

The Vintage Automobile Museum of NJ has a Museum on Wheels program that visits schools, health care facilities and public functions.

“History on Wheels” at Schools:

Initially working with the Humanities Department at Southern Regional High School, we developed this program that brings samples of automobiles from each decade from the teens through the 1970's. As each class moves from decade to decade during a typical school period, the owners of the vehicles make a 5 or so minute presentation explaining how the automotive industry during each era was impacted by or how it impacted industry, society and government at that time. The owners also talk about their specific automobile, which provides a very tangible exhibit of how automotive technology progressed over the years. As we have seven decades of automobiles represented, it is possible to handle as many as seven classes at a time keeping the groups small and manageable and affording all the students the opportunity to get a close look at the cars. At the end of each segment, the class moves to the next decade and the process is repeated.

Preparation:

We have found that students gain more from our presentation if they have discussed the automobile in American History before viewing our display. We request that teachers advise their students that they are not to touch the cars or get in them unless invited to do so by the owners. Teachers of students who are not scheduled to attend should take careful attendance to prevent "crashing" the show.

What We Require:

A clear parking area approximately 40 feet wide by 250 feet long. We generally have two cars from each decade parked next to each other and a gap of about 20 feet between them and the next group. This gives us room for the students to walk around the cars comfortably and enough space between each group such that the presenters do not drown each other out. We found that small groups work better than one large one, so we suggest the teacher escort his or her class to a given decade and, at the end of each presentation, move on to the next group. At Southern Regional, we had a whistle blown at the end of each time segment to keep everyone moving.

There is no charge for this program, but we appreciate having some coffee and donuts or bagels etc. when we arrive and set up, and some lunch. (Southern Regional gave each of the presenters a free lunch in the cafeteria, which worked very well.) Security is very important, as many of these vehicles are quite rare and valuable. Arrangements should be made with security to clear the parking area for our arrival and to watch the cars especially during lunch.

If you are interested in availing your students of this opportunity, please contact the undersigned to arrange a date. We suggest sometime in the late spring when the weather is nice and that a rain date also be considered.

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