

Volunteers needed for fourth annual Cruisin' Hines in Westland

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In 2011, Don Nicholson was blown away by the response to his inaugural Hines Drive cruise. Cruisin' Hines attracted more than 24,000 classic car owners and hot rodders who spent the day driving from Ann Arbor Trail in Westland to Outer Drive in Dearborn.

That number more than doubled by year three and Nicholson is expecting an even bigger crowd for this year's Cruisin' Hines, set to start at 9 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 24.

"We had over 50,000 cars last year; the response was phenomenal," the Westland resident said. "The car count has continued to grow by huge numbers every year. This year we have been hearing from car clubs and individuals coming from far away."

But the problem Nicholson has faced since the first year is how to get the cars onto the parkway efficiently. Making cruisers register slowed the process the first year, so he dumped that for the second year and it still remained a slow process. Last year, he moved the cruise entrance to Merriman, thinking access from a four-lane road would help. It was "a hindrance," he said.

New entrance

So for the fourth installment, he's moved the entrance to Ford Road in Dearborn to use the long approach to Hines Drive as the staging area. Spectators will still be able to access the park at Ann Arbor Trail, Merriman and the Warrendale entrance near Telegraph.

"It'll give us a more efficient entrance and we knew that even opening one entrance at each end, the majority would still enter near Nankin Mills," Nicholson said. "So we would not have fixed anything, just spread out our manpower."

"Hopefully that will end that problem. It's a good problem to have when you have so many people come to an event," he added.

The popularity of the cruise is due in part to its inclusion in the Autopalooza lineup, which promotes car cruises, races and car shows in southeast Michigan that is promoted not only throughout the state, but around the U.S. and the world. Last year, the event had people come from seven states and two provinces and even had a couple from Germany plan their vacation around the cruise, Nicholson said.

Volunteers needed

And with the cruises popularity growing – it's Nicholson's goal to make it the biggest such event in Wayne County – he's in need of volunteers to help. Last year, he had 20 volunteers, but this year, knowing how participation has doubled each year the past three years, he's looking for 50 volunteers.

Volunteers will help put up banners and mark areas for car clubs and vendors and work at the spectator entrances and main gate. Shifts will start as earlier as 1 a.m. "In addition to being part of a great event," volunteers will receive a free T-shirt and will be provided with food and water throughout the day, Nicholson said.

"I hope to have enough so volunteers only have to work four-hour shifts," he added.

Nicholson will hold a volunteer meeting before the cruise. People interested in being involved can contact him at Don@DonNicholson.net or by calling 734-658-5296.

The cruise also has added new sponsors, Rory Gamble and UAW Region 1A.

“They are a big part of all of our events,” Nicholson said. “With our commitment to the history of the automobile and the local car people, the UAW was the perfect partnership to work with. The UAW members are our customer base. We look forward to adding the UAW 1A logo to our growing list of great organizations.”