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Classic car aficianados spent time looking and lingering at this year's GM Tech Center Employee Car Show.

GM designer Steve Chaney

Employees Enjoy GM Tech Center Show

by Jim Stickford

The Tech Center Employee Car Show, held at GM's Tech Center in Warren on July 24, gave today's car designers the chance to view some authentic Detroit steel and see how they did it the "old school" way.

The show is held every year at the Tech Center and gives current and retired GM Tech Center employees the opportunity to show off their classic cars. It's sponsored by the Tech Center and UAW Local 160.

Among the GM employees taking a look at the classics on display were Lexi Scott, who is a Finance intern, and Mari Pine, who is a controller for Product Operations.

"We wanted to see these beautiful cars," Pine said. "We support the development of new products, so getting the chance to see older cars is nice. The vehicles from the 1960s and 1970s are special. The more recent cars from the 1980s and 1990s are not so stylish, but the vehicles right now are. It's nice to see it all come back."

Scott said that she wanted to see the cars behind the production numbers.

"I think they're all so beautiful," Scott said. "To see that these vehicles are more than just production numbers is great."

Steve Chaney is a designer who is working on the new Traverse, which uses the Lamda platform. He brings a practiced eye to the show.

"I look at the headlamps," Chaney said. "Right now, I'm looking at a 1967 Mercury Cyclone convertible, which is a rare car. When I look at the headlamps, bumpers, fascia and grille of the car, I am amazed.

"The lighting design is so simple. They just snap the lights right in, as opposed to now where lighting has become an integral part of the exterior design. It just shows you how far we've come."

Chaney said the reason cars in the 1980s and 1990s were so bland was that, due to things like higher federally-mandated fuel standards, Detroit automakers had to shift a lot of resources into improving fuel efficiency.

"Those guys did what they had to do," Chaney said. "Now, we have to improve fuel economy and make sure the car looks and performs great. Today's vehicles have to do everything well. It's hard to do, but we're getting it done now."

The Mercury Chaney was looking at is owned by GM retiree David Wakely. He worked at the Tech Center for 28 years as a body engineer, retiring as a design manager in 2009.

"People ask why I own a Mercury, even though I am a GM guy," Wakely said. "It's simple – it's a rare car."

Wakely said the man who sold it to him back in the 1980s said there weren't too many of these particular Mercurys. So Wakely investigated and learned that only 53 were made back in the 1960s and decided to buy the car.

"I recently had Ford do a title search and they told me that only two are left," Wakely said. "I really don't show the car and enter it into contests. I just take it to shows and let people look at it. My son Bryan now works in the VEC building as a designer and owns a 1967 fastback Mustang, a 1986 Buick T-Type and 1968 Charger. I guess it runs in the blood."

The 2013 show had a special emphasis on the Corvette to celebrate that make's 60th birthday. Ronald Lambert brought his restored 1966 Sting Ray to the Tech Center. He worked as a mechanic at GM for 33 years, first at Chevrolet Engineering, then at Truck Engineering, before retiring in 2008. His car drew some long looks.

"I've owned my Corvette for about 15 years," Lambert said. "I bought it from another man who worked at GM. And I bought it because I like it. The Sting Ray is a beautiful car."

Lambert takes the vehicle to about a half-dozen car shows a year. He used to do more, but has slowed down. He said that these old cars need a lot of tender loving care.

One of the people looking at Lambert's 'Vette was Gary Singles, a dynamometer operator at GM's Truck Center. He retired in 2001.

"I love coming to this show and looking at all the great cars," Singles said. "It's amazing how many employees own these specialty cars. I myself own a 1955 Chevy 210 two-door. I've had it since 1998."

Singles takes his car to about eight shows a year. He doesn't care about winning prizes.

"The shows are great because they are a great way to stay in touch with your friends and fellow car buffs," Singles said. "This show is great because these cars are owned by people who work in the industry and really love cars."

Chrysler's SHAP Paint Shop Part Of $850M Outlay

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dere, Ill., and Toledo North, Ohio, plants received new paint shop facilities.

After the orientation, it was out to the paint shop for a pretty good hike as stops were made at each major step of the paint process, starting at the underbody sealing and coating area all the way to the state-of-the-art friction drive system conveyor.

At the powder system station, Bruce Donakowski, senior Advance Process Specialist – Powder, said the process includes an anti-chip primer. He pointed out that the Fanuc-built advanced robotic arms are mounted high in the booth to give enough versatility that the booth can handle virtually any Chrysler product except the Ram trucks and the Chrysler ProMaster van.

At the topcoat system booth, Program Management and Paint Facilities Supervisor Heather Montgomery told visitors the new facility will allow SHAP to save energy.

"The booth itself is very flexible and highly automated," she said. "It uses a bell applicator . . . (which runs at speeds between 40,000 and 80,000 rpm) and atomizes the paint."

Montgomery added the pearlescent clearcoat – which is applied there – gives the finished paint job "a real depth." She said the booth's large glass panels make it easy for booth personnel to watch the robots as they're spraying the body panels to see if they're doing a good job.

