



Q. to RV Dave Simso Jr. and Dave Simso Sr. run Dave's RV Center in Danbury, Connecticut.



# Excellence Passed Down

*Dave's RV Center leverages a decades-long relationship to provide its customers top quality and service. The dealer's lessons are being handed down to the next generation.*

By Dan Larson | Photos by Kevin Rabito

Dave's RV Center has found success despite supply disruptions and strong competition nearby by forging enduring relationships with its suppliers, elevating vehicle prep and service to the highest level and encouraging customers to actively participate for a day, before and after the sale, to understand their RV.

"We have been exclusively Newmar for more than 25 years, and I cannot see us doing it any other way," said Dave Simso Sr., president of Dave's RV Center, in Danbury, Connecticut. "Even in these extraordinary times, the support we get from the company means we can give our customers the best experience possible."

His son and heir apparent to the company, Dave Simso Jr., agreed.

"It does not matter what you saw on YouTube or you heard from the guy in the campground, RVs are complex vehicles with unique components that take time to understand how they operate and what can go

wrong," said Simso Jr., general manager. "That is why we ask customers to spend so much time with us."

The time spent with customers forms lasting relationships. At the annual

“Getting the build-out right for our customers is the most important thing we do.

— Dave Simso Jr.

Customer Appreciation Cookout, host Simso Sr. said the cookout is among his highlights because "I get to hang out with people that are now my friends."

## Narrowing Focus

Simso Sr. went into business in 1970 as an RV/marine sales and service dealer. After 22 years, he outgrew his first shop in Norwalk, Connecticut,



[L to R] Newmar President Matt Miller and Simso Jr. met in April at Newmar's annual dealer meeting. The dealership credits Newmar's dealer support for enabling Dave's RV Center to provide a top customer experience to buyers.

and moved to his current location in Danbury. "I bought this location because I needed more room and this had a 16,000-square-foot building, which was bigger than my whole property in Norwalk," he said. "I was one of the first dealers with an indoor showroom for full-size coaches."

Simso Jr. grew up in the dealership, referring to the business as his day care site.

"Back then, we were autos and marine. My job was usually a tool-getter, so if something fell into the bilge, I was the one to squeeze in and retrieve it," he said. "I got to spend the whole day with Mom and Dad, and I feel lucky because of it."

“Most of the calls we get about a problem can be easily resolved over the phone, because [consumers] are now familiar with the systems.

— Dave Simso Sr.

Dave's RV Center steadily moved away from selling Type B, Type C and towable RVs, as large competitors entered the dealership's market. In the past decade, Dave's RV Center has sold only Newmar motorhomes.

Because of limited lot volume, customers are encouraged to research online and understand what is available before coming into the dealership, Simso Sr. said.

"Some customers, especially those that have previously owned a coach, know what they want when they come to see us," Simso Sr. said. "Others are very interested in the RV lifestyle, but they do not know what they really need. That is why we ask if they are willing to spend time with us."

Customers are asked to make a daylong commitment, rather than the typical two or three hours spent during a technician walk-through at other dealerships. Buyers unwilling to

devote such time are asked to purchase elsewhere, even if turning customers away leads to potential negative dealership reviews online.

With an exclusive product line, especially one aimed at a high-end buyer, selling the RV lifestyle at Dave's RV Center comes with an elevated service expectation. Newmar has an estimated six exclusive Type A dealers in its network, and company Vice President of Sales John Sammut said an exclusive dealer/manufacturer relationship provides consumer benefits not found elsewhere.

"Customers appreciate the consistency in sales and service, just like the consistency they expect from Newmar in terms of quality, service and support," Sammut said. "When an exclusive dealership like Dave's RV Center is able to focus on one brand, they do a really good job of understanding the product and providing a great sales experience for their customer."

#### Guided Tour

Whether a gasoline-powered Bay Star coach or top-of-the-line King Aire diesel pusher, Newmar RVs are available in various floorplans and with features ranging from thoughtfully practical to luxurious.

Selecting the correct vehicle is best managed as a guided tour, Simso Sr. said. Learning how technology adds to the RV ownership experience is an important aspect of the consumer's tour.

