

PISTON PRESS

F O R I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E



Piston Foundation kickoff draws big names and big donations

Westport, CT – On Saturday, April 2nd, more than 100 automotive enthusiasts and industry leaders filled the spectacular Autostrada automotive facility in Westport, Connecticut to kick-off the Piston Foundation’s 2022 season. With attendees traveling from across the US and Europe, the non-profit Piston Foundation laid out their mission “to bring more young people into the collector car industry so the craftspeople who built this American touchstone can transfer their skills to a new generation.”

Gioel and Ronni Molinari donated use of the newly constructed and exquisitely detailed Autostrada event space as an impressive setting for the kickoff. Attendees dined on gourmet appetizers and cocktails while strolling among an impressive collection of exotic automobiles and exhibits displayed throughout the dramatic venue.

At one end of the large space renowned metal craftsman Steve Hall, President of The Panel Shop in Stratford, demonstrated the art of panel shaping on a century old English wheel. The 1,600-pound machine, which looks like a giant c-clamp, was brought to America by Mr. Hall when he immigrated here in 1981 after learning his craft at Rolls-Royce where he started as an apprentice. Steve’s English wheel is 104 years old and has a storied history including shaping body panels for Spitfire fighter planes during WWII and fenders for Carrol Shelby’s legendary Cobra sportscars in the sixties. Guests who tried their hand at the wheel quickly appreciated the years of experience and skill required to turn flat metal sheets into beautifully curved fenders.

Greenwich, Connecticut resident Robert Minnick, Piston Foundation Founder and CEO, addressed the crowd during a stirring presentation which culminated in a check presentation from Luigi Orlandini, chairman and CEO of Canossa Events, for \$30,000. Luigi and Federica Magnavacchi, Canossa Senior Account Manager, traveled from Modena, Italy for the momentous occasion. The presentation also included the debut of the Piston Foundation’s new mission video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTICT7MOtDA>

With his Formula 1 team keeping him abroad, McLaren Racing CEO Zak Brown addressed the crowd via video and encouraged the crowd to help keep these wonderful vintage autos on the road by supporting the foundation’s mission to get more young people into the field. <https://youtu.be/edyFq-dAP6I>

Next up was Richard “Dicky” Riegel, president and CEO of Connecticut’s Lime Rock Park, who spoke to the historic track’s commitment to skilled trade education with its new Piston Foundation Partnership. Greenwich resident Charles Mallory, who along with Riegel is a new Lime Rock Park co-owner, was also in attendance. Mallory, who’s Greenwich Hospitality Group

owns numerous hotels in the region including Delamar Hotels in Greenwich, Southport and West Hartford, is a member of the Piston Foundation's Founders Club. The support of the Founders Club is helping the Foundation award their first scholarships this July to deserving young people looking to get into the trade. One of the evening's honored guests was Murray Smith, accomplished racer and Chairman of the Lime Rock Park Historic Festival. Murray generously donated a significant 1928 Gordon England Austin Seven to the Piston Foundation's Cars and Parts Program.

A young technician in attendance was able to put a face on the foundation's cause. Kira Mundhenk is a restoration apprentice at Steel Wings in Ivyland, Pennsylvania. She is redefining stereotypes in a traditionally male dominated field as she works on vintage Aston Martins.

Several Piston Foundation staff members, all of whom are volunteers, are Fairfield Country residents who bring impressive resumes to the foundation. Mayo T. Smith of Westport, a partner in Sound Shore Management, Inc., is the foundation's Director of Donor Relations and chaired the very successful kickoff event. Fairfield resident Kent Bain is the founder of Automotive Restorations in Stratford and in his role as Piston Academy Director, heads up the foundation's internship programs. Karl Maruyama is the foundