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BACK

PRINT

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Muscle Car City celebrates official opening

City: State:

Check-in: Check-out:

The Story

Text Size



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By JASON WITZ
Staff Writer

PUNTA GORDA -- Elmer Boggs leaned forward and buried his head inside the nerve center of the 1966 Pontiac GTO convertible.

This was the one, he thought, scanning the engine block.

The Jacksonville man drove a similar hot rod when he met his wife many moons ago. This was the vehicle Boggs used back then to give her driving lessons.

Boggs smiled as he lifted his head from the black hood, which shined beneath the fluorescent lights of Muscle Car City.

"I'm in love here," he said.

And he wasn't the only one lost in memories.

Hundreds of car enthusiasts packed the former Walmart Saturday for the official opening of the classic car showroom.

The event featured music, prizes and even more vintage vehicles parked outside for public viewing.

In reality, it was the event owner Rick Treworgy said he wanted to do when Muscle Car City opened its doors in March, but it wasn't possible.

"It's not our biggest event here, but I felt it was something we owed the public," he said.

Muscle Car City features nearly 200 classic vehicles dating back to the 1920s.

Treworgy's love of Chevrolet Corvettes is everywhere throughout the converted store building, as his collection includes one or more models from each year between 1954 and 1975.

Tampa resident Mike Risner walked around the showroom reminiscing about the vehicles he drove growing up --

vehicles he wishes he owned today.

His wife, Deb, compared the collection to works of art.

"It's fantastic," she said.

Farther down the row of cars, 13-year-old Charlie White ogled the polished Corvettes and recited the years of each model to his grandmother, Alicia.

Some day, the North Port teen hopes to drive the 1996 Corvette Grand Sport, whose sleek design and engine scream speed.

Boggs, meanwhile, continued to snap photographs of the vehicles as he made the rounds with other members of the Jacksonville Corvette Club.

The group laughed as they discussed the symbols of their youth now parked neatly on the carpet floor.

"They might not get me out of this place for a while," Boggs said.

The museum, at 3811 Tamiami Trail, is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Single-day admission is \$10; an annual membership is \$30. Children under 12 are admitted free with a paying adult.

For more information, visit musclearcity.net or call 941-575-5959.

E-mail: jwitz@sun-herald.com

[Return to Top of story](#)



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