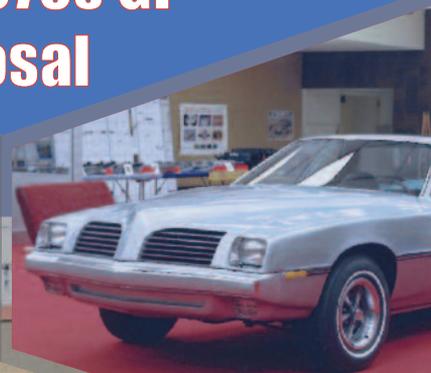


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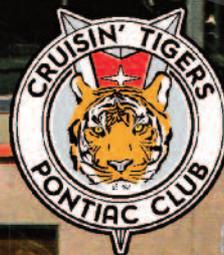
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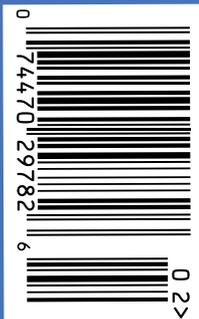
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Pontiacs With A Purpose: RI Benefit Show

Originality Plus: 1964 GTO Sport Coupe



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Pontiacs With a Purpose

Enthusiasts Congregate in Rhode Island to Raise Thousands for Children's Cancer Charities



By Jason Scott

Photography by Darrin Magro and the author

Most of us are lucky: we and our families are healthy and happy. For most of us, a "bad day" is finding that your car's battery is dead, or

that you've got a flat tire, or maybe it's raining on the day of the big, local car show. But not everyone is so lucky.

Rick DiGiacomo had a day, one

day, that most of us would find unimaginable: a day in which his two-and-a-half year old grandson died after battling cancer.

Rick and his family were under-



A plethora of early Pontiacs and even an Oakland or two greeted enthusiasts as they arrived at the Pontiacs With A Purpose event, including this assortment of Bonneville's and Catalinas.

standably devastated, but even as he mourned, Rick knew that he had to find some way to honor his grandson, to somehow keep alive the memories of his happy, smiling face, and to help others who might be dealing with the same affliction.

Rick's idea was simple: a car show to raise money for charities that help families with children who have cancer. Being a Pontiac guy, Rick shared his idea with his friend Larry Kummer, who runs the Pontiac Registry(.com), and the two developed



Dozens and dozens of Firebirds flocked to Pontiacs With A Purpose, ranging from the earliest of 67s through late 02s, including all-original, low-mileage models, flawless restorations, and some that ... well ... could use a little TLC. But all were welcomed and enjoyed by show participants.



It wasn't just vintage Pontiacs that were on display, though. There were dozens of later-model Ponchos to peruse, like this gathering of 80s and 90s Grand Prix's and '08 G8s.



Nearby, classic Grand Prix and Grand Villes gathered on Friday evening and Saturday.



And who wouldn't want to cruise around in Noel and Starr Evans' 1957 Custom Safari wagon?

a plan that eventually became the "Pontiacs With A Purpose" event that the pair host every even year.

This past September marked the tenth anniversary of "Pontiacs With A Purpose", and, fittingly, it was the best attended occurrence ever with 257 Pontiacs on display (and some for sale) in the paved parking lot of the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick, Rhode Island.

Situated adjacent to Interstate 95—the major north-south highway that runs the entire length of the East Coast, from Maine to Florida—it's easy for Pontiac enthusiasts to attend, and this year's show drew

folks from all over. We spoke with folks from as far north as Maine and as far south as Pennsylvania, though we heard there were Pontiacs from further into the midwest and south.

Unlike so many larger shows, "Pontiacs With A Purpose" has a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere that feels more like a Friday night cruise-in than a big show ... which is actually how the show began, on Friday night, with Pontiacs pulling into the huge east parking lot that had been cordoned-off for event participants. Notably in short-supply were trailers: nearly all of the Pontiacs in attendance got there under their own

power, which contributed to the cruise-in feel.

On Saturday morning, like most shows, cars clustered into various sections—GTOs from early-'64s through the Australian-derived '06s formed a long line along one side of the lot, up against the grass, while an impressive gathering of roughly two dozen original, restored, and modified Fieros anchored the opposite side of the lot. From the center of the show lot to its farthest edge was Firebird territory, with dozens and dozens of examples of Pontiac's pony car, ranging from first-year '67s right through final-year '02



More Firebirds filled out the rear of the show field. Nearly all of the cars at "Pontiacs With A Purpose" were driven to the show. Trailers were few and far between.

