

Corvette Club Donates \$5,000 To Leader Dog for the Blind

by Jim Stickford

America's Corvette Club of Michigan, based in West Bloomfield, recently donated \$5,000 from the proceeds of its 12th Annual Corvettes America Car show to Leader Dogs for the Blind in Rochester.

"We held our fundraiser on Aug. 11," said Richard Heldenbrand, club president. "(It was) our annual Corvette-only car show at the Alpine Valley Ski Lodge in White Lake. We raised the money from vendors as well as a voluntary \$10 per car donation and silent auction."

Brad McKenna, Sr., accepted the check for Leader Dogs for the Blind.

The Corvette club meets on the first Tuesday of every month at Cauley Performance Automotive in West Bloomfield, Heldenbrand said. They picked the Leader Dogs charity by vote.

"Members nominate different charities we might make donations to," Heldenbrand said. "This year we selected Leader Dogs, but other nominated groups included the American Cancer Society and Karmanos Cancer Institute. We'll be holding another Corvette-only show at Alpine Valley next year on Aug. 10."

The club is coming into its 13th year, Heldenbrand said. He's been a member for 10 years and worked for GM for 36 years, 5 of them at the Tech Center. He's been president of the club for nine years.

Heldenbrand said club members really enjoy showing and driving their Corvettes. The oldest model a member drives is a 1961. His own 'Vette is a 1996 dark purple metallic.

"We hope to do better at next year's car show," Heldenbrand said. "This year, we only had about 250 cars attend the event compared with 2011 when we had about 500 vehicles. The big difference was that it rained this year."

The car show is only one of many events sponsored by the club, Heldenbrand said. They also take trips. Their Tail of the Dragon event takes them to a part of Tennessee where they drive on a stretch of road that has 338 curves in 11 miles.

"That's exciting to drive," Heldenbrand said. "But we had no crashes due to the fact that we don't drive too fast. It's a nice scenic route and we drive it carefully."

They also just returned from a drive to Niagara Falls.

The club is looking at attending the 2013 North American International Auto Show. They've heard there'll be a special Corvette display of the upcoming model.



Brad McKenna, Sr., philanthropy director of Leader Dogs for the Blind in Rochester, accepted the Corvette Club's \$5,000 donation.

U.S. Fuel Economy Reaches All-Time High

by Irena Granaas
Special Writer

With the per-gallon price of gasoline on the rise again, the good news for car buyers is that average fuel economy of new vehicles sold in the United States is at an all-time high, according to researchers from the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI).

Window sticker average fuel economy values of all vehicles - cars, minivans, SUVs and light trucks - purchased in October was 24.1 mpg, up slightly from September's average of 23.8, and a robust 20 percent (4.0 gallon) increase since October 2007, when Michael Sivak, director of sustainable worldwide transportation for UMTRI, and UMTRI project manager Brandon Schoettle began monitoring fuel economy averages.

"It's definitely a big decrease among new vehicles over a short period of time," Schoettle commented in a recent interview.

Domestic automakers General Motors, Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler/Fiat have been doing their part to boost the national sticker fuel economy values. For GM, Schoettle cited the Chevrolet Spark minicar, with a combined city/highway fuel economy rating of 33 mpg across its different models; and the Chevrolet Cruze, averaging about 30 mpg.

The Ford Fiesta comes in at a fuel-sipping 33 mpg and at Chrysler, the Dodge Dart offers a thrifty 31 mpg average for its different models. (All figures here are based on combined city/highway fuel economy averages.)

All this signals a healthy trend in the national drive to save fuel and become more energy-independent.

"The improvements in fuel economy in the past five years corresponds to a 17 percent reduction in fuel consumption per distance driven," Sivak stated in the Nov. 5 UMTRI news release announcing the latest fuel economy numbers.

In addition to reducing fuel consumption, these fuel economy improvements contribute to better U.S. numbers for the national Eco-Driving Index (EDI), developed for UMTRI by Sivak. Sivak and Schoettle factor in fuel economy and distance driven to estimate the average monthly emissions of greenhouse gases generated by an individual driver in the United States, results of which are published with a two-month lag. During August, the EDI remained unchanged at 0.81, which is down nearly 20 percent since October 2007.

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