

Classic Cars, Fitness Key to Pontiac Employee Car Show

by Jim Stickford

The 12th annual Pontiac GM Powertrain Employee Car Show, held on July 26, had a lot to offer attendees. For fans of great cars, both past and present, there were new and classic Corvettes.

For those looking to buy a car, there was the GM ride-and-drive program, which gives would-be buyers the chance to drive new GM products with a guide who can explain what the vehicles can do and how they work.

The ride-and-drive program is the brainchild of Wendy Stachowicz, manager of the GM vehicle advocate program.

"I created this program about four years ago during the dark times at GM," Stachowicz said. "Its purpose is three-fold. First, it helps our employees understand our products. Second, it provides them with the opportunity to connect with our customers. Third, employees get to network with other employees in different departments. It's just easier to get things done when you know the people in the other departments."

The employee ride-and-drive program is different, Stachowicz said. It is run by volunteers who work for GM. They go to events and sit in the passenger seat while a potential customer drives a new GM product.

She said they bring all sorts of cars to events, ranging from Cadillacs to Sparks to Camaros to Volts.

The employee ride-and-drive events are aimed at particular niches, Stachowicz said. During the day of the Pontiac Powertrain Car Show, the event was open to GM employees and their friends.

If a GM employee had a friend interested in buying, say, a Camaro, that employee could bring the friend to the ride-and-drive on July 26, and that friend could drive a Camaro with a volunteer who could talk about the car and how it worked.

"We've been here three days," Stachowicz said. "The first day was open to GM retirees. The second day was open to GM suppliers."

Stachowicz said that trying to sell GM cars to suppliers might seem "like preaching to the

choir" but people have to realize that suppliers sell to all the OEMs. They have no special loyalty to GM.

"We're passionate about our cars and we want to share our passion with the public," Stachowicz said.

"These ride-and-drives allow our employees to connect with customers and give a face to GM vehicles."

Stachowicz said they don't just hire marketing people to sit in the vehicles and speak with potential customers. The people who ride with the drivers are all GM employees.

"They volunteer their time," Stachowicz said. "They come from different departments. Some come from Finance, some come from Engineering, from IT, from Purchasing."

"Basically, all the unusual suspects who don't normally connect with the customer. This program is part of our vision to connect with the buyer."

These employees sign up to volunteer for events, said Stachowicz. When one is planned, she contacts those who signed up and tells them when to show up.

Those who are picked then arrive the morning of the day they've been assigned. They are briefed and then spend three or four hours taking people on test drives.

One of the volunteers, Brian Beaubien, works for GM in its IT department. He said he enjoys taking people for rides probably as much as they enjoy test driving the vehicles.

"This is a great setup," Beaubien said. "Imagine trying to do this at a dealership - driving five or six different cars in the span of an hour or two. You can't. I also like riding and even driving the cars as well."

"I work for GM, but I don't have the opportunity to drive every vehicle they make, so this is fun for me, too."

Tom Read, who works in the company's GM Technology Communications - Powertrain department, put together this year's show.

He said it was a great success and that they had more than 120 classic cars on display. And he was able to get a 2014 Stingray



Employees, their friends and families roam the displays of classic cars at the Pontiac Powertrain show.

and put one of the engines that powers the model on display.

"Hey, this is the Powertrain Car Show, so we put the Stingray powertrain on display," Read said.

"But for a lot of employees, the 2014 Corvette we have here at the show is the first chance they've had to see the model."

Read said the theme of this year's show is the Corvette. It's a popular vehicle with GM employees as well as with the public.

"I myself don't own a Corvette, but I love cars and think of myself as a wannabe Corvette owner," Read said.

"What's interesting about the Corvette is that there is probably no car with more trivia behind it. I've found that people, all kinds of people, know so many facts about the Corvette. It's just amazing."

Read said this year's show offered a lot for GM employees and their families. There was food and drink, cars to see and even a push-up contest that was held to break a world record.

GM has a Powertrain Fitness Center program to help employees stay in shape.

To help promote the program at the car show, a special push-up contest was held. Volunteers from the audience were signed up and asked to do as many push-ups as they could in one minute.

The result was a couple of hun-



Engineers compete in a push-up contest at the Employee Car Show.

dred engineers and other GM employees did push-ups outside the Pontiac Powertrain building.

Read said he doesn't know if they broke the world record for the most amount of individuals doing push-ups at the same time, but the event was good for the participants and fun for the peo-

ple who watched engineers doing push-ups.

"Today is just a great day for powertrain employees and their families," Read said. "The people who come to the show get exposed to car enthusiasts and they get to see great old cars and GM's great new cars."

Delphi Auto Offers Solution for the Sounds of Silence

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products like the Vehicle Sound Generator."

Delphi's patent-pending device uses unique algorithms, pitch shifting and amplitude scaling to indicate a vehicle's speed, throttle and acceleration.

In addition to the obvious safety benefits of the device, the Delphi Vehicle Sound Generator can be customized to emit distinctive sounds to differentiate each automaker's products, using customer-supplied sound tracks.

"The flexibility of the high-fidelity system adds an opportu-

nity for customization," said Jerome Coudre, Product Marketing manager, Delphi's Body & Security. "Not only can an automaker custom-design the low-speed warning sounds, but the sound generator can also be integrated with other vehicle systems to sound when, for example, a battery needs changing or to con-

firm that a charging session is complete."

Delphi's single-box configuration combines electronics and the speaker actuator in the same box. Rugged enough to be mounted under a vehicle's hood, the sounder has a frequency range of 300 Hz to 10 KHz, and a 32-bit microprocessor.

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