

# RV Consumer e-Magazine

**AUGUST 2016**

**VOLUME 6**

**ISSUE 8**



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## **Park Model Living & RV Destination Camping**



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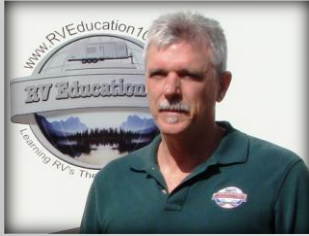
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There is nothing quite like experiencing travel on the open road and RVs afford us the ability to do it in comfort and style. Our favorite pastime is experiencing new adventures and traveling to new destinations in our RV.

But did you know there is another type of RV camping enjoyed by thousands of people each year? It's called destination camping. This type of camping involves leaving an RV or park model trailer at a favorite destination and traveling back and forth to it from your home.

Don't miss this month's feature article where our good friend and colleague Bob Zagami talks about park model living and destination camping, and read how we came to purchase an RV lot and a used RV to use exclusively for destination camping.

Enjoy the e-magazine, and if you have RV friends and family tell them to subscribe, and to like us on

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## RV Consumer Magazine

150 Bay Ridge Rd.  
Harrells, NC 28444  
910-484-7615

[www.rvconsumer.com](http://www.rvconsumer.com)

**Publisher:** RV Education 101

**Editor:** Mark J. Polk  
[mark@rveducation101.com](mailto:mark@rveducation101.com)

**Contributing Writer:** Bob Zagami

**Cover Photo:** Bob Zagami

**Marketing Director:** Dawn Polk  
[dawn@rveducation101.com](mailto:dawn@rveducation101.com)

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This helps accomplish two things; it eliminates the guess work as to which DVD titles go together, and it saves the RV consumer a significant amount of money with our DVD box set discounts. Our goal at RV Education 101 is simple, to help RV owners until they are comfortable operating and using their RV, and to make their entire RV experience safe, fun and stress free. [Browse the product catalog now](#)



# *The Best Kept Secret in the RV Industry*

## *The Enjoyment of Park Model Living and Destination Camping*



Article & Photos by Bob Zagami

I've often wondered why we don't see higher sales numbers for park model trailers, given the role they play in our industry. Last year there were less than 5,000 park models sold in the entire country. Hopefully the numbers will start to increase now that the [Go RVing](#) campaign has added a new section on [park model RVs](#) and destination camping.

My RVing experiences started almost forty years ago with our first motorhome. Through the years we have owned pop-ups, travel trailers

and motorhomes – each filling our RV requirements at a particular point in time as we built careers, businesses and brought up our two daughters. About fourteen years ago we purchased our first park model trailer when we decided to do seasonal camping at [Wild Duck Campground](#) in Scarborough, Maine. Last year we sold that unit and moved over to [Seacoast Resort](#) in Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

My wife, Mae, worked closely with Linda Mailhot, who owns [Seacoast RVs](#) in Saco, ME with her husband Michael.





Seacoast RVs specializes in park model trailers and park model living – they also own Seacoast Resort. Working with Linda and Curt Yoder, of [Kropf Industries](#), we were able to custom design a park model well suited for our lifestyle today in a gated park model community situated just two miles from the world famous Old Orchard Beach and its seven miles of pristine sand and cold Atlantic Ocean water!



When fully developed, Seacoast Resort will be home to 110 families and couples that have opted for park model living instead of a more expensive vacation home in a great destination location.

There has been a lot of discussion in

our industry the past few years about destination camping, which may or may not be a discussion on park models.

Destination camping is the description we use for RV enthusiasts who love a particular destination location and then find a campground where they want to put an RV on a site for the entire season. The RV could be anything from a pop-up to a large motorhome and it will be on the same site for the entire camping season.

Some manufacturers have started building trailers they designate as destination campers. Some of them are confusing because they are called park models, but in reality they are built like a travel trailer but will have a sliding patio door, knowing that the unit will not be towed around, but will find a permanent home, even if it is for only one season. These types of destination campers are easy to move should you want to stay at a different campground and location next year.



