

# LIVIN' IT

Photos by Brenda Priddy

2014  
Jeep  
Cherokee



(Right, top to bottom) Best Value Family, Mazda CX-9; Best Value Off-Road, Toyota 4Runner; and Best Value On-Road, the new Jeep Cherokee (also at left).

**M**ore than 100 athletes and outdoor enthusiasts from around the country, who participate in such sports as marathon running, bicycling, soccer and kayaking, gathered at the Local Motors microfactory in Chandler in October to evaluate new vehicles and choose winners for the 10th annual Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year awards.

Active Lifestyle Vehicle (ALV) is the only annual vehicle award for which active outdoor people pick the winners. A small contingent of automotive journalists accompany them in the ride-and-drive tests and this year also participated in voting. All vehicles are tested on a paved road course. Off-road vehicles are also tested on the challenging off-road course adjacent to Local Motors' facility, where their own Rally Fighter is tested.

"This is really, really cool," said ultramarathon runner Jenn Shelton, as she reviewed the collection of off-road vehicles her team was testing out. "It gets your average consumer's opinion about things that are really important to them, that for car people are maybe not that important."

Shelton, who competes in running events up to 100 miles, says she needs a rugged vehicle that can travel to out-of-the-way places. Plus, one other thing: "It's important for me to be able to sleep in my car. Very important," she said.

Jol Dantzig, a runner, auto writer and guitar maker from Connecticut, pointed out that ALV is an invaluable tool for the automakers in updating and refining their vehicles for the end users, saying, "I think this is a great opportunity for the manufacturers to get real-world feedback from a growing segment of consumers."

Automakers' representatives rode along with the athlete judges to hear their opinions about the new vehicles.

A special highlight of this year's ALV event was the participation of retired professional football players from the Arizona Legends of the National Football League, which promotes youth access to football programs.

Among the NFL stars was Tony Bouie, formerly of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who happened to be shopping for a new



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(Left, top to bottom) Green winner, the Jeep Grand Cherokee Diesel; Luxury Family, the Acura MDX; and in Luxury Off-Road, the Jeep Grand Cherokee.



vehicle for his own family. The ALV event was helping him decide, as well as providing feedback to the manufacturers. "This is a great way to try out what's out there and let them know what we think," Bouie said.

Joel Reynolds and Faye Farmer were also shopping and brought along their three boys, ages 5, 3 and 16 months, and their respective car seats, to see how well they fit in each vehicle in the family categories. "It has to be right, because we have three tornados," Reynolds said.

A new product for bicyclists was introduced during the ALV competition: XPEL paint-protection film that shields vulnerable parts of bike frames from rocks and trail debris, as well as chips and scratches from pedals and chains. XPEL is an automotive product that has been adapted for mountain and road bikes after input from ALV participants.

Longtime distance runner and auto journalist Nina Russin, a co-founder of the Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year awards, said the event is designed to educate the automakers about what active people want in their vehicles. Manufacturers whose vehicles win prizes in the competition can use the Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year brand in their marketing and advertising.

"Every year, ALV grows not only in size but dimension," Russin said. "We had more participants on hand than ever before, and I see a deepening relationship between our audience and the OEMs as this program continues to grow."

The other co-founders of the ALV awards are Bob Babbitt, a member of the Ironman Hall of Fame, and Jim Woodman, longtime journalist, triathlete and founder of Active.com.

Awards were handed out to the winning



(Right, top to bottom) Luxury On-Road winner, the Audi SQ5; Urban category winner, the new Kia Soul; and Local Motors contest winner CLIMAX.

automakers as soon as votes were tabulated, with representatives on hand to receive their trophies.

Jeep was the biggest winner, taking three of the 10 categories. The winners in all eight categories for this year's Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year awards are:

- **BEST VALUE FAMILY** (three rows, ≤ \$40,000)  
**Winner** .....2013 Mazda CX-9  
 Other finalists: 2014 Dodge Durango, 2014 Hyundai Santa Fe (long wb), 2014 Kia Sorento
- **BEST VALUE OFF-ROAD** (true off-road, ≤ \$35,000)  
**Winner** .....2014 Toyota 4Runner  
 Other finalists: 2014 Jeep Wrangler Limited, 2014 Mitsubishi Outlander, 2014 Subaru Forester 2.0 XT
- **BEST VALUE ON-ROAD** (≤ \$35,000)  
**Winner** .....2014 Jeep Cherokee  
 Other finalists: 2014 Buick Encore, 2014 Mazda CX-5
- **GREEN** (alternative fuel and hybrid power)  
**Winner** .....2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee Diesel  
 Other finalists: 2014 Audi Q5 TDI, 2014 Volkswagen Jetta SportWagen
- **LUXURY FAMILY** (three rows, over \$40,000)  
**Winner** .....2014 Acura MDX  
 Other finalist: 2014 Mercedes-Benz E350 wagon
- **LUXURY OFF-ROAD** (true off-road, over \$35,000)  
**Winner** .....2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee  
 Other finalists: 2013 Ram 1500, 2014 GMC Sierra
- **LUXURY ON-ROAD** (over \$35,000)  
**Winner** .....2014 Audi SQ5  
 Other finalists: 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT, 2014 Volkswagen Touareg TDI
- **URBAN** (≤ \$20,000)  
**Winner** .....2014 Kia Soul  
 Other finalists: 2014 Fiat 500L, 2014 Nissan Versa Note

Local Motors hosted a complementary competition, a Design Challenge in which its global community of designers and engineers could create their ultimate Active Lifestyle Vehicle. Following the "crowd-powered" model Local Motors uses in its own development, designers from around the world submitted their radical ideas for outdoor, off-road and adventure vehicles, and the ALV athletes helped pick a winner.

The first-place prize in the Design Challenge went to John Bukasa for CLIMAX, an imaginative go-anywhere sports vehicle with a roof system designed for toting such things as kayaks. ■