Vehicle parts at the booth receive an external base coat, a mica coat, interior cut-ins, clearcoat and external clearcoat.

One of the largest areas of the new paint shop is the conveyor area, using a state-of-the-art friction drive system, as opposed to the older chain-driven conveyor system.

"At the end of the shift, all cars must go out of the ovens and be sent somewhere," said Jim Hanley, conveyor project manager, who noted the paint shop area contained eight miles of track, and if chain-driven, would include 12 miles of chain to be oiled and greased.

"Energy consumption is way down," he said.

Although friction-drive systems are not unknown to Chrysler, Hanley said this is the first one of this magnitude in a U.S. Chrysler plant.

"After cooling in the ovens, (car bodies) go downstairs for a finesse check on one of these paint shop carriers."

Hanley said the conveyor system is not totally chain-free – chains are still used in the ovens and in the color booths, due to concerns about paint overspray and other issues.

"We thought about it, talked about it, but we decided we weren't going to be the guinea pig," he said.

Book Donation Targeted at Driving Importance of an Early Education

Chrysler is donating 148,500 Scholastic children's books to Early Learning Communities, summer "Meet Up and Eat Up" events, health centers and an elementary school in metro Detroit.

The book distribution is part of a partnership with United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) and Michigan No Kid Hungry.

The No Kid Hungry program is aimed at children who, unless aided, would go without lunches after school is out. The program will run through September.

"Donating these books is a part of Chrysler brand's mission to both help drive the importance of early education and also to ensure that those children who need lunch when school is not in session have the opportunity to receive it," said Saad Chehab, president and CEO – Chrysler Brand.

"We hope the distribution of these books inspires children's imaginations and helps to provide them with some of the necessary tools they'll need to achieve a limitless future."

Recent research from the Scholastic-created Kids & Family Reading Report shows that having a reading role-model/parent or a large book collection at home has a greater impact on kids' reading frequency than does household income.

Chrysler brand's book distribution directly supports the efforts of UWSEM and Michigan No Kid Hungry to increase participation in summer meal programs and early education initiatives by creating resource-rich environments for kids, and helping to put books into the hands of children who need them most.

Some of Chrysler's book donations are lined up on display.

A Chrysler spokesperson said that over the years the Chrysler brand has been a supporter of reading initiatives and has often purchased books for programs like this one.

The book distribution will help provide parents and caregivers in the metro Detroit area the tools and resources they need to reduce the literacy gap and help more children go to school ready to learn.

2014 Chevrolet Impala Interior Quiet Enough to Record Professional Music

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"I'm amazed at how quiet the Impala is," Pastoria said, after playing the vocal recording through Impala's audio system.

"It was important that we wouldn't hear background noise while recording," he said, "and with all that was going on outside the car, I am astounded that we couldn't hear any of it. The Impala rocks."

The new Impala is quiet by design, say Chevrolet officials, due in part to a technology that audiophiles know well – the active noise-canceling technology used in high-end headphones.

Active Noise Cancellation is standard on new Impalas with four-cylinder powertrains and helps make the redesigned flagship Chevrolet's quietest full-size sedan ever, said Chad Lyons, Malibu and Impala spokesman.

Active noise cancellation even helps owners of the new Impala save money at the pump, Lyons said, by using three ceiling-mounted microphones to detect low frequency engine noise during idling.

The frequencies are processed by an onboard computer that directs counteracting sound waves through the audio system's speakers and subwoofer.

This technology allows the engine to operate at the fuel-conserving range of 1,000 to 1,500 rpm, and helps eliminate the need for some sound-deadening materials, all of which contributes to improved fuel efficiency, Lyons said.

Impala also uses a variety of sound-buffering and -absorbing materials to minimize wind, road and engine noise, including:

- Acoustically laminated windshield and front-door glass;
- Liquid-applied sound deadener applied to the floor pan and trunk;
- Triple-sealed doors with acoustic perimeter water deflectors;
- Sound-absorbing carpet and dash mat;
- Acoustic foam baffles inside body cavities and between inner and outer quarter panels;
- An isolated engine cradle.

"Having a quiet cabin makes it easier for Impala's voice recognition software to understand commands," said Kara Gordon, a General Motors noise and vibration performance engineer.

"A quieter cabin also makes it easier for front and backseat passengers to have a conversation at normal speaking levels."

Voice recognition is part of the MyLink system that comes standard on LT and LTZ models, and helps drivers safely place calls, enter destinations and control other functions while keeping their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel, Lyons said.

To make the Impala as quiet as possible, Gordon worked with Stephanie Ernster, a GM noise and vibration engineering specialist and friend since their college days at Michigan State University.

At Milford Proving Ground, Ernster tested Impala's interior acoustics with a mannequin-like binaural recording device called an Aachen Head, which uses specially calibrated microphones to precisely record a dynamic range equal with human hearing.

Ernster said, "It's a quiet driving experience that is truly something to sing about."