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Tuesday, August 7, 2007

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## Employees express optimism as Chrysler begins new chapter

Web-posted Aug 7, 2007

By JOSEPH SZCZESNY  
Of The Oakland Press

AUBURN HILLS As the sounds of Mitch Ryder echoed over a crowd of hundreds of employees, acrobats slid down ropes across the face of the company's towering headquarters building and fireworks exploded from the roof, Chrysler celebrated the opening of a new chapter in its long and storied history.

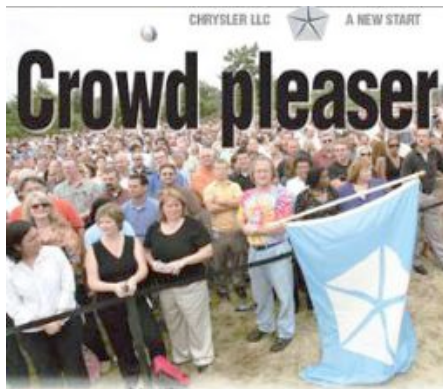
Employees interviewed Monday by The Oakland Press said they were looking forward to the change brought on by Chrysler becoming an American company again - under the control of the private-equity firm Cerberus Capital Management LLC.

"I'm optimistic," said Jim Knight, a 15-year Chrysler employee, who works inside the metal shop at the company's Auburn Hills Technical Center and seemed to speak for many of the employees watching the noontime show.

"Everybody likes to be optimistic about it. Who wants to be doom and gloom? There have been a lot of up and downs (in recent months.) Hopefully, it will be smooth sailing from here on out. Hopefully, we'll be able to keep our jobs and keep building cars," Knight said.

Mark Tappen, a technician in the scientific labs at the Auburn Hills Technical Center, said, "It sounds like we'll have a little more flexibility."

Thomas Ladopoulos, who works in the international assignment office in Chrysler



The new Chrysler marked the first day of a new era Monday by bringing back its Pentastar corporate logo, so employee Roger Germonprez decided to hold an old Pentastar flag during the festivities. The first-day events follow Friday's contract signing, under which New York-based Cerberus Capital Management assumed majority ownership of the company. -

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headquarters, said, "I'm confident we're heading in the right direction. I think we'll be able to do what we want to do and what the company feels is most important. We'll make those decisions directly."

Julie Amman, a contract employee at the Chrysler headquarters, said, "I think it's going to be good, I really do. At this point, it looks like it's moving in the right direction."

"At first, it was kind of scary because you didn't know what was going to happen and what direction it was going in or if you were even going to have a job. I think we're going to be able to do a lot more with this private equity firm than we were before."

Kelly Karakashian, who joined Chrysler as an engineer two years ago after graduating from the University of Michigan, said, "I think it's an opportunity for us. Being young and new in the company, it gives us a chance to see something that most people don't get to see in their careers. We know the auto industry goes up and down and we're getting to see a new start, a transformation."

"It's a chance to go back to our heritage," said Lindsey Patrick, who joined the company as an engineer in January after graduating from the University of Detroit-Mercy.

Mike Tomlan, who has been with Chrysler for more than 34 years, noted that the company has come back from tough times in the past.

"We've done it before and I don't see why we can't do it again," he added. "I don't think you have to be a big company to survive. There are different companies out there now that are smaller than we are that are making it."

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