



GTOAA Nationals 2025

by Chris Winslow



For 2025, we were back in Kingsport. Most of the Gateway members rolled in on Monday or Tuesday, although many of us drove through a bit of weather to get there. As usual at these conventions, Gateway had a major presence. By my count, we had at least 45 total people there over the course of the convention.

The registration got underway on schedule Tuesday morning. Despite the fact that Gateway was not the host chapter for 2025, Gateway members Terrie Oxler, Diana Johnson, and Paula Winslow were busy Tuesday morning working with other GTOAA folks to keep the registration process running smoothly.

Outside, the tent was back this year, but only for the Points Judged program Tech-In. The changes in the Popular Vote program meant that Popular vote cars only had to check in. No tech inspection was needed.

The two car shows, the Points Judged Show and the Popular Vote Show went off without a hitch. In addition, there were a number of well attended events during the week including a chance to drive the track at Bristol, a tour of the Biltmore Estate, a cruise of the Back of the Dragon, and a Pub Crawl. All of this led us to the two big events for the week, the Indoor Parking Lot Party on Friday evening and the Awards Banquet on Saturday.

The original plan for the Parking Lot Party was to have a repeat appearance by Captain Rat and the Blind Rivets. They were the band that played the event in 2024 and they were awesome. With those memories in mind, many of us were really disappointed when we heard the bad news that the group had to cancel. In its place, GTOAA booked Songs of the South. This band had had a last minute cancellation for the weekend and that turned out to be our gain. They were excellent. They played a wide range of music and because of how good they were, there were still lots of folks left at the event when they wrapped up. We also had a surprise appearance by the GTO Tiger during the

evening.



Of course, the finale for the week was the awards banquet. The first part of the awards program was pretty standard with GTOAA president John Johnson thanking everyone that helped to make the convention a success. We then moved into the chapters section of the program with GTOAA Chapter Coordinator Bill Sanders presenting. First up was disappointment

as we learned that once again we did not win the Chapter of the Year Award. But, then came the presentation of the Tom Foster Award the winner was announced as our own Earl Lewis in recognition of all he does to promote the hobby and raise money for charity, especially the National Children's Cancer Society.

Next up in the program was the Popular Vote awards. For 2025, Gateway's own Lucas Hedrick and Bryan Johnson have taken charge of the program. There were also some program changes from previous years. For 2025, members voted on their favorites and then Bryan and



Lucas totaled up the ballots. The ten cars with the most votes won a Popular Vote Members Choice Award. Gateway had 2 members that took home one of these awards. They were Roger and Debbie Johnson in their 1965 GTO Tribute and Harry Timmermann with his 1965 LeMans convertible.

The next awards announced were a pair of Kid's Pick awards, but unfortunately Gateway did not win either of those.

Byran and Lucas then tallied up which car won the most votes in its category. The categories included Pre 1980's Pontiacs, Post 1980's Pontiacs and then one award for each year of GTO and for GTO Judges. For those, Gateway member Robert Woolsey took home the award for 1968 GTO and Frank and Cheryl Chapman took home the award for GTO Judge.

Lucas and Bryan did a great job with the program were also very entertaining while handing out the awards, so it was a lot of fun all the way around.

The final set of awards for the evening were for the Points Judged Program. For 2025, none of our members put a car into that program, so we did not take home any awards for that section.



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Overall Gateway did quite well with 4 popular vote awards and, of course the big one for the evening, the Tom Foster for Earl. It was a great showing for 2025.



