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POSTED: OCT. 17, 2009

# Ford uses football to promote Taurus

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FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

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**Ford** Motor Co. is taking a page from companies like Tupperware and Avon to generate interest in its cars.



Amy Szostek, husband Jeff Szostek and son Aaron, all of Dearborn, check out the party pack from Ford, which includes thunder sticks. She's expecting about 12 to her house party, which Ford is using to promote the Taurus. (WILLIAM ARCHIE/DFP)



A version of this story appears on page 6A of the Saturday, Oct. 17, 2009, print edition of the Detroit Free Press.

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On Sunday, Ford is teaming up with HouseParty.com and dealers to throw house parties for guys as they watch football and promote the 2010 Ford Taurus.

Called the Taurus Ultimate Game Day, Ford expects nearly 20,000 people will gather at 1,000 house parties across the nation, including 19 in metro Detroit. At most of the parties, hosts get a Taurus for the day for test-drives.

"It sounds like Barry Kay instead of Mary Kay," said Michael Bernacchi, professor of marketing at the University of Detroit Mercy. "This is kind of taking a page out of the Fuller Brush ranks and maybe combining it with a Super Bowl mentality."

Ford is providing all of the hosts with a "party pack" that includes banners, thunder sticks and a DVD featuring FoxSports commentator Michael Strahan, a former New York Giants defensive end, talking about the Taurus.

Most of the homes will also have a Taurus along with a representative from a local dealer to talk about the car.

Jeff Eggen, Ford car experiential marketing manager, acknowledged that the home party model is typically used by direct sales companies with products geared toward women.

"That's a proven strategy and it's been done over the years, but rarely in the car business," Eggen

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said.

Amy Szostek of Dearborn said she applied to participate in the event after seeing an advertisement in a magazine and is expecting about 12 guests Sunday.

"When I told my husband, he was actually more excited than me," Szostek said.

Another twist added by Ford is the use of the Internet and social media.

Ford advertised the event on Web sites such as FoxSports.com and received more than 6,000 applications through the Web site HouseParty.com. Hosts also coordinated electronic invitations through the site.

The hosts also are part of an online voting contest. The host who receives the most votes will win a new 2010 Taurus, with the winner announced during Fox's "NFL Sunday Pregame Show."

Ford's house party event is part of a broader fall advertising campaign for the Taurus that links the car with pro football.

Similar events were held during "American Idol" in January for the launch of the 2010 [Ford Fusion](#) midsize sedan and two other, similar events last year.

Each of those events successfully raised awareness for [Ford vehicles](#), said Connie Fontaine, manager, Ford brand content and alliances.

Fontaine said 66% of those who attended the Fusion party encouraged friends and family to test-drive a Fusion.

"This is a very efficient way to generate test-drives," Fontaine said.

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