Park model RVs are limited to a maximum living space of not more than 400 square feet and are designed for

temporary use and should never be used for full-time living. In fact, new legislation worked out with HUD and the RV industry earlier this year has resulted in new labels being placed inside each new park model trailer that clearly states these units are recreational vehicles and not intended for a permanent residence. Now a park model trailer can also be referred to as a destination camper, but typically they are only moved twice – once from the manufacturer to the dealer and once from the dealer to the campground.

*As with any major purchase, and I put RVs in that category, you want to work with RV dealers who truly understand the type of RV you want to buy and how you intend to use it.*

One of the reasons we have done business with Seacoast RVs for over fifteen years now is their expertise in park models and destination camping. Seacoast RVs is the largest park model dealer in the Northeast and the #1 Kropf dealer in the country for the past few years. When Breckenridge was a major park model manufacturer they were also their #1 dealer in the country.

These honors are even more impressive when you consider that most of the park models are shipped to

prime destination locations like Florida, Texas, Arizona and California – yet Linda and Mike, in Saco, ME, set sales records and most of their sales are in campgrounds or their own resort and less than 100 miles from the dealership. That speaks to their expertise and support that they provide to their customers.



### **Why would somebody buy a park model RV?**

Interestingly there are actually several answers to that question:

- ❖ A couple may be downsizing from a larger motorhome or travel trailer and have done all the traveling they want to do and are ready to settle down in a great destination.
- ❖ A young family that really doesn't have a lot of time to travel, but wants the enjoyment of camping without a high mortgage on a second home.
- ❖ Retired couples that don't want homes with a lot of upkeep and expenses may have a park model trailer in Maine from May to October and then have another park model trailer in



Florida where they will winter from November through April. Both trailers might be in park model communities or campgrounds that have a special park model section for seasonal visitors.

❖ A seasonal worker that doesn't want to pay high rental rates in a popular tourist area and will only be there during the camping season.

❖ An active mature couple (like Mae and me) that want an RV that other members of the family can use without additional campground charges. In our case we have a second bedroom in the loft area and built a third bedroom into the large three-season sunroom that also houses a dining area and two desks for days that we feel like working in Maine.

### **Why don't they sell more park model trailers?**



Destination campers are much like traditional travel trailers, just a bit larger with more home-like appliances and accessories, like the sliding patio doors. Traditional RV dealers have accepted this extension of their product offering

because they come to them from the same manufacturers that they are currently stocking on their lot.

*Park model trailers are unique. They are larger, heavier and wider than traditional RVs, but they are not intended for permanent residency.*

Moving park models from the manufacturer to the dealer requires special trucks, markers, and escorts on the highway. Moving them the second time to the campground or RV resort also requires special handling, special over-the-road permits, and a much heavier tow vehicle, usually with two people, to bring it to its final location and set it up.

From a dealer perspective, park models take up a lot of real estate on their lot and if you are going to be a major player in this segment of the market you must have many units on display to show the various options, floor plans and functionality of a park model over a traditional travel trailer.

Prospects for park models are unfamiliar with this product group. There are not a lot of dealers that sell them and those dealers have mastered their markets and know what consumer shows work for them.



For example, Seacoast RVs has a major presence at many New England shows each winter, but a full presence in the [Boston RV & Camping Expo](#) where their display replicates the typical installation at their Seacoast Resort.

Visitors coming to that show, expecting to see pop-ups, travel trailers, fifth-wheels and motorhomes are surprised when they come around the corner and see what looks to be a house, with a full sunroom and a deck. Instinctively, their first thought is, “why is a house in an RV show?” Well, it is not a house, it is a vacation cottage though, and I would like to see the industry advertise them that way to get the attention of non-RVers who have no idea what a park model is or what benefits it brings to people who were thinking of spending a lot more money, for a lot bigger house, when in reality what they really want is a relaxing environment, with little upkeep, to enjoy the RV lifestyle in an outdoor setting that will bring them great pleasure and wonderful family memories.

