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Timeless cars on tab for show

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In the modern, fast-growing town of Madison, old-fashioned cars remain timeless pieces of art that have withstood the test of time.

On Oct. 19 and 20, the folks of Madison County will have a chance to step back in time to the days of Bel Air convertibles, Thunderbirds, and Holiday sedans, imagining an era of drive-thru movies and local diners. And for some, it's a chance to relive the glory days of cruising in a hot rod, with one hand on the wheel and the other around their high school sweetheart.

Nine years ago, a couple of guys with a love for cars crowded around Mike Martin's kitchen table with an idea that would become known as the Scarecrow Cruise and Car Show. For co-founders Keith Bates, Mike Martin and Tom Phillips, the light bulb clicked after seeing the attention from crowds gathered around their old cars at Madison's Scarecrow Festival.

Since then, the car show has made some impressive strides and has become one of the city's biggest events, drawing thousands of spectators a year.

Over 500 cars are anticipated to participate this year, an all-time high compared to the mere 60 cars displayed nine years ago.

Pam Mahony, executive director of Madison the City Chamber of Commerce, has been involved with the car show for two years.

"I try to help promote the event for the city, and for MS Classic Cruisers," said Mahony. "We love doing this event, and it's good for our city, retailers, and residents."

An eclectic group of cars and trucks of all sizes and colors will be displayed - some brand new sports cars, others vintage Chevrolets. Avid car restorers and proud car owners will show off their prized beauties, most in pristine mint condition despite their advanced age.

Madison retiree Pat Fisher will show his '52 Chevrolet Patina Rod pickup truck, one of his six hot rods. Fisher has been showing cars for the last 40 years and has attended events all around the U.S.

Car enthusiast Paul Westwood has entered his 1934 Studebaker Dictator street rod. Westwood has shown a car every year at the Scarecrow Car Show.



Tom Phillips stands next to his '76 Stingray. Phillips will bring his Stingray to the Scarecrow Cruise and Car Show in October. The show attracts several car enthusiasts from all over the South.

"I think old cars are absolutely beautiful, and there's always something new to see [at the event]," Westwood said.

To put on one of Madison's biggest events of the year requires year-round preparation, according to Bates.

Bates, who is in charge of the caravan and getting sponsors, owns a '77 white Corvette and enters it every year.

The caravan begins early Saturday morning with hundreds of spectators lined down the streets.

This year it will start at the Reunion Golf Club, travel across I-55 and down Highway 51, before concluding at Madison Center Square for the Arts, where the show takes place.

"My primary responsibility is promoting the caravan and getting the permits from the city of Madison and pre-staging all of the cars, because there are generally 80 to 100 cars in the parade," Bates said.

Various activities take place on the grounds that Saturday, including Hope Hollow's silent auction, a SIDS booth fair, and a free magic show for kids. Awards will also be presented, and cash and door prizes distributed to raffle ticket winners.

"Plaques are given to the top 50 automobiles, top 20 trucks, top 20 imports and top 20 street rods, as voted by registered participants," said Phillips, committee chairman of the car show and a tireless worker on its behalf.

The Scarecrow Cruise and Car Show supports two local charities, Hope Hollow Ministries and MS SIDS Alliance. The foundation of the car show was based on the premise that the money would go to children's charities.

Hope Hollow is a year-round Christian camp for children and young adults with disabilities. Director of Development Leslie Dill has participated in the car show for the past two years, one of the camp's biggest fundraisers.

"My job [at the event] is to try to make people aware of Hope Hollow and let the children know where we are and promote the camp," said Dill.

MS SIDS Alliance, which stands for sudden infant death syndrome, greatly benefits from the annual car show.

Leslie Threadgill is the director of programs at MS SIDS Alliance. Threadgill partnered up with the event as a way to raise money for SIDS and spread awareness.

"We have a booth called Shopping for SIDS, an area of about 40 vendors," said Threadgill.

"We charge each vendor \$50 for the cribs we purchased this year to give to families who can't afford cribs," Threadgill said.

Phillips says the car show is primarily a family event, an opportunity for children and grandchildren to see the cars once driven. "It's a history lesson," he said.
