15th Annual Car Show at the Pontiac Museum

by **Chris Winslow**



This was a very special year for our annual All Pontiac Show at the Pontiac Museum. First, it was our 15th consecutive annual show at the museum. Not even Covid caused us to miss a year. In addition to that, however, 2026 is also the 100th anniversary of both Pontiac and Route 66. So, for 2026 the goal was to pull it all together for a great event.

For this year our plans included a few things to tie it in to the anniversaries. For the anniversary of Pontiac, we arranged for the City of Pontiac to put up a tent where we could have a display of cars showcasing the history of Pontiac. The display included a really nice example of a 1976 Grand Prix owned by Mike Van Wiltenburg and the last Pontiac ever made, a 2010 G6 that is part of the museums collection. That last Pontiac includes signatures of the worker that ushered down the assembly line. These were the last people to build a Pontiac, so it is certainly a piece of history.

For the anniversary of Route 66, I was able to get our show recognized as an official event for the Route 66 Centennial Celebration. Additionally, Alan Finkenbinder and Dave Sullivan planned our Saturday cruise from Pontiac to Atlanta on Route 66.

We kicked off the event with a Bar B Q at the Finkenbinder's house. It was a super event as always with lots of great food and great company. For this year, we were even treated to an amazing fireworks show. So amazing, in fact, that the local police even stopped by to see it!

As always, the weekend officially got underway on Saturday morning. As has become

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the case every year, the City of Pontiac had everything ready to go for us out front when we rolled up on the Museum. They also had boxes of goody bags that they had prepared ready to go, including the dash plaques and ballots that Terry and Gail had previously delivered. In addition, for this special year, Gateway had arranged to have Route 66 Anniversary pins in the bags along with Pontiac Anniversary stickers from the Pontiac Museum. The dash plaques also had anniversary logos on them to carry through on the theme.

Registration got underway early with help from Paula and Marlene Grunewaldt and we had a brisk pace early.

The first activity for the event is always the car cruise. Alan and Dave had arranged for the town of Atlanta to shut down the streets near the Giants Museum for our cruise destination. Although it had rained a bit in the morning before the cruise pulled out, once the cruise was underway, the weather held off and we were able to get it in without any rain to spoil it.

The Giants Museum itself had some really cool giants inside and out and there were some other giants around the town. The local restaurants were ready for us so everyone had a great lunch while checking out all of the giants and other sights to see in Atlanta.

Of course, the main event is the big car show on Sunday. We had hoped for a huge turnout given it was the anniversary year and how much we had promoted the show. These hopes were bolstered by the fact I had rolled into Pontiac on Friday with 27 pre-registrations. (I normally have around 10 or 12). We had also received word that a cruise was planned from the Chicago area down to Pontiac early on Sunday. In hopes of having a big rush, we had registration open early with help from Paula and Gail Schott.

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But, unfortunately, the weather had other ideas. It rained off and on during the morning, which apparently caused those cruises from the north not to happen. The rain did eventually let up for a while late in the morning, but by then the damage was done. We ended up closing registration on schedule at noon with a total of 100 cars registered.

With the registration complete, Tammy Hedrick worked her magic with the registration sheets and generated tabulation sheets for the tabbing team. Shortly thereafter, a group of Gateway and Heart of Illinois members got tabulation underway.

In the mean time Susan and Dot from the HOI club with help from Danny Beasley got to work selling 50/50 tickets. Despite threatening weather on the way, they were able to raise $298 for the museum with their efforts.

As the skies continued to look worse, Brian Sorenson wrapped up the tabulating right on time and we got the awards program started at 2:00 hoping to get it in before the weather cut loose. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Just a few minutes into the awards presentations, the rain let loose and it was a lot more than a sprinkle. Terry Schott ended up soaked delivering trophies to the winners.

Gateway members did take home a number of awards. Mark Melrose took home the Kids Pick trophy for his 2006 GTO. Here are the other awards for Gateway members

Roger Johnson	1st Place for Class 1, 1964 GTO
Julie Beasley	2nd Place for Class 1, 1964 GTO
Dale Grunewaldt	1st Place for Class 4, 1967 GTO
Mark and Jackie Enright	1st Place for Class 6, 1969 GTO
Dan Finkenbinder	3rd Place for Class 6, 1969 GTO
Alan Finkenbinder	2nd Place for Class 7, 1970-74 GTO
Michael Fogarty	3rd Place for Class 7, 1970-74 GTO
Joe Mayweather	2nd Place for Class 8, 2004 GTO
Harry Timmerman	1st Place for Class10, 1961-73 Tempest
Jim and Shelly Schneider	2nd Place for Class 23, 1966-80 Pontiac/GMC
Steve Hedrick	3rd Place for Class 24, 1981-2010 Pontiac/GMC

Once the dust settled on the event we were able to raise a total of $3000 for our donation to the Museum for 2026. Thanks to all of the members of Gateway that helped us pull off this event under some challenging weather conditions!

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