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West Coast Kustoms to Hold 30th “Cruisin’ Nationals” Event in Santa Maria on May 27-29

Group Launches Alzheimer’s Awareness Project in Honor of Founder

Santa Maria, CA—As hundreds of vintage, customized automobiles roll into Santa Maria this year for the three-day “Cruisin’ Nationals” event held May 27 through May 29 at the Santa Maria Fairpark, one might detect a trace of sadness amid the revving engines and rumbling motors. Since last year’s event, Rich Pichette, who founded the West Coast Kustoms group more than 30 years ago, and who spearheaded the “Cruisin’ Nationals” event, has died of complications related to Alzheimer’s disease.

To honor Pichette and raise awareness of this debilitating disease, some of the best-known individuals in the kustoms community are collaborating to produce a “One-Off” 1954 Mercury Roadster kustom vehicle named, “Memories.” The completed car is slated to debut at the Grand National Roadster Show in Pomona, California in January of 2012. From there, it will tour both indoor and outdoor auto shows with the goal of benefitting Alzheimer’s disease research. At the end of the car’s touring life it will be auctioned off with all proceeds going directly to the National Alzheimer’s Association.

“Memories” will be on display at this year’s “Cruisin’ Nationals” exhibition at Santa Maria Fairpark so that all interested can see how the car is progressing.

“You will not be disappointed in the 2011 ‘Cruisin’ Nationals’,” said Penny Pichette, Rich’s wife of 50 years and current director of West Coast Kustoms. “We even have cars coming from Australia!”

Indeed, the 2010 event also held in Santa Maria drew more than 800 auto entries and auto-related vendors from as far away as Japan.

She added that one of this year’s most exciting happenings is a television documentary series called “Kings of Kustoms” that will shoot part of its pilot in Santa Maria. The production crew will film at Friday night’s cruise and at Santa Maria Fairpark on Saturday at around 11 a.m., when producers interview Gene Winfield, a kustoms pioneer and West Coast Kustoms Hall of Fame member.

An event overview and prices are listed below. All tickets are purchased at the gate on the day of the event. More details may be found at www.westcoastkustoms.com.

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Event Overview:

-The public is invited to cheer on the “Santa Maria City Cruise” on Friday, May 27 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The route begins at Stowell Road and South Broadway and continues to West Main Street.

-On Saturday, May 28 at 8 a.m. spectators are invited to Santa Maria Fairpark to enjoy auto-related vendors, a model car show, live music, special speakers and an auction benefitting Alzheimer’s research and families impacted by the disease. Admission is \$12 for adults (\$20 for a two-day pass); \$6 for seniors ages 60 and older; free for kids aged 10 and younger; and free for active military with identification.

-On Saturday, May 28 at 5 p.m. the public may see a variety of autos in action at the Santa Maria Speedway. Admission is \$14; kids are free.

-On Saturday, May 28 at 7 p.m., Rancho Bowl hosts an “after party” with live music for ages 18 and older. Admission is \$10.

-On Sunday, May 29 spectators are invited to Santa Maria Fairpark to enjoy the swap meet at 7 a.m. All other exhibitions and events open at 8 a.m. Admission is \$12 for adults (\$20 for a two-day pass); \$6 for seniors ages 60 and older; free for kids aged 10 and younger; and free for active military with identification.

Rich and Penny Pichette began their kustoms journey by hosting monthly cruise nights at the Jet Drive-In that they owned in Sunnymead, California. In 1981, Rich created West Coast Kustoms, a group of kustom car enthusiasts who would caravan to various locations and rally together. When the group started to attract greater numbers of members from both Northern and Southern California, Rich Pichette sought out a mid-state location for an annual rally. In 1982, the Paso Robles Chamber of Commerce responded to his inquiries. For the next 27 years, Paso Robles was home to the West Coast Kustoms “Cruisin’ Nationals” event. In 2009, the event moved to Santa Maria where it is still going strong today. After a debilitating battle with Alzheimer’s, Rich Pichette died in July of 2010. Penny Pichette and the couple’s many longtime friends continue Rich’s legacy through their dedication to West Coast Kustoms.

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