"Getting the build-out right for our customers is the most important thing we do," Simso Jr. said. "The technology that is available in just the last three years is incredible. All that capability and connectivity has to operate in the background, and for customers who are not tech-savvy, we have to know how they plan to use the RV."

During the initial customer interview, Simso Jr. asks questions to determine customers' RVing plans. Will they spend weekends at Disney World in a full-service campground? Are they heading to a remote state park with nothing more than a gravel pad and a firepit?



Service technician Steve Burnett walks a new buyer couple through a demonstration of their motorhome's features.



Service technician Romulo Demoraes installs an upgraded fan vent.



Demoraes removes a roof vent cap during an installation upgrade.



Simso Jr. displays various camping toys and collectibles in the parts department.



Simso Jr. and Parts Manager Michael Cote look up a product in a parts catalog.



Simso Sr. opened Dave's RV Center in 1970.



Simso Jr. updates the WiFiRanger in a Newmar Base Star.



Dave's RV Center's parts department includes sewer hoses, levels, faucets and more.

The answers help Dave's RV Center staff guide customers to a motorhome that best matches their expectations.

#### Built to Last

Simso Sr. said Newmar's quality product is the main reason the dealership moved to exclusively focus on the Nappanee company's brands. He ticks off the differences to customers as easily as reciting family birthdates.

As a manufacturer, Newmar builds RVs on a heavier chassis than some competitors, allowing Newmar to produce RVs with higher gross

“*At this point, all the 2021 chassis are spoken for, and we have a waiting list to order the 2022s.*

— Dave Simso Sr.

vehicle weight ratings. Engines and drivetrains provide greater capacity, while Simso Sr. touts features such as cantilever-supported, cog-driven slides; flush-floor slides; Comfort Drive and tag axle steering; and wheelchair fully accessible coaches.

Simso Sr. said Newmar's support to dealers enables staff to pass along the best information to buyers. About 98 percent of coach problems reported to Dave's RV Center come from "operator error," Simso Sr. said. The dealership gives customers Simso Jr.'s cell phone number to reach out if they have issues with their motorhome.

"The benefit for the dealer is a consistent way of ordering parts and processing warranty claims," Sammut said. "It allows the dealer to focus on one product from a sales side and foster a stronger one-on-one relationship with Newmar."

"For us, it is beneficial as well. We know who we are dealing with," Sammut said. "I think it is like the Colonel from Kentucky Fried Chicken—all they do is chicken, and they do it right."



#### SumoSprings.

Manufactured from our micro-cellular polyurethane, SumoSprings are designed and built to reduce sag, body roll, sway, and vibration. With no airlines or compressors, this is the airbag alternative that was built to outlast your truck.

Designed, built, and supported right here in the U.S.A.  
Zero-maintenance. Backed by a lifetime warranty.



## SELL TRAILERS WITH REMOVABLE TONGUE JACKS



- Prevents bent jacks from pot holes, speed bumps, railroad tracks and other unexpected road conditions
- Protects truck tail gates from being damaged by the jack when lowered
- Trailer anti-theft device
- No pins to pull, faster hookup/unhooking with no need to crank the jack clear up
- Huge aftermarket sales potential
- Special dealer discount pricing
- Made in USA

Available Now at Northern Wholesale in the U.S. and Atlas Trailer Products in Canada, and other distributors upon request.  
Call (404) 754-8928 for information or visit <https://www.Jack-e-up.com>



(L to R) Dave's RV Center's staff includes Simso Sr., Pam Simso, Simso Jr., Cote, Demoraes and Burnett.

Imparting knowledge is behind Dave's RV Center's daylong customer training, as well as the dealer's request that new buyers stay in their motorhome overnight and return the next day with additional questions the dealer did not answer.

"Most of the calls we get about a problem can be easily resolved over the phone, because (consumers) are now familiar with the systems," Simso Sr. said. "When our customers understand how their RV works, it keeps our warranty costs down."

