

## CLUB MEMBERS ENJOY A RE-ENERGIZED CONNECTION WITH FORD

By John M. Clor,  
Photos by Mark Barag

**W**hile Ford Motor Company's marketing efforts have gone beyond just telling people about our great new vehicles and now more directly involve asking prospective customers to just "Drive One," those of us in the Mustang hobby are eager to even "See One—especially when it comes to the 2011 Mustang!

That's also why we all scour the Internet for the latest automotive info, read car mags, hang out in our friends' garages, join car clubs and go to auto shows—we really enjoy getting up-close-and-personal with the cars we love.

Less in the public eye but perhaps even more important, Ford is also very active these days in the business of re-energizing its connection with Ford enthusiast organizations. What you might not know about your MCA membership is that it does much more than keep you informed on the latest news and the best information and people in the Mustang hobby—it also gives you the chance to be involved with Ford-sponsored events in a very special way.

No, I'm not talking about the hundreds of Mustang and Ford shows and club events held throughout the country each year—those take place mostly at the grassroots level and are powered by the passion of our many loyal enthusiasts. But I'm talking about the many unique ways that Ford reaches out to us as club members—whether it's via Ford dealers, from Ford Division and its Marketing and Sales Regions, or even Ford Racing.

One cool thing that's been going on for a while now is a series of new-vehicle preview events for club members at major auto shows. These invitation-only "sneak peeks" usually involve getting special access to see a brand-new Ford model (more often than not a Mustang) before a local show opens to the general public. I finally got the chance to experience one of these special preview events for myself recently—and I must tell you that they are a real blast!

I got the call to help unveil the 2011 Mustang at one such preview prior to the opening of this year's Philadelphia Auto Show at the beautiful PA Convention Center in downtown Philly. This "2011 Mustang Private Preview," which was offered to a variety of local Mustang clubs in the Philadelphia region, was put together by Wally Hagen, who heads Ford's Philadelphia Marketing and Sales office, and his team. I had figured that with a half-dozen clubs being extended the invitation, we might see some 50 or so Mustang fans brave the cold to come out on an early Saturday morning to check out the new Mustang.

I underestimated how much "Mustang fever" there is around Philly!

Wally assembled a group of some 270 Mustang club members outside of the show hall by 8 am to take out to the Ford stand on the show floor where the 2011 Mustang was on display. I heard that Chevrolet was sponsoring a similar morning preview around its Camaro display, but I must admit to a great sense of pride when our group of nearly 300 strong marched past the 30 or so Chevy clubbies on our way to see the new Mustang!

When everyone gathered 'round, Wally pulled the cover off the beautiful silver 2011 Mustang GT convertible up on the turntable, while I gave a brief sneak-peek "walkaround" of the new features on Ford's new "pony car." We then had each of the seven local clubs in attendance pose for their own group picture in front of

the '11 Mustang. (Some of the regional Mustang clubs represented there included the First Pennsylvania Mustang Club; the First State Mustang Club; the Garden State Mustang Club; the Lehigh Valley Shelby Club; the New Jersey Stangers club; the South Jersey Mustang Club; and the Valley Forge Mustang club; and even some members of the SVT Owners Association.) We then all headed off to a nearby banquet room for a Ford-sponsored breakfast! And if that weren't enough, Wally and his team also provided a series of special attractions during the breakfast meeting to make the event even more memorable.

First there was a Ford Gift Wheel that each member could spin to win a free prize—things like Ford logo tee shirts and other collectible goodies. The good folks at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation were also there with a charity raffle to benefit JDRF that included a die-cast GT500 autographed by Carroll Shelby! Plus Rick Markko of Carlisle Events was there with more giveaways, including some free registration passes to this year's All Ford Nationals on June 4-6. Marcie Cipriani of the SVTOA donated one of the "Fox Forward" group's new 5.0 Mustang posters, and I even added to the giveaway party with a red Ford Racing polo shirt and a couple of copies of my own *Mustang Dynasty* hardcover history book.

Wally had me wrap things up with a "Mustang Performance History" presentation and some spirited Q&A afterward. At that point, club members could get stick around to chat or watch a Ford documentary movie called, "The New American Road," and get a free ticket for admission back to see the rest of the Philadelphia Auto Show. All this wasn't done for just anybody—it was all set up for Mustang club members! Better still, I hear that programs like Wally's are being replicated in other Ford Marketing and Sales regions across the country, so this kind of special event offer could come your way someday as well.

I've told you about this event for a very specific reason, and that's to drive home two important points: One, that you should know Ford is actively trying to engage, energize and reward Mustang club members like you and me; and Two, that this kind of special interaction happens because of your membership in clubs like the MCA. You can't get the call if you're NOT part of the club world!

So do yourself a favor: Join a Ford club or renew your Mustang club membership when you get the chance. It costs roughly the same as a few trips to the fast-food restaurant ... and that's something I know I can sure do without! Plus the memories of a morning like the one we spent together in Philly will be much more satisfying!

Hope to see you all at a Mustang show this year!

**Editor's Note:** Veteran automotive journalist John Clor has owned, raced, worked on or written about Fords and Mustangs for nearly 30 years. After a 15-year career at The Detroit News, Clor shifted to automotive journalism with stints at *AutoWeek* and later *Edmunds.com*. He joined the Ford Special Vehicle Team in 1995 and had spent the better part of the next decade working on SVT communications, PR and Marketing. Today, he manages [www.FordPerformance.com](http://www.FordPerformance.com) for Ford Racing, and is also a columnist for *Mustang Enthusiast* and *Mustang Trader* magazines, editor of *SVT Enthusiast* magazine, and author of a hardcover book, *The Mustang Dynasty*. Clor is also the proud owner of three '70s-era Mustangs—two of which he describes as "long term projects."



▲ Club members were invited to a special '2011 Private Preview' to open this year's Philadelphia Auto Show.



▲ The 'headliner' event of the special Philly club program was a sneak-peek unveiling of the 2011 Mustang.



▲ After the 2011 Mustang photo shoot, club members headed off to a banquet room in the PA Convention Center.



▲ Ford's Philadelphia region sponsored a free bacon, eggs, and potatoes breakfast for attending club members.



▲ Some 270 Mustang club members gathered 'round a 2011 Mustang GT Convertible for a walkaround by Ford Racing's John Clor.



▲ Attendees from the First Pennsylvania Mustang Club pose with the 2011 Mustang at the PA Convention Center.



▲ The PA Region's Wally Hagen, whose team put together the event, spoke to the clubs, and gave away a Ford Racing polo shirt.



▲ The big hit of the morning had to be the Ford Prize Wheel, where winning a free gift was as simple as a little spin.



▲ The First State Mustang Club gathers around the new Mustang convertible for their group photo.



▲ Next up to pose with the 2011 Mustang GT on display was the Garden State Mustang Club.



▲ Rick Markko of Carlisle Events and the All-Ford Nationals helps raffle off a new "Mustang 5.0" poster donated by the SVTOA.



▲ One lucky winner walked away with a great JDRF prize package that included a die-cast GT500 model signed by Carroll Shelby.



▲ A bit smaller group in attendance but certainly no less passionate was the Lehigh Valley Shelby Club.



▲ Then it was the 'New Jersey Stangers' turn to get a group shot with the 2011 Mustang GT.



▲ John Clor tried to fire up the breakfast crowd with a 'Mustang Performance History' presentation and a spirited Q&A.



▲ The South Jersey Mustang Club was well represented with many smiling faces at the Philadelphia event.



▲ The Valley Forge Mustang Club even brought along their own club banner to proudly display in their group shot.

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