Dealers must make a major investment

to become successful selling and servicing park model RVs. Many are just not ready to make that investment so there are fewer dealers to showcase this lifestyle to non-RVers and experienced RV enthusiasts when they may be prime prospects for this type of RV.

One of the other major issues for dealers thinking about adding park models to their inventory is competition from local campgrounds, which they don't usually have with other types of RVs. Many manufacturers of park models will set up campgrounds as dealers for their products.



The campground owners will then be the sales outlet for campers who want to have a park model RV in that particular campground. It is an easy way for the campground to add another revenue stream but they may not have the professional service staff required to do routine and major repairs on this *different* type of RV. When a major problem exists, they must then try to locate a park model dealer who does have the expertise and proper staffing,



or a mobile technician who *might* have the appropriate training and skill sets required to fix the problem.

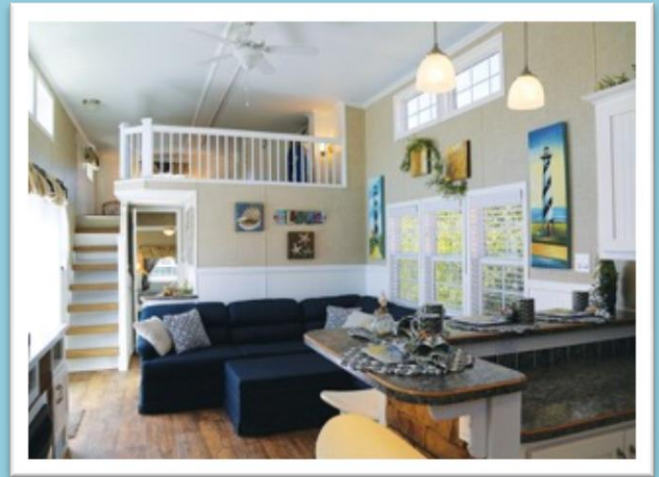
Park models are a major investment for any dealer, and while we all appreciate competition, setting up several campgrounds around a potential park model dealer will make it very easy for that dealership to take a pass on writing that check and getting into a difficult marketing problem before the first unit arrives on their lot.

### **How does the industry increase awareness and improve sales of park model RVs?**

The resurgence of the RV industry post-recession has seen almost every product segment increase their sales. Manufacturers in the Elkhart/Goshen area of Indiana where over 80% of all RVs are made, is enjoying full employment with every company having a *Help Wanted* or *Now Hiring* sign on their front lawn. During the recession unemployment in this area of the country was at 22-25% - today it is 4% - a striking turn around and economic recovery. Companies who are not already making park model RVs are not going to change their business model to add them now.

So we have a few specialized companies that do focus on manufacturing these great RVs, and a few dealers who have the expertise, staff and facilities for a great buying experience for prospects and

customers. We are not going to expand this segment of the market by adding more manufacturers and more dealers – certainly not in the short term outlook to take advantage of the economic recovery the industry is enjoying right now. In fact, in 2016 it is expected that the industry will sell approximately 400,000 RVs of all types and sizes. This volume would break the previous record of 390,500 units sold in 2006, before the country spiraled downward in a recession that forced many RV manufacturers and RV dealers out of business.



So how does the industry increase park model sales against all these odds? Actually it is very simple, the industry must reach outside traditional marketing and showcase these products and park model living to people who know very little about RVs and the RV lifestyle.

❖ Let's advertise in real estate magazines and on websites to show the advantages of park model living to people considering a second home for vacations or a smaller home for



retirement. Why not show them how affordable park model RVs are versus *any other* type of real estate investment they may be considering?

❖ Let's showcase our products at travel shows around the country. Why don't we have RVs at shows that cater to people spending discretionary income on vacation villas, cruise ships, airlines or destination locations like Disney World or Myrtle Beach? If they don't know what our industry has to offer, how will we ever be able to convince them to at least check out park model living and destination camping adventures?