#### Tech Guru

As the technology integration guru at Dave's RV Center, Simso Jr. learned how to ensure coach technology

**“Even in these extraordinary times, the support we get from the company means we can give our customers the best experience possible.”**

— Dave Simso Sr.

communicates with other RV components and the outside world.

"Dad is good at referring all the tech questions to me," Simso Jr. said. "I am happy when we get it all to work quietly

in the background. It is like in the Wizard of Oz: Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain."

Simso Jr. was an early networking component advocate. He said the industry has come a great distance from providing wall-mounted manual switches and individual appliance apps. Still, he said there is room for improvement.

"There is a lot of connectivity in RVs today, but nobody has reined it all in; we are just not there yet," he said. "Instead of your phone telling the awning to roll down, you should really be telling the RV to tell the awning to roll down."

For now, vehicle prep and delivery include working with the customer

to securely store device settings, so when they come aboard, connections are seamless.

Gen X customers expect the latest technology, Simso Jr. said. However, not every Gen Xer is tech-savvy. "Sometimes they just hand their tablet to their kid and say, 'connect this,'" Simso Jr. said. "I then make sure to spend time with the kids and show them how to access the router and set up a VPN."

#### Rooftop Real Estate

Solar power system installation is a popular service Dave's RV Center provides. A typical install includes three 190-watt monocrystalline panels from Canadian-based supplier Go Power and a solar controller from Xantrax. With a dual battery bank in an A/B configuration, Simso Jr. said a consumer can stretch a full charge's power to a week's use, even if the sun is behind cloud cover.

“When an exclusive dealership like Dave's RV Center is able to focus on one brand, they do a really good job of understanding the product and providing a great sales experience for their customer.”

— John Sammut

"Everybody has a generator, but unless there is a big power draw, like from an AC, most people would rather not run it," Simso Jr. said.

The dealership must deny some requests for installed solar because of insufficient usable roof space. Other requests to install a solar system with enough capacity to run an AC are declined, Simso Jr. said, because the necessary battery bank would be so hefty, "you could not carry any clothing, let alone passengers."

Whether a customer wants to protect the environment or just wants all the gadgets, Newmar coaches are prepped for solar and satellite to significantly reduce installation time. Yet, Simso Jr. said he still relies on customer input when discussing solar installation.

"If they plan on weekends at the campground where they will always be plugged into shore power, I level with them and advise against solar," he said. "Why spend \$4,000 to \$6,000 on solar when you do not need it? Solar panels may make you feel better, but why not spend it on a tow package so you can bring your car along? Not everybody needs solar, and as the GM, I do not see every number in the building as a profit center. I would rather have a customer with a better-quality experience than pad my pocket."

To emphasize the point, Simso Jr. said a typical RV generator produces enough power to run all onboard electronics and appliances, yet only burns 0.4 to 0.8 gallons per hour. "That's a pretty efficient way to make 110 volts," he said.

#### Supply Slowdown

Over the past year, supply shortages affected product availability to build coaches. Corporate reorganization at a major RV furniture supplier also influenced deliveries.

"We use a premium line of Flexsteel furniture, so when Flexsteel quit supplying the RV market, it affected everybody," Simso Sr. said.

The Texas winter snap in February shut down the production of propylene oxide, the chemical intermediate used to make foam cushions and insulation. Long waiting lists are common for customers looking to buy Newmar RVs.

"At this point, all the 2021 chassis are spoken for," Simso Sr. said, "and we have a waiting list to order the 2022s."

When units are ready, though, Dave's RV Center will be among the dealerships at the front of the line to fulfill consumers' orders.

Sammut said, "Now that the baton is being transitioned from Dave Sr. to Dave Jr., a lot of the same elements that have been prevalent at Dave's RV Center are going to carry forward." **RVM**

## Superior Performance & Reliability



Model: 5300

## Converters, Power Centers & Transfer Switches



Model: 4400



Model: AT5301

**PS** PARALLAX  
POWER  
SUPPLY

Call 800-443-4859  
or Contact Your Favorite  
Distributor

[www.parallaxpower.com](http://www.parallaxpower.com)