, but it looks like we sold more than we did last year."

"It was a sale environment and customers were definitely in a buying mode, which bodes well for the fall buying season and for next spring. The Hershey show always is an indicator. We definitely see this as a positive for our company and the industry."

While declining to provide specific sales numbers, Roger Martin, [Winnebago Industries Inc.](#) vice president of sales and marketing, said that show sales were up 30% compared to last year.

"Traffic was excellent," Martin said. "We had a very nice mix of products retailed — from Class C's to Class A gas to Class A diesel. Consumer interest in our new Winnebago Via and Itasca Reyos was stellar — with lines waiting to get inside the units."

Brian Wilkins, general manager of [Wilkins RV](#) in Bath, N.Y., said he was busy Monday sorting out orders. "There seemed to be for everybody very brisk business activity," Wilkins said, noting that most of consumer's interest was in fifth-wheels retailing from \$30,000 to \$70,000.

Recreational park trailer sales apparently also did well. "There were some happy looking manufactures that I talked to who said that things were moving," said Bill Garpow, president of the [Recreational Park Trailer Industry Association](#) (RPTIA).

PRVCA's Leach attributed part of the attendance boost to increased national magazine advertising and radio and TV promotions that reached into New York and Ohio. The weather also cooperated for a change.