

Hines cruise: 'Lots of cars, lots of people'

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(Photo: Photo By Sue Mason)

Don Nicholson has given up counting. There's no way to say how many people were in Hines Park Sunday for the annual Cruisin' Hines car cruise.

"I know we beat last year's numbers, but there's no way to count," Nicholson said. "So all I'm saying is there were lots of cars and lots of people. I think we beat the Dream Cruise in car count with classics and hot rods."

Classics hot rods and custom cars paraded through the park, which was closed to regular traffic from Outer Drive in Dearborn to Ann Arbor Trail in Westland. While cruisers entered off Ford Road in Dearborn, spectators came on foot or bicycles to watch the show. A popular spot was Perrinville School, which was surrounded by

parked cars.

Open to classics 25 years and older, hot rods and customs, the cruise has grown in popularity since it started four years ago. Nicholson, who also stages Westland All-American Cruise in July, has worked with Wayne County Parks on the event that attracts people from far and near.

Logistics — how to get cars into the park — has been a problem, but this year the entrance was moved to Ford Road, providing a more than one-mile long staging area. There was a lineup of cars, but it was moving, although the line was stopped briefly when it became apparent the park was full.

"We closed the entrance for 20 minutes to let the people in the park get settled, then we reopened it and didn't have a lineup the rest of the day," Nicholson said. "It was an ah-ha moment. It does work. They were driving a distance, but the ability to organize at the entrance was great."

'Made it go so well'

Nicholson was at the park at 1 a.m. Sunday to set up for the cruise. He got help from a cadre of volunteers, of which only two "knew anything about hot rods and cars."

"I can't say enough about the people who jumped on board to do this," he said. "The volunteers are what made it go so well."

The cruise had a kick-off party with 500 cars at Crosswinds Church in Wayne. The gathering was part of the church's annual Family Day. According to Nicholson, the church changed the date of its event to host the kick-off party. At the end of the event, the cars cruised from the church to Nankin Mills where Nicholson passed out his green and white "I cruised Hines" paper street signs.

"Crosswinds is now the site of the official Hines cruise kick-off party," he said.

Movie cars — the Green Hornet, Monkee Mobile, Herbie, A-Team van, the van from Dumb and Dumber, Ghostbusters, Knight Rider and Dukes of Hazard — were on display and a crew from the PBS show *Discover the D* were in the park filming the event.

Nicholson has already started planning for the 2015 cruise. On Monday, he sat on a park bench in the Hines Park, discussing what worked and what didn't work.

Feel good

"The cruise may be funded by businesses, but it's a community event," he said. "We need to bring out the cruisers, we need to bring out the entertainment to make it work."

And even though the cruise season is winding down, Nicholson will be hosting a "Show N Shine" at Milan Dragway on Sept. 27. "Show N Shine" is a car display with minimal judging. There is no charge to enter the car, but participants do have to pay spectator pricing to get into the track. Each car will get a free dash plaque, and there will be up for four spectator-voted awards.

"What makes me feel good is the emails and tons of phone calls I got telling me how much fun they had and how they loved the event," he said. "I was even asked for my autograph. It fills me with pride that someone appreciates what I'm doing."