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Donahue's goal is to help people have fun

Powersports business has provided machines to ride since 1966

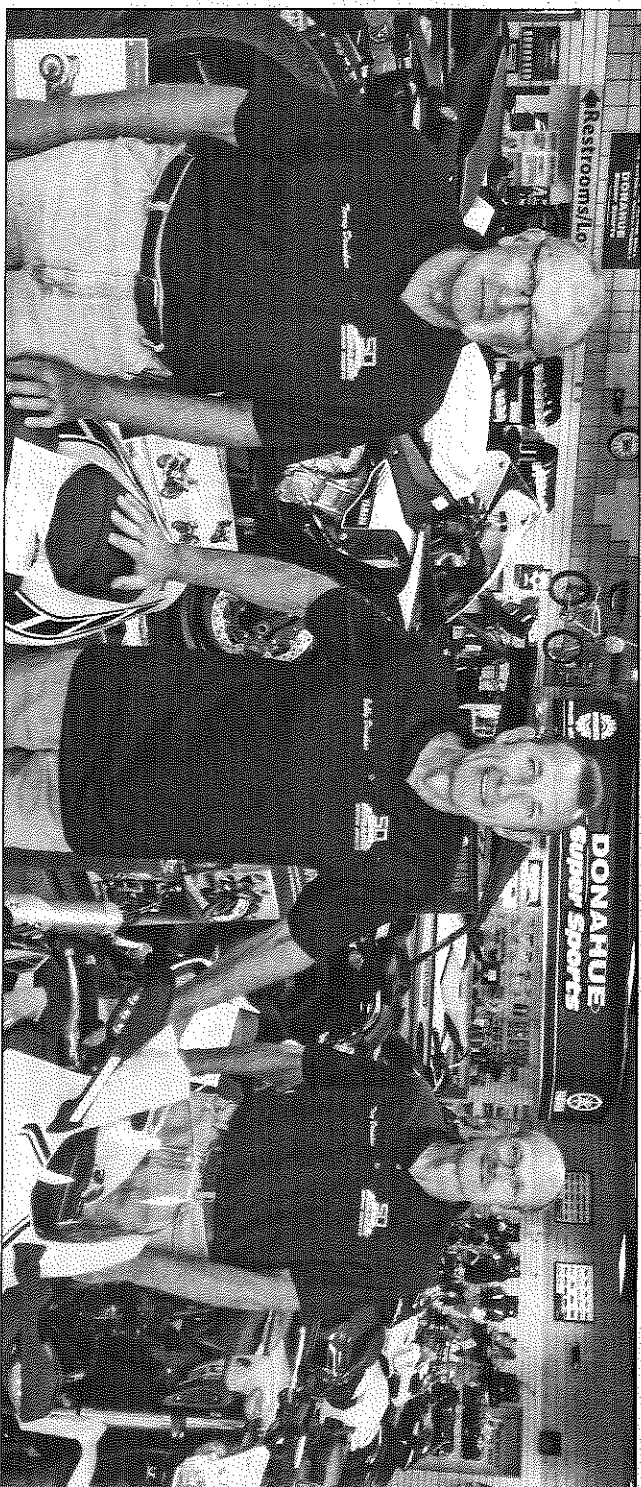
By Jim Servi
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Bob and Alice Donahue founded Yamaha City in 1966 featuring BSA, Yamaha, and Moto-Ski product lines at their modest 1,800 square-foot Wisconsin Rapids location.

They quickly built a reputation for hard work and an unmatched passion for their business. Customers took note. As their customer base grew, so did their business.

With that continued growth, and limited expansion opportunities at their original location, they knew it was time to relocate. Customers wanted more than just to look at a new machine, touch it, sit on it, and imagine how it would ride. They wanted to actually ride it.

In 1969, Yamaha City delivered, relocating to the outskirts of Wisconsin Rapids with a test track. Their location was also doubled as a



Donahue Super Sports co-owners Terry, left, Bobby, and Troy Donahue sell and service a variety of recreational vehicles at their Wisconsin Rapids business.

safety," said Bob's son and current co-owner of Donahue Super Sports, Bobby Donahue, "This was a time when a lot of Vietnam Veterans were coming back and buying motorcycles,

and licensing." With their expansion, they would be able to continue that enterprise right in their backyard. By 1977, the company was incorporated and renamed Bob's Yamaha City.

Moto-Ski and was added as a product line. That was just the beginning of their product expansion. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Bob's Yamaha City offered more machines and continued to grow.

Fun/Business includes a test track and training area

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began to look toward their vision of the future. In 1996, they decided it was time to transfer ownership to their three sons — Bobby, Terry, and Troy — but wanted a new name to represent the company. They decided to have a naming contest and ask the people who knew them best — their customers. Customers would submit their name choices and the customer that came up with the winning name would get \$500. It was a unique strategy and it worked.

More than 200 names were submitted and Bob and his three boys sat down to go through the names. At first, nothing sounded right. Then, they saw it. Donahue Super Sports. In an instant, they knew that it was the perfect name to represent their growing product line and transition to the next generation, while honoring their history and foundation. The transition began and their vision was coming together.

In addition to the ideal location and test track, they wanted to make the building something unique as well. "We always wanted to give the customers a higher level of excellence," said Bobby Donahue, who was inducted into the Snowmobile Racing Hall of Fame in 1997 after a 14-year professional racing career that included three consecutive

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— **Bobby Donahue, co-owner**
Donahue Power Sports,
Wisconsin Rapids

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Tournament of Champion titles and the 1988 Formula 1 World Championship title. "That is why we built this state of the art facility, with the test track in back, and enough warehouse space that everything stays inside."

That includes servicing and maintenance. The moment a customer walks in, they're able to find more than a 100 machines for all seasons in their expansive indoor showroom.

Once a customer purchases their machine, they are able to pick it up in an enclosed driveway, specifically designed for the occasion. Altogether, their footprint is over 40,000 square feet.

All of this was part of Bob and Alice's vision that came together in 1996. "Our goal is to help people have fun," Bobby said. "It's just people taking care of people here. Many of those old philosophies like that still apply here today. For us, it's all about the customer. We wanted to bring a higher level of excellence. It wasn't about doing things good, Dad said we need to do things great."

Their vision has led to several awards and recognitions, but perhaps none larger than being named the National Snowmobile Dealer of the Year in 2012.

"Snowmobiling is where we really cut our teeth and what we are known for statewide," Bobby said. "Part of that is the racing success because we have very performance minded buyers."

Donahue Super Sports now has many fourth-generation customers, dating back to its roots more than 50 years ago. With their one-of-a-kind building and location, they have been able to capitalize on the growing popularity of power sports. "We still have our challenges. Machines are become larger, faster,

and more popular which creates more activity," Donahue confessed. "With the explosion of ATVs/UTVs, communities have opened their road, but we understand it's important to ensure that our riders are highly responsible."

Due to this they are very active in the Wisconsin ATV-UTV Association, which is dedicated to improving the sport throughout Wisconsin.

Bobby, who is nationally recognized for his professional snowmobiling racing career, also worked at BRP for 4 years before returning home and joining his family in running the business.

During that time, he gained a deeper understanding about the business side of power sports. However, it was the employees at Donahue Super Sports that helped him to be successful as a co-owner.

"We've always had high quality employees, but I've had to expand my philosophy throughout the years," Bobby said. "I've become more sensitive to their needs and created a safer, more enjoyable, work environment. One example is that we installed in-floor heating to make it more comfortable in the service department where they'd be kneeling in their bays. It's little things like that, that go a long way. They've really taught me how to become a better manager."