

CLASSICS ROCK

LYME-OLD LYME CAR SHOW HAS SOME OF THE BEST



TOP AND ABOVE, THE 12 CATEGORIES OF CARS THAT ARE ENTERED IN THE SHOW INCLUDE ROOM FOR ANTIQUES AND SEVERAL CLASSES OF CORVETTES. PHOTOS COURTESY LYME-OLD LYME LIONS CLUB

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By SUSAN BANNING Day Staff Writer

One of the certainties of life is that it always pays to have a gearhead around. If you have two nearby, so much the better. You never know when you need something fixed.

That was the case for the Lyme-Old Lyme Lions Club, whose big fund-raiser was a food concession at the annual Memorial Day fair in town. But when the organization that ran the fair decided not to continue it, the Lions Club budget faced a gaping void.

During a meeting to come up with alternate fund-raisers, one of the club members suggested having a car show. The Lions cast their eyes to members Phil Parcak and Jim Graybill, one a self-admitted "closet car nut" and the other the owner of a garage.

"When they asked if we would run it, we waited for one another to blink," said Parcak, the car enthusiast who is a proud owner of a 1947 Mercury. "And by hook or by crook, we both did."

They hit the ground running, with ads sold for a program and the details worked out with Lyme Academy of Fine Arts, on whose grounds the cars would park. A tradition was started when the first show was held on Memorial Day 2005, and the Lions knew they had a winner when they netted \$8,000 that year. As the gears really started to click the next year, the profits were nearly \$12,000, and in 2007 they took in nearly \$15,000.

The money is promptly put back into town in grants to youth services and social services, and as three \$1,500 scholarships to graduating Lyme-Old Lyme High seniors. What is left then is spread out to regional and national causes that match the Lions' mission, including its Sight and Health campaign.

"People in both towns really support us," said club president Bernie Szreders. "We give to the local groups, then branch out to regional organizations such as the Low Vision Center of Southeastern Connecticut and Fidelco, the guide dogs group."

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THIS PAGE, EMCEE PHIL PARCAK OF THE LYME-OLD LYME LIONS CLUB SPENDS ALL DAY CHATTING UP THE CAR OWNERS AND GETS TO PRESENT THE TROPHIES TO THE WINNERS IN EACH CATEGORY. PHOTOS COURTESY LYME-OLD LYME LIONS CLUB

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Lyme-Old Lyme Lions Club Antique Car Show

When: May 26, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Where: Grounds of Lyme Academy of Fine Arts

Cost: \$5 (donation), under 12 has. \$10 (over 12 has. \$20 (very hot day at pm)

For information or to register, go to: www.lymeoldlyme.com

The success lies in the appeal of the cars, which are entered into 12 categories, as well as Parcak's emceeing gig the day of the event that keeps onlookers entertained. The beautiful grounds of the art academy don't hurt, either.

"We couldn't ask for a better venue," Szreders said.

Added Parcak: "It really adds a little something."

The grounds will be filled with cars again this Memorial Day, as participation in the event has steadily climbed. The first year saw 97 entrants, the next year 104 and 2007 had in the neighborhood of 120.

"The interesting thing we found is that people would come with their cars and look at the venue, then tell two people, who'd tell two people, just like the shampoo ad," Parcak said. "It also helps that it's a dustoff event, one of the first car shows in the region. Plus, being on a Monday, they would go from here to the cruise night at Ocean Beach."

The May 26 show begins with registration at 8:30 and gates opening at 9 a.m. The trophies for each category are presented in the 1:30-2 p.m. range.

The cars that have shown up here in the past are noteworthy, even among those who see beauties on a regular basis.