❖ There is an entire industry of financial planners out there and one must

wonder how much they know about our industry and park model living. When they are advising their clients of real estate or retirement options, are they including our industry in those discussions? Probably not. We need to make them aware of the benefits of park model living for future planning that can have a significant financial impact on their investments and spending patterns.

❖ We should be reaching out to real estate investors who build communities of traditional housing. If they own land in prime destination locations that might prohibit the size and height of condominiums or apartments, why not



show them the benefits of building a park model community similar to what Linda and Mike did with [Seacoast Resort](#) in Old Orchard Beach, Maine?

- ❖ Senior Living Expos are very popular around the country. These special events are designed to introduce senior citizens to products and services that they might not be aware of. Why are we not showcasing park model living to an audience of people who would truly enjoy the benefits this lifestyle has to offer them?

- ❖ You can always find people shopping at the mall. While you may not be able to set up a park model RV or destination camper inside the facility, you could certainly set them up in the parking lot to showcase the lifestyle. You could also take one of the kiosks in the mall to show pictures or models of the units and highlight the living experience at a park model resort.

- ❖ Every person that walks into Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, Gander Mountain or similar outdoor experience stores is a pre-qualified prospect for an RV! Think about it, all these people enjoy doing *something* outside. Why not enjoy it from an RV or a park model community versus the hotel down the street? The New England RV Dealers Association has had great success partnering with Cabela's at the three stores located in Scarborough, ME, Hudson, MA and East Hartford, CT in the spring and fall. The events are not

focused on sales – they are focused on education and allowing people to see, touch and ask questions about RVs and the RV lifestyle.

- ❖ Home Shows are very popular in the spring when homeowners are thinking about improvements to their current homes. We should be at these show to pique their interest in an affordable vacation cottage as their second home – the key word being *affordable!* They may not go to the show looking for a second home, but when they realize the benefits of park model living and destination camping, we should be able to attract more people into our industry who never understood our products or lifestyle.

- ❖ The campground industry has awakened to the potential of destination camping within their parks and resorts. Many are now advertising park model and cabin rentals. We need to see more of this advertising in non-traditional places. These are *truly great* vacation options! Once consumers realize the benefits of vacation rentals, they are more likely to become a prospect for their very own destination camper in a campground or a park model RV in a park model community.

- ❖ Take full advantage of the Go RVing campaign adding park models and destination camping to our market awareness program and promotions. We must reach the Millennials on their platforms to plant the seeds of destination camping and park model living.



We must be savvy in our social media outreach programs through effective inbound marketing programs that reach consumers when they are looking for retirement options, vacation planning, second homes, travel options, etc. We need to be where they are when they are looking for something that competes with our products and services. The title of this article is *The Best Kept Secret in the RV Industry!* We have great manufacturers and dealers who currently represent a very small segment of our industry. If we sell close to 400,000 RVs this year, only approximately 1% of them will be park model RVs. Another small percentage of them will be destination campers.

Some might look at those numbers and be depressed, given the size of the market. I look at these numbers and see an incredible opportunity to bring park model RVs, the RV lifestyle and park model communities as destination camping locations to an entire population of people who are not familiar with what our industry has to offer. The potential here is *incredible*, if the industry promotes this segment of the RV industry the right way and in front of the right people.

Opportunity knocking . . . it's time to open the door and take full advantage of it.

Bob Zagami has been reporting on the RV industry since 1996 and has been an active RVer for over 40 years. He has been the editor of *RV News*, *Pop-Up Times* and *RV Enthusiast* magazines. He is a contributing editor at *Family Motor Coaching Magazine* and a frequent blogger and contributor at *RV Daily Report*. Bob owns [RV Insights](#), a media, marketing and consulting company to the RV industry. He also serves as Executive Director of the New England RV Dealers Association. Bob can be reached at 617-974-3739 or via email at <mailto:rwzagami@gmail.com>.



