



# TEN YEARS OF GRINS, SAFETY, AND LEARNING



By Jim Edwards, Event Chairman

**O**n the first weekend in June, the Carolina Regional Mustang Club's Motorsports Team conducted the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event of their Performance Driving School. Held at Carolina Motorsports Park in the sandhills of South Carolina, students came from Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and perhaps even other states. For the first time in the 10-year history of this event, CRMC's driving school "SOLD OUT." With 75 students, the challenge for Chief Instructor James Ray was to find sufficient qualified instructors to match up with the varying degrees of experience found among the students.

One highly interesting phenomena this year was the quite large number of true beginners wishing to participate. Therein another challenge was presented—how to handle a group of more than 30 beginners through the various exercises created just for them. Those exercises include sudden lane change (two very challenging versions), threshold braking, accident avoidance, ABS braking, and the like. Ultimately the club's Motorsports Director Tom Hennig, Chief Instructor James Ray, and I decided to conduct two run groups for the beginners. This would provide them "clear track" with approximately 15 cars out per session. In order to accomplish that, we had to combine the "experienced" and "very experienced" into one group, but our plan came off with no problems noted.

In fact, the CRMC Performance Driving School volunteer team proudly points to no "tire wall encounters," no "traded paint," and other than maybe two slight "off-road agricultural excursions" everyone left with body and car intact. Perhaps a little lighter in the brake pad and gasoline departments, but intact nonetheless.

The students were exuberant in their comments about the event on their evaluation forms. Those who had attended the school before said it was the "best ever" and one fellow who drove 12 hours in his Bullitt said, in his evaluation, that it was the most fun he'd had in 40 years!

All of that being said, it is important that the reader understand the multiple goals of the Performance Driving School. The first being safety, the second learning, the third fun, and lastly the fact that all the driving school team members

and all 42 instructors are volunteers. For all the hard work we got a sandwich worth \$6.50, one T-shirt, and the gratitude of the participants. Why do we volunteer? Well, most instructors say that CRMC has the best-run and managed performance driving event they instruct for. Secondly, as all members of the CRMC and all the volunteer team and instructors know, all proceeds after expenses go to the club's charities. In the 10 years since the school's inception, the driving school enabled our club to donate nearly \$100,000 to local charities.

As I've stated in the past, this simply couldn't happen without the support of the entire club. Some 20 members not involved in the driving school caravanned down on Saturday to show their support and grab a passenger seat for a "hot lap" or two if they could. I wish to thank James Ray, Tom Hennig, Jim Pantas, Ray Michue, Bill Heybruck, Leah Gowan, Kat Messenger, James Clegg, Norm and Karen Demers, Todd Howe, and all the others who spend nearly a full year preparing for each driving event. Our challenge is to outdo ourselves every year and our team is up to the task. We also thank the MCA—without its support, these high performance schools wouldn't happen. To that end, the club sends much thanks to MCA's Bill Dillard for his support of these schools and events. In fact, here's what Bill had to say about our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event: "This group puts on a school that all others should be measured against. I always feel comfortable and the instructors are top notch. You are pushed to do better but not pushed to where you get out of your comfort zone. This year I was able to bring both of my children and they enjoyed it as well. It is also a great family event."

Be on the lookout for next year's Carolina Regional Mustang Club's Performance Driving School to be posted in the MCA's Driving Events. We'd love to have the number of participants grow even larger.

