

I love people!

We at Everett Port Gardner Rotary are thankful to be back out in the world again and raising money to give away by selling raffle tickets for a 1967 ½ Pontiac Firebird convertible. We have been giving away a classic car for more than 20 years now and in the process have raised well over \$1 million dollars that every cent has been turned around and gone back into the community... local, regional and international. We have supported efforts like domestic violence prevention, Special Olympics, disaster mental health recovery, human trafficking prevention, safe water, support to non-traditional college students and so so many more.

Our only fundraiser is our raffle and we've had our share of experiences! The car travels to car shows, fairs, community events and any where else we might find people who love cars and want to support what Rotary does.

When we are in the community selling tickets and talking about Rotary, there are some common questions... Question 1. Is this the same car you give away every year? Question 2. Who donates the car to you? The answer to the first question is always... no, we have a different car every year and you can find the info on who the past winners are on our website. The answer to the second question has always been... no one donates the car; we scour the classic car community for sometimes a couple of years to find just the right car and then we buy it and work hard to raise enough money to pay for it along with a little extra to give away. The gambling commission caps our purchase at \$40,000 so we stay very close to that as a purchase price for a car.



But this year is different when we are asked who donated the car. This 1967 ½ Pontiac Firebird was donated to us and the story is very heartwarming. 3 years ago, we were doing what we always do, showcasing a beautiful classic car and selling tickets for \$5 each for a chance to win it. The conversation went to one of the other questions we get asked often... what do we do with the money we raise? The person selling the tickets that day was then club President Marge Fairweather, she answered the questions, sold the tickets and the conversation was soon forgotten. Until about 4 months later, when Marge got a call reminding her of the exchange by the woman on the other end who said the conversation was a significant one that now brings her to reach out to us.

A family member was in the process of restoring a classic car that had been in the family since it was brand new. There was still a little left to do but serious illness struck, and it was going to be impossible to complete. The family had talked it over, loves what Everett Port Gardner Rotary does with the money we raise, and wanted to give the car to us to be raffled off in a future year. When our experienced and

knowledgeable car team went to look at the car, their eyes nearly popping out of their heads. The car was about 75% restored and that was great... but even more exciting was the uniqueness of the car and the appeal it would have to a multi-generational audience. This particular model was rare, there had only been about 3000 of them produced in the first place and there weren't many still around. We worked with the family and the car became the property of EPG Rotary. It went into storage and over the next 2 years (one of those years we were at a dead stop of fundraising due to COVID), the rest of the restoration was financed by EPG.

Our first public event in 2021 was the Evergreen Fair in Monroe, Washington. The car came out of storage, got polished up and driven to the fairground where it drew a crowd each day for sure! This is usually one of the last events of the year, but this year is different for in so many ways!

The very first person to stop and talk about the car on opening morning was a man named Steven. He was a vendor at the fair, was walking by and drawn to the car like a magnet. The typical conversation happened including what do you do with the money you raise. After the explanation he took a \$20 bill out of his pocket and said "here... I will pay for tickets, but I don't want them, give them to someone who walks by". What a great way to start to new season with this car!!!

There was a family at the fair on another day that was spending the day together for the first time in almost 2 years... COVID had kept them apart but now the grandparents had come to visit, all the adult kids and their kids were all together and they were at the fair. They stopped, looked at the car, and each individual family brought tickets. The grandmother pulled out her phone to take a picture of the car. I asked if she wanted a family photo and she jumped at the chance. The whole family gathered around the open hood of the car (there were lots of people from 3 generations) they repositioned themselves, so everyone was visible, joking and laughing at each other and I took the picture with grammas phone. She was delighted and said it was going to be their holiday photo with the car as the centerpiece but really the centerpiece was the family all being together!

Another reason I love people is that they are just fun! There was a couple who both were buying tickets. They were both quite tall and the fellow stood up straight and said, I don't know why I'm buying tickets, I might not even fit in it. His wife said... keep writing, cuz I will fit!!!

This car is a crowd stopper for all ages. A family was walking by with a couple of adults and several small children in tow. The littlest one was a girl of about 3 years old in a wagon. As they came down the walkway, her eyes locked on that car, and they never left it. In fact, after they walked by, her head was swiveled around to keep looking and that she almost fell out of that wagon!!

And maybe the best story of all is the man and his about 10-year-old son who stopped to look at the car and buy tickets. The boy asked Dad what he was doing and what was a raffle. Dad explained that he was certainly hoping to win the car but most importantly he was helping others who might need a little help. The dad was buying what is known as a Bonus Book of tickets, \$20 for 5 tickets. The boy told his dad they should buy more but Dad was sticking to his \$20 decision. The boy then reached into his own pocket and took out some \$1 bills and said he'd buy a ticket too! Of course, we couldn't sell him a ticket because he was under 18 years old, but he had his dad put his own name on the ticket was doing it not for the car, but to help others. Now there is a future Rotarian!!!



If you'd like to get in line for your chance, just let us know.

Dr. Mary Schoenfeldt

Past President Everett Port Gardner Rotary