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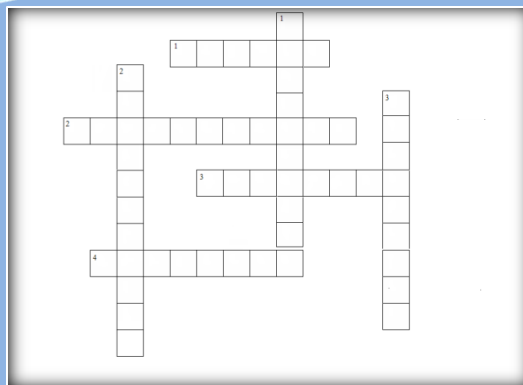
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by Mark Polk

## RV Destination Camping (our Story)

For years we criss-crossed the country in our RV enjoying all the spectacular sights and fun places to visit. There are still many destinations awaiting us, and our plan is to hopefully visit each one that still remains on our RV bucket list.

One thing that could potentially prevent us from achieving that goal is some ongoing medical conditions that worsen with time. When I was in the military I had a back injury that required surgery. It used to be nothing for me to drive the RV all day long, but now the nerve pain that radiates from my lower back into my leg prevents me from driving more than about 250 miles on a good day. On a bad day it's quite possible to call it a quits after about 150 miles.

As a back-up plan we started looking into destination camping. Destination camping is when you have a favorite spot or destination you visit and you purchase an RV or park model (also referred to as a Recreational Park Trailer) ) to set-up at that location on a semi-permanent or permanent basis. A favorite destination for us is the beach. There are several beaches within a 90 minute drive from our



home, so it's an easy trip to make on a moment's notice.

### Destination Camping Fact

The Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) stated 67% of destination campers locate the RV within several hours of drive time from their primary residence.

We don't really like the built-up touristy areas so we started searching for more tranquil settings at some local beach destinations close to home.

When you destination camp you can lease a lot or purchase a lot to put the RV on. We prefer purchasing a deeded lot over a leasing option.



After a few months of searching we found a campground with 400 plus sites that individuals purchase and own. The campground is located directly across the street from the beach. When we found the campground there were about 15 or 20 lots available for sale. The majority of sites are located in direct sunlight, so trees are a real commodity. One lot we really liked was on the first



row with lots of trees, close to the beach, and in close proximity to many other campground amenities. The seller was motivated because he moved to the west coast and never uses the lot.

We made the decision to purchase the lot and in less than two weeks we were closing the deal. The HOA fees are very reasonable and the fees include water, sewer, garbage and property taxes. The only additional expense is electricity.

The next piece of the destination camping puzzle was the RV. At some point in time our plan is to purchase a park model trailer to put on the lot, but for now we wanted to find a good used RV that is roomy and will fit on the lot. Most of the lots at the campground are deep and kind of narrow. Our lot is more of a square shape, offering room for parking and room to add a deck and screened enclosure. But since the lot is not deep the length of the RV is limited. To maximize our living space we thought a used 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer would fit the bill. A couple concerns I had are the camper's constant exposure to salt air and the

threat of hurricanes. I didn't want to invest a lot of money in a used RV right now based on those concerns, but we wanted something that was in good condition. We searched in a 100 mile radius from our home for a good used and affordable RV. I looked for ads claiming the unit was maintained and in good overall condition, but the majority of RVs we looked at had water damage or other issues we did not want to deal with.



Finally we found an ad for a used 33-foot Newmar Kountry Star 5<sup>th</sup> wheel. It was an older trailer but it had good bones. It was solid from top to bottom and the owners were fanatics about keeping up with the majority of the maintenance. For the past 8 years it was parked in a campground storage facility and was only moved when the owners went there to camp for a week or two at a time.

I liked the solid construction, the fact that it was maintained and that it has a 50 amp electrical system. Dawn liked the floor-plan and that it was pre-wired and plumbed to add a washer/dryer unit. After a thorough inspection of the

trailer we negotiated a good deal with the owners. In addition to getting a good price the owners agreed to split the cost of installing new tires so it could make the 130 mile journey to its new home.



