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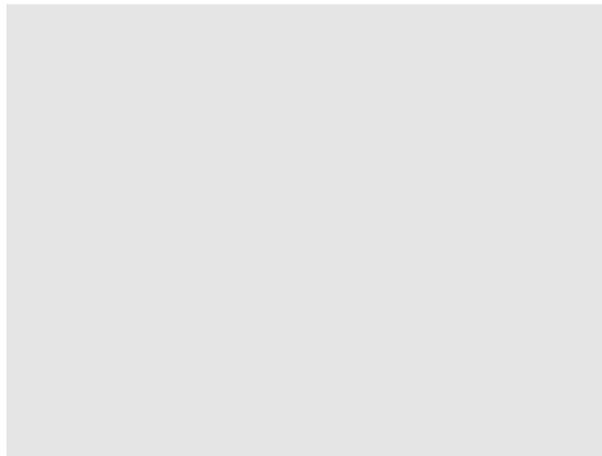
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Ward earns promotion at Camping World

By DON SERGENT dsergent@bgdailynews.com

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Tamara Ward

Submitted

Camping World, a company that caters to recreational vehicle owners who love being on the go, will continue to stick close to its roots.

Founded in Bowling Green in 1966 by Beech Bend Park owner David Garvin, Camping World has grown into a \$5 billion-a-year public company that includes Good Sam Enterprises and Gander Outdoors. Its reach now extends to more than 150 retail locations across 36 states, and Chairman and CEO Marcus Lemonis oversees the company from offices in his Chicago suburb, Lincolnshire, Ill.

But Lemonis, an entrepreneur and star of the CNBC television series “The Profit,” said in announcing the company’s new chief operating officer last month that Camping World isn’t pulling up its stakes in Bowling Green.

Tamara Ward, who has been with Camping World's Bowling Green corporate office since graduating from Western Kentucky University in 1989, was promoted to COO in a move that Lemonis said is a sign of the company's commitment to southcentral Kentucky.

"Bowling Green is one of our company's headquarters," said Lemonis, who mentioned Lincolnshire and Denver as other areas where the corporation has an administrative presence. "We recognize Bowling Green as an integral part of the company."

He said Ward is the ideal pick to lead the Bowling Green operation based on Three Springs Road.

"This decision was not difficult," Lemonis said Monday. "Tamara and I have worked together for 15 years, and she has demonstrated her competence."

Ward was not available for comment, but Lemonis called her "the fairest and firmest leader around" and said she "understands the industry better than anyone."

Ward, who has held many positions at Camping World and most recently had been serving as executive vice president for corporate development, joins another WKU graduate on the company's management team.

Brent Moody, a Bowling Green native who has been with Camping World since 2002, was promoted to president of the company in 2018. Like Lemonis, he sees Ward as a good fit for the COO position.

“We’ve worked closely together,” Moody said of Ward. “She has a lot of knowledge about different aspects of the business. Tamara has really been the leader of that Three Springs Road building.”

Lemonis said the company has close to 300 employees in Bowling Green between the Camping World and Gander Outdoors retail stores on Bluegrass Farms Boulevard and the Three Springs Road headquarters.

Moody said the headquarters building is home to a number of functions, including marketing, accounting and information technology.

“We still have a big presence there, and I don’t see that changing,” Moody said.

Camping World has undergone many changes since Lemonis merged it with his Freedom Roads company in 2006 and with the Good Sam Enterprises membership club in 2011. He took Camping World Holdings public in 2016, raising \$251 million by selling 11.4 million shares at \$22 per share.

The company has expanded its reach under Lemonis.

“We’ve done a lot of dealership acquisitions in recent years,” Moody said. “Gander Outdoors gave us the ability to quickly expand our footprint.”

Moody said Camping World reached “an all-time high” in RV sales in 2017 but has “leveled off” since then.

“We are always looking to grow our RV platform,” Lemonis said. “We’ve made a number of acquisitions, but 2020 is really about executing what we already have.”

Camping World Holdings stock, which dipped below \$7.50 a share in September, was trading at \$14.71 Tuesday.

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