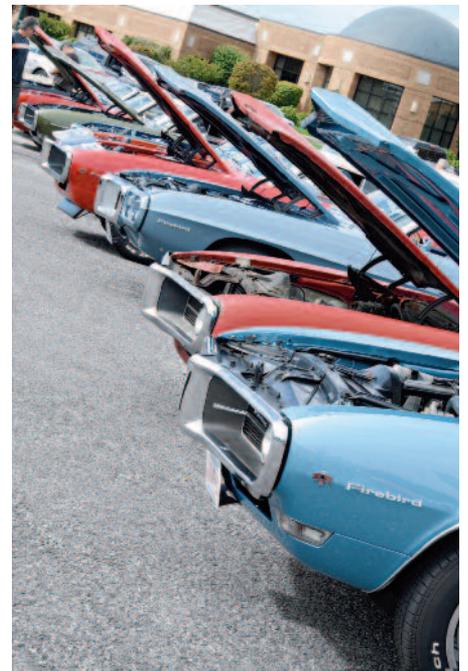


Here, several 1964-67 GTOs arrived early to get good parking spots along the rear of the Crowne Plaza's massive paved lot that hosted the "Pontiacs With A Purpose" event.

T/As, all in several rows that ran from the Goats to the Fieros. Additional rows, closer to the hosting hotel featured LeMans models, Tempests, modified GTOs, Parisiennes, Grand Villes, and Bonneville and Grand Prix of all years from the classic '60s through the front-wheel-drive 2000s. Tucked up closest to the hotel was an assortment of Pontiacs from the '40s and '50s, including an Oakland or two that showcased the earliest roots of the marque. And we'd be remiss if we didn't mention that interspersed throughout the lot was a large and

loud contingent of a few dozen Pontiac enthusiasts from Long Island, who crossed the Sound on ferries that trekked northward up 95 to the show.

With so many outstanding Pontiacs (and those couple Oaklands) on display, one could easily spend all day Saturday roaming the entire lot, as we did, glancing at the vast array of vehicles ... looking under their hoods ... peeking in the interiors ... and, of course, talking with their owners, and reminiscing about our separate but shared experiences cruising in our Pontiacs...and maybe



This '68 Tempest Custom wagon belongs to Rob Heim and was a favorite with many in attendance.



Judges were well represented, naturally. This Carousel Red '69 belongs to Manny Sousa.



Adjacent to the '64-67s was where you'd find the '68-72 GTOs, like these, and in the distance, a couple '04-06 GTOs had grabbed good spots that would turn out to be mid-field later in the day.



Jim Napoletano's 1970 Trans Am had quite the story behind it, having started life as a Ram Air III car with an automatic...



... but after the original engine self-destructed, the original owner replaced it with the Ram Air IV and manual combination that it has to this day.



A number of Pontiacs, like this '67 GTO that needed a little TLC, were for sale at the event, for those who were looking for a winter project. Will this one be completed and return for the next "Pontiacs With A Purpose" in September of 2020? Time will tell.



Scott Scribner's gorgeous '65 GTO drew loads of attention throughout the show.



Rob Sylvia's black-on-black '70 Ram Air IV GTO was a knock-out.



Joe and Ann Marie Mandarano's 1960 Ventura Vista was a restored beauty to behold with just 37,000 original miles on the odometer.



And this '69 Judge is Jim Prudente's, which made the journey from Long Island across the Sound, along with a merry band of other Long Islanders with a passion for Pontiacs.



Late-models like this '86 Grand Prix 2+2 designed to cheat the wind in NASCAR Winston Cup competition back in the day were welcomed at the event and garnered plenty of admiration.



Carlos Martins' 1989 Turbo TA fit in perfectly with the scores of Firebirds that filled the lot at "Pontiacs With A Purpose". At the time, the Turbo TA with its Grand National-inspired Buick V6 was the quickest TA ever, and could easily give even a Corvette a run for its money.



Check out Jim Erviti's gorgeous '51 Chieftain that just oozed style, with touches like its translucent indian head hood ornament.



If you're a Pontiac guy through and through, what's the only way to haul your show setup and the raffle engine to an event? Well, with a tricked out '68 Tempest, of course! It drew more than its share of gawkers, too.



The event had several vendors, too, including Nitemare Performance, which was on hand with a variety of performance parts. Darrin's participation in the engine giveaway project really helped cement his reputation as "one of the good guys." We appreciate his efforts and devotion to the Pontiac hobby.



Of course, the Nitemare Performance crew had the raffle engine on display at their booth, too, and it really drew a crowd every time Darrin Magro fired it up throughout the day. But the lucky winner wasn't drawn until the Saturday evening awards ceremony.