After the tires were on the trailer I went to the storage facility to inspect the wheel bearings and lights so it was road-ready for the move. I did not want to install a 5<sup>th</sup> wheel hitch in my truck just to move the trailer from point A to point B, so I found a worker at the storage facility who agreed to deliver it for a reasonable fee.

We cleaned up the lot, had the electricity turned on and scheduled the delivery date. Getting the trailer on the lot was a challenge. There were two tree limbs that concerned me and there wasn't much room for maneuvering the trailer. In addition to those concerns the length of the trailer was almost as long as the lot itself. The trailer needed to be positioned on the lot correctly and leveled from side-to-side since I have no way to move it after the driver leaves. Placing the trailer on the lot brought back memories of setting up RV shows when we had to position RVs



within inches of obstacles and other RVs. The delivery day arrived and curious neighbors came to offer assistance and advice. To some degree I think their curiosity was based on wanting to see if we could get the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel situated on the



lot without any damage. We had to unhitch and reposition the truck to get the trailer positioned where we wanted it, but we got it done without damage to the property, the trailer or the truck. I did breathe a sigh of relief after it was unhitched from the truck and sitting on the lot. There is still a lot to do in the way of improving the site and getting things the way we want, but the hard part is over. Now we can enjoy one of our favorite camping destinations whenever we want to without concerns about making advance reservations or worrying about a site being available.



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# 15 Minute RV Generator Service

Your RV generator is powered by an internal combustion engine. When it comes to maintenance internal combustion engines need two things to operate properly and help prolong engine life; it needs fresh air and clean oil. In 15 minutes you can change your generator engine oil and filter and clean or replace the air filter. Here's how you do it.

The first step is to start and run the generator for a couple of minutes. This warms the oil up making it easier to drain the crankcase. Just keep in mind the engine, oil filter and oil itself will be warm so be careful. Shut the engine off, place a drain pan under the oil drain plug or tube and drain the old oil.

When the oil stops draining you can remove the oil filter. **Note:** Not all generators use oil filters, and depending on the type and model of generator the location of the filter can vary. Consult your generator owner's manual for more information.

Wipe the area where the filter installs with a clean rag. Put a thin layer of clean oil around the rubber gasket on the new oil filter and reinstall the filter. Snug the filter to get a good seal, but do not over tighten it.

by Mark Polk



Using a funnel add the recommended type and amount of new oil to the crankcase. Consult your generator owner's manual for oil viscosity and capacity.



Start and run the generator for about 30 seconds. Shut it off, wait a few seconds and check the oil level. Adjust the oil level as required. Check for any oil leaks around the oil filter and oil drain plug or tube.



Internal combustion engines are basically big air pumps. The engine needs clean air to operate properly. Remove the air filter housing cover and check the air filter for cleanliness and for any dirt and debris.



Sometimes it's possible to clean an air filter, but for the cost of a new filter it's easier to just replace it, and your engine will thank you for it. Usage on a generator is based on hours. Check the hour meter and record the oil, oil filter and air filter replacement in the maintenance section of the generator owner's manual. That's all there is to a 15 minute RV generator service. Follow the service intervals recommended by the generator manufacturer and your generator will always be there for you when you need it.



Stop dead batteries for good with the charger, maintainer & conditioner that Mark uses on all his batteries. [The Battery Minder](http://www.batteryminders.com)



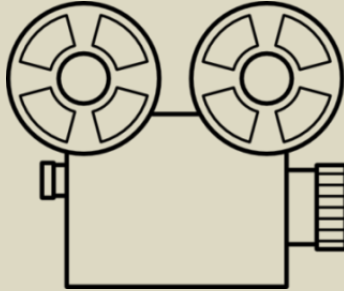
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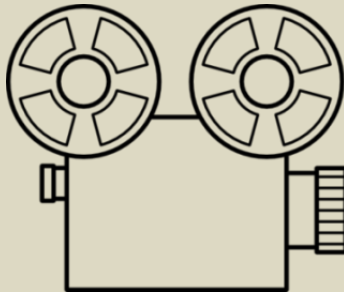




