

Staff writer

In August 2012, an estimated 40,000 classic and hot rod cars joined the processional cruise along Hines Drive. And that was double the number of cars who attended the first cruise in 2011.

“2013? I quit guessing,” said Don Nicholson of Don Nicholson Enterprises.

Nicholson is the Westland resident behind the Cruisin' Hines event, as well as a number of other well-known shows and cruises throughout metro Detroit.

Cruises and car shows are just a part of the summer scene in the Motor City metropolitan area. Whether large or small, the events that offer their own brand of Americana, draw hundreds if not thousands of car enthusiasts and collectors, as well as interested visitors.

“I think it is a regional thing. Does the Motor City have a lock on it? No. But it is king,” Nicholson said.

Bob Steinhaus, founding member of the Grand River Cruisers


 Car Club, which hosts Cruis'n the Grand weekly in downtown Farmington would agree.

“They are popular because it is Michigan. We have good weather and gorgeous cars.”

And there is a difference between cruises and car shows. Cruises are typically without a registration fee to car enthusiasts who bring their classic or hot rods cars. A car show comes with a registration fee and can include an awards show.

True classics

Regardless whether it's a cruise or a show, spectators are sure to be entertained this summer when they see the true classics - historic cars - as well as revved up hot rods. It isn't unusual, Nicholson said, for a lot of people to buy fairly new cars

 and modify them, whether with spiffy wheels and hubcaps or redone interiors or any other modifications that suit their fancies.

“There are a lot of different levels,” Nicholson said. “There is something definitely for every individual.

Car enthusiasts can spend as little as a few thousand dollars on purchasing a classic or rod or as much as several hundred thousand dollars. “You really can see such a wide range,” Nicholson added.

Residents throughout Oakland and Wayne counties are sure not only to see hot rods and classic cars

📍 in traffic, but also at shows and cruises.

Of course, the grand dame of all cruises is the 19th Annual Woodward Dream Cruise scheduled for Aug. 17. The premier show annually draws more than one million spectators and approximately 40,000 participants and their autos.

Considered the largest one day classic car

📍 event in the world, the cruise had a humble beginning. Ferndale plumber Nelson House came up with the idea in 1994 as a way to raise money to build a soccer field. More than 250,000 attended that first cruise, confirming its potential success.

On a smaller scale, the Grand River Cruisers Car Club begin its weekly Cruis'n the Grand as early as April. The event began years ago in Farmington and though the cruisers have moved to a variety of places for the gathering, it is now nestled cozily in the parking lot of the Village Commons shopping center on the north side of Grand River, just east of Grove. Car enthusiasts and spectators gather beginning and 5 p.m. every Monday and stay until dusk.

The gatherings have become an event, with DJ music, occasional entertainment, 50/50 drawing, door prizes and discounted food prices, said Harvey Ettinger, one of the cruise's founders and promoters. The cruise in is free for car owners and spectators.

The Grand River Cruisers also help

📍 raise money for local charities and needy individuals. In the past, donations have been made to Farmington High School Falcons Marching Band, Salvation Army, Carnival of Care and Farmington Area Goodfellows.

Cruise for a cause

Charity often drives the local shows and cruises, such as the ninth annual car show at the Livonia Public Schools' Western Wayne Skill Center at 8075 Ritz in Westland.

Organized by Nicholson, whose son attends the center, the annual Charity Car Show is coming up at 6-9 p.m. Monday, June 24 in parking lot off Ritz. The event is free to the public, but those who register for the event beginning at 4 p.m. are charged \$15. One-hundred percent of the proceeds are provided to the center.

“We had more than 100 cars at the show each year,” Nicholson added.

Another fund-raising car show is one planned for 6-9 p.m. Monday, July 15 at Bill Brown Ford on Plymouth Road. “They clear out the sales lot,” Nicholson said.

The \$15 registration fee for those who show their classics and hot rods is donated to the Livonia Public Schools Foundation. Vendors with refreshments are available throughout the event.

Nicholson is also planning the third annual car show - as a fund-raiser - at Marycrest Manor, 15475 Middlebelt in Livonia in September. Again, the \$15 registration fee charged to each

enthusiast who brings their car is donated to the facility.

Community support

A first for Westland all day on July 13 will be the All-American Cruise up and down Wayne Rd., which will remain open for the event. The cruise will run between Glenwood and Joy.

Designed as a promotional event, the city of Westland will have a chance to show itself off, including the business community. Sponsorships are available.

“It really is a tourism event,” Nicholson said.

The American Legion Myron H. Beals Post 32 at 9318 Newburgh in Livonia kicked off its annual car show season Thursday, June 6. The event runs at 5 p.m. every Thursday throughout the summer. The last show is on Thursday, Aug. 29.

Out in Milford car enthusiasts can be assured that every Sunday, thousands of classic cars and hot rods will be on display at Baker's Weekly Car Show.

The popular restaurant and banquet center at 2025 S.Milford Rd., just south of the entrance to Kensington Metropark, began the weekly car shows in 1996. The event is free to car owners and spectators but there's always plenty of food and refreshments and vendors.

And later in the summer, the Cruisin' Hines event begins at 9 a.m., Sunday, Aug. 25. Hines Drive will be closed for the day as cruisers drive up and down the road showing their cars. They can also park in designated areas to show spectators their classics and hot rods.

“This show just keeps growing,” Nicholson said.

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