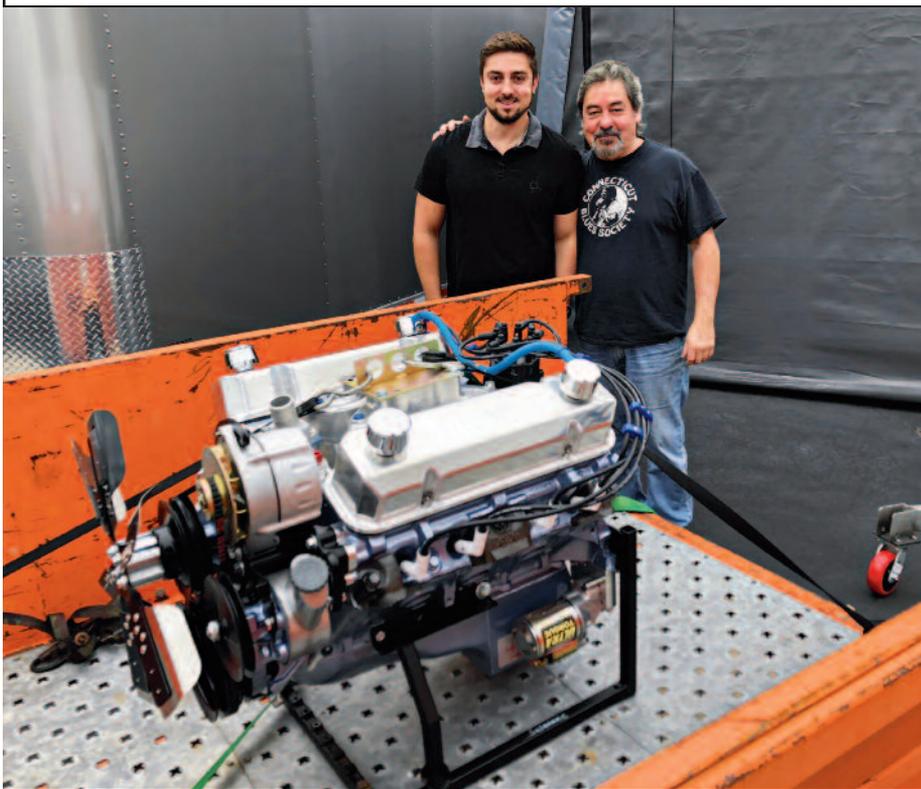
Thomas Theroux showed up with his LS3-powered Solstice that was reportedly built as an engineering exercise for Pontiac engineering to explore the viability of a potential production option. Sadly, it was stillborn when Pontiac was shuttered, but this R&D car escaped to tell the tale.



At the Saturday evening Awards Ceremony, Nicholas Magro (Darrin's son) drew the name of Thomas Sanders as the lucky winner of the 450-horsepower 462-inch crate motor. The engine raffle generated a \$10,000 donation to the two children's charities, Alex's Lemonade Stand and The Tomorrow Fund!



At the end of the evening, Rick DiGiacomo gave a touching “thank you” to everyone who made the 2018 “Pontiacs With A Purpose” the most successful ever, with a total donation of \$15,000 to the charities, bringing the event’s lifetime contribution to more than \$50,000. The next “Pontiacs With A Purpose” will be held in September of 2020, so mark your calendars!



The Nitemare Performance 455 with winner Thomas Sanders.

engaging in a few stop light-to-stop light skirmishes or on-track duels.

The event wrapped up Saturday evening with a lavish awards ceremony and dinner, during which Nick and Darrin Magro from Nitemare Performance drew the name of Thomas Sanders to take home the 450-horsepower 462-inch Pontiac crate engine that they machined and assembled specifically to benefit this year’s two charities. The engine raffle generated a cool \$10,000 donation from the sale of 100 tickets at \$100 each and accounted for two-thirds of the event’s \$15,000 total donation to Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation and The Tomorrow Fund.

Representatives from the charities were on hand at the awards ceremony and graciously accepted the donations and thanked the participants repeatedly. But, sadly, as they explained the various ways in which they help families, it was clear to everyone in the banquet hall that more needs to be done. Case in point: parking fees alone during hospital stays and treatments can easily cost a family \$7,000-10,000 a year—something that few people even consider.

The next event is being planned for September of 2020. Wouldn’t it be awesome if we could all help Rick and Larry raise even more money than this year’s historic donation? Mark your calendars and make your reservations and maybe start stashing away a few bucks to contribute to the next “Pontiacs With A Purpose” event. You’ll have a great time while doing a good thing. What could be better than that? **PP**