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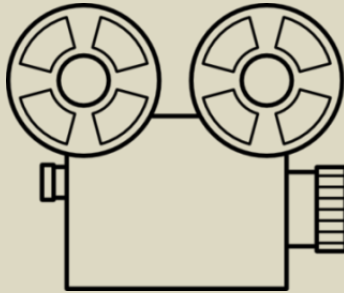
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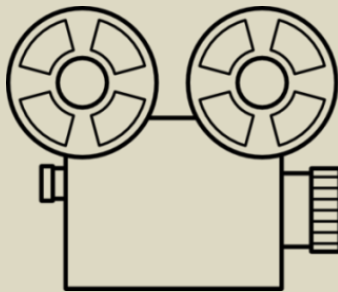
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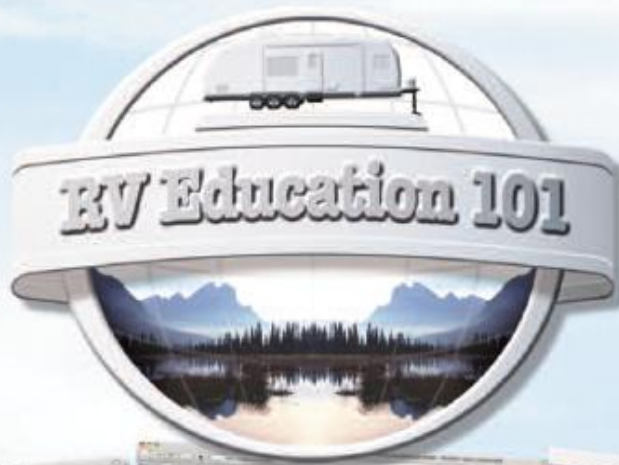
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**The new App is titled “RV Education 101” and is available through both [Apple](#) and [Android](#) App Stores.** The IOS App works on iPhone, iPad and iPod touch devices.

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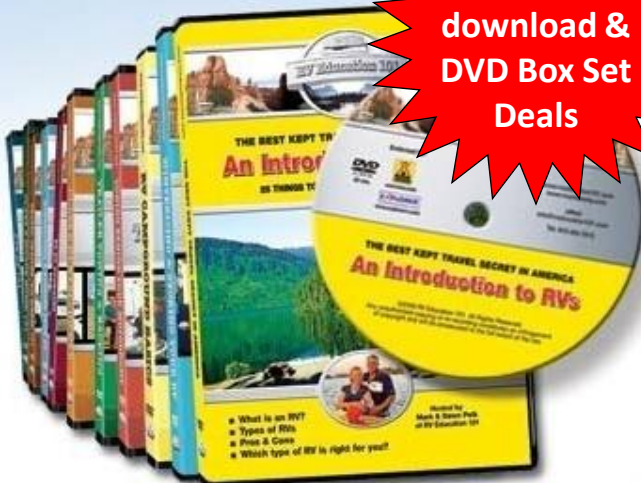


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Our goal with RV Consumer E-Magazine is to provide you with helpful information to make all of your RV experiences more enjoyable. I left my position as an RV Sales and F&I manager in 2000 to work RV Education 101 fulltime.

We produce RV educational videos & DVDs and publish books and e-books on how to safely & properly use and maintain your RV. The reason I left my job was because of my concern about the lack of educational and safety awareness material available to the RV consumer, in other words you.

My wife Dawn left her position in RV sales to help start the company, and is our Sales and Marketing Director. We currently have a 35-foot Type A motor home and travel with our three dogs Roxie, Gracie & Mo-Mo. If you would like to learn more about us and about RV Education 101 please visit

[www.rveducation101.com](http://www.rveducation101.com)

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RV Education 101  
150 Bay Ridge Rd.  
Harrells, NC 28444  
910-484-7615

Contact:

[Mark@rveducation101.com](mailto:Mark@rveducation101.com)

[Dawn@rveducation101.com](mailto:Dawn@rveducation101.com)

