

Taking recreational fun seriously

Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year Awards reflect real world usage

Historic San Marcos Golf Resort in Chandler hosted the Carspondent.com Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year (ALV) Awards program in its 12th year this fall. Built in 1912, the authentically restored 103-year-old architecturally rich resort sits in what is now the heart of historic old town Chandler. ALV was previously held at Local Motors in Chandler, but both they and the event needed more space this year. The new home base handled event activities, dining and overnight accommodations in one location, with restaurants and shops within walking distance.

This also led to improved drive routes—a mix of city and freeway driving in a home town atmosphere. Off-road driving moved from the prior Local Motors rock course to a desert location.

On Saturday, October 17, elite and recreational athletes drove and rated a list of crossovers, SUVs, trucks and other vehicles catering to active lifestyles. This is the heart of ALV: a group of athletes, celebrities and active lifestyle enthusiasts act as a valuable focus group for automakers and industry experts alike. For manufacturers, it's a chance to gain a seal of approval from the very consumers they're marketing to, augmenting the

results from events judged by automotive media.

Nearly 100 journalists and athletes drove on a variety of street, freeway and off-road courses to get a feel for how each vehicle performs within one of six categories, variously grouped by value, luxury, on- or off-road duty, also with family and urban lifestyle categories. Vehicles were entered by Audi, Buick, Chrysler, Fiat, Ford, Dodge, GMC, Jeep, Kia, Lexus, Mercedes-Benz, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Scion, Toyota and Volkswagen.

Athlete judges scrutinized livability features such as seating and cargo capacity, plus overall versatility for activities such as camping, sports and road trips. An awards ceremony was held at the San Marcos Golf Resort on Saturday afternoon. Winners in the six judged classes were:

- BEST VALUE ON-ROAD** ...2016 Mitsubishi Outlander
- LUXURY ON-ROAD**2016 Mercedes-Benz GLE
- BEST VALUE OFF-ROAD** ..2015 Ford F-150
- LUXURY OFF-ROAD**2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee
- BEST VALUE FAMILY**2015 Ford Edge
- URBAN**2015 Kia Soul

This year's event instituted a new electronic scoring system, faster and more data-rich. Consumer metrics will be more comprehensive and more

useful for manufacturers than ever.

For the Kia Soul, this was a fourth consecutive award in the Urban category, while both Ford and Mitsubishi were new to the winners' circle.

Two new presentations took place the prior evening at an athlete welcome dinner.

Friday had been a media day, with local and visiting national jurists. Participating members of the Phoenix Automotive Press Association (PAPA) compared a list of contenders and presented a new Best of the Southwest award to just one vehicle that met a complex list of practical and subjective considerations. The PAPA Best of the Southwest award went to Jeep Grand Cherokee (which went on to win the Luxury Off-Road ALV category the next day).

A new Denise McCluggage Memorial Scholarship—celebrating the life of a beloved and gifted automotive colleague and long-time member of the ALV jury panel—was sponsored by XPEL Technologies and presented to an outstanding student of automotive engineering or design. The Denise McCluggage Memorial Scholarship was presented to engineering student Maeva Ribas.

ALV is a privately run Phoenix-based event. ■



(Top) Catching the event buzz. • Vehicles (L-R, t-b): Mitsubishi Outlander, Mercedes-Benz GLE, Ford F-150, Jeep Grand Cherokee, Ford Edge, Kia Soul. • Event cofounder Nina Russin and retired Arizona Cardinals defensive tackle Bernard Wilson present awards to (L-R, t-b) Trevor Dorchie for Jeep, Shमित Choksey for Kia, Alex Fedorak for Mitsubishi, Diedra Wylie for Mercedes-Benz and Jason Camp for Ford.

