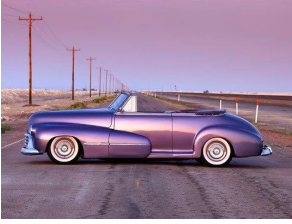


She's going 'topless' for annual Hines Drive cruise

Sue Mason, smason@hometownlife.com 12:07 a.m. EDT August 20, 2015



(Photo: Denise Sheldon)

Denise Sheldon is serious when she says she's been cruising "topless" on Hines Drive since 1978. In fact, her moniker is Hot Rod Lady Cruiser.

"My very first car I bought with my babysitting money — it was a 1968 Camaro convertible," the Livonia resident said. "From that point on, I've always had a convertible in my stable of cars."

Sheldon will be among the thousands of classic and hot rod enthusiasts who will converge along Hines Drive on Sunday, Aug. 23, for the fifth annual Cruisin' Hines. Staged by Westland resident Don Nicholson, 7¹/₂ miles of Hines Drive from Ann Arbor Trail in Westland to Outer Drive in Dearborn will be closed to regular vehicular

traffic.

Wayne County's answer to the Woodward Dream Cruise, the cruise will start at 9 a.m. although enthusiasts have been known to lineup as early as 5 a.m. Nicholson is using the long approach to Hines Drive off Ford Road in Dearborn as the staging area for cruisers. Spectators will still be able to access the park at Ann Arbor Trail, Merriman and the Warrendale entrance near Telegraph. They will not be permitted to drive on Hines.

There will be vendor areas along the route, and the cruise program and collectibles will be available for free at the T-shirt stands at the Nankin Mills pavilion area, Nankin Mills parking lot, Merriman Road vendor area and Telegraph vendor area.

The cruise is supported by local business sponsors. In addition to Wayne County Parks and Gateway Classics, the list includes WOMC, My Mechanix Place, Scrap Busters, Parts Galore, MotorCities National Heritage Area and UAW Region 1A.

Cruising as a child

Cruising has been in Sheldon's blood since she was 12 years old. She grew up in El Cajon, Calif., and when her father was away at sea, she would beg her mother to take her cruising on Second Avenue to see the hot rods.

Her family moved to Livonia in 1977, the same year she got her driver's license. Her first car was the 1968 Camaro. Now she owns a 1947 Oldsmobile convertible with a big block 455 engine and a nine-passenger Pontiac Catalina station wagon, which she drives on a daily basis.

Single, she describes her cars as "my kids."

"My cars aren't trailer queens or garage queens," she said. "I get in my cars and drive them religiously. I've put 126,000 miles on my Olds. I've driven to every continental state except Georgia, Maine and Florida."

Sheldon has been Cruisin' Hines since its inaugural year. When she heard about it, her first thought was "why did it take someone so long to do that?" Hines Drive was a cruiser's paradise in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

"I was one of those kids who cruised and hung out on Hines," she said. "It would be bumper to bumper for miles on weekends. Everyone would park on the shoulder of the road and sit on their cars so they could talk to the people as they went by."

"It went on for years until the police cracked down and they put up no parking signs and turn-arounds. I guess that's where they wanted us to park," she added.

On any given weekend, Sheldon can be found cruising. She has been to "too many cruises to count." She does cruise nights during the week and then heads out for cruises on the weekend, going to places like Indianapolis or Pennsylvania.

She did last weekend's Woodward Dream Cruise. In fact, she did it the weekend before, during the week and on the official day, but she likes Cruisin' Hines "a whole lot better."

"It's only classic cars, no daily drivers," Sheldon said. "It makes it pure for the classics."

For more information about Cruisin' Hines, contact Nicholson at Don@ DonNicholson.net or 734-658-5296.

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