

Blue Ridge Mustang Club of Asheville



by Joe Grace

Back in July of 2006, I saw a TV documentary on a group of Mustangers who travel together around the country and thought how neat it would be to do something like that but on a smaller scale. Thus, the idea for the 1st Annual Mustangs for Hospice Pony Run was hatched. On October 14, 2006, a herd of 125 Mustangs gathered under a chilly, but clear blue sky and took a beautiful leisurely 80-mile round-trip-drive through the beautiful mountains of Asheville, NC. Coming back to the staging area we enjoyed great music, food, prizes, and of course, the wonderful Mustangs that were on display.

From this event we had people asking about forming a Mustang club. On December 11, 2006, the first organizational meeting took place with 17 people attending. Undertaking the role of organizer, I proceeded to contact Jim McFarland of Knoxville, TN, who was instrumental in guiding me through the process of forming a Mustang club. Our second meeting was held in mid-January 2007 and we had about 30 people show up. The growth was the result of contacting people that participated in the first Pony Run who indicated on their registration form that they would be interested in joining a club. At that meeting we tossed around some names for the club and then elected officers. As I was the organizer of the first Pony Run and the first club meeting, the attendee's were kind enough to vote me as president. The club members chose the name Blue Ridge Mustang Club of Asheville, the officers were elected, we collected our first membership dues, and we were on our way. By February we had outgrown our meeting facility and had to deal with seeking a new location.

With more than 40 present for the meeting, we then voted on a t-shirt design and color, and officially began the process to have our club chartered by the MCA.

By the time March rolled around, we were at 45 members and had become noticed by other Mustangers in surrounding counties.

Many people were calling to ask where we meet and what we did as a club, how many were in the club, and if we were associated with the MCA? In April, we submitted the documentation to Jim McFarland to become a chartered MCA club. With more than 50 attendees we once again outgrew our new meeting space. About the time we had begun the process to become chartered by the MCA I had hoped for many of our members to become MCA members. To my surprise, many in the club had signed up, and we had well over 20 that were already MCA members! With that information in hand and proper and legal documentation sent to the MCA, the Blue Ridge Mustang Club of Asheville was chartered by the MCA on May 11, 2007.

During Memorial Day weekend I participated in my first National in Louisville, KY. I had such a great experience that I decided that we will someday have to host a National event. Our May meeting had standing-room only; we had grown to 55 paid families and we began to plan our first car show. In June, I contacted the local newspaper to see if they would do a story about our club and the fact that we were hosting our first ever club charity event that month. Well, not only did they do a story, but they filled up a 3/4 page with photos of our Mustangs and information about our event! On June 22nd and 23rd, we had more than 169 Mustangs participate in the event. As the result of those two days, we signed up 15 more members to the club!

Our meetings in July, August, and September will concentrate on our 2nd Annual Mustangs for Hospice Pony Run & Mustang Show. By the time you read this, we will be finalizing the event. With a large number

of major sponsors, local TV coverage, five radio stations running ads and covering the event, a documentary film crew filming the event (for a DVD), numerous food vendors, and over 90 Mustangs in our club, we can honestly anticipate well over 200 Mustangs for our September event! There is nothing quite like a drive up the Blue Ridge Parkway in the early fall, especially the feeling of the temperature dropping 10-12 degrees as we make the climb up the mountains. With the great bunch of good people in our club, our reputation is reaching far and wide. We now even have Ford dealerships in Western North Carolina calling on our club to come out and help promote their events.

So, how difficult is it to have all this happen? Pretty difficult. You have to have a passion for the Mustang, be willing to become a chartered member of the MCA, and be enthusiastic in getting your club's name out to the public. You may not grow as fast as we did, but doing it right, taking it one step at a time, and asking for advice from the MCA (and others) really can make it happen.

Being the fastest growing MCA club in the last 15 years does not happen overnight, you need to think it out, recruit members, put on great events, participate in other clubs events, and above all treat everyone with respect and take advice from not only members in the club, but from other clubs especially those affiliated with the MCA. Try to attend regional and National shows sanctioned by the MCA and LEARN everything you can, because someday you may want to host a National event. The Blue Ridge Mustang Club of Asheville is well on its way to having more than 100 families represented in the club and will continue to grow and host local and regional events. With that experience under our belts, we hope to be hosting the Nationals in Asheville at the Biltmore Estate in 2010.

Think big, and dream big, because dreams can come true!

