

Business First of Columbus
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By Kathy Showalter
Ricart: Deal can succeed where Ford efforts failed

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The Ricart brothers' purchase of car dealerships from the Nourse family puts them in a position to accomplish what one Big Three automaker couldn't do: Operate a regional and consolidated network of Ford Motor Co. showrooms.

"This makes us a regional concept," said Fred Ricart, spokesman for the Ricart Automotive Group. "This gives us three (Ford) franchises. ... We might be the only dealership in the country that truly operates with economies of scale of this magnitude."

The Ricarts said Aug. 8 they are buying Ford and Lincoln-Mercury dealerships in Delaware County and Chillicothe from the Nourse Family of Dealerships. Terms of the transaction, which includes assets and real estate for four properties, were not disclosed.

Business First was unable to reach Dick Nourse for comment.

The transaction, which needs Ford's approval, gives the Ricarts at least two other firsts. Until this transaction, the Ricarts had no Lincoln-Mercury new-car franchise, nor did they have a presence in the affluent suburbs northwest of Columbus while that likely didn't hurt Ricart car sales, it probably pinched the company when it came to service.

"I'm 10 years behind moving up north, and we have tons of customers up there," Ricart said. "Until now, it's been an inconvenience for service." Ricart has had service problems in the past but was recently recognized by Ford for its service department.

Ricart isn't the only multiple dealership operator to recognize the value of northwestern Columbus. Germain Motor Co., which operates Toyota, Nissan and Lexus dealerships in Dublin and east Columbus and has a Lexus showroom under construction at Easton, bought Dick Ruhl Ford in December. The purchase gave Germain a presence on Sawmill Road and its first Ford store.

In Delaware County, the Ricarts are buying a 25,000-square-foot showroom and 6 acres of land, three of which are undeveloped, giving it an opportunity to build an expanded used-car operation, Ricart said. In Chillicothe, the transaction includes a 20,000 square-foot new-car showroom and more than 2 acres of land.

In 2000, the Nourse family sold 800 vehicles from the Delaware dealerships, and 1,200 vehicles from the Chillicothe stores.

Ricart Automotive sold and leased 13,542 new cars, 14,821 used cars and 11,377 wholesale cars last year from its megamall and from a Chrysler/Plymouth and Jeep

dealership, both off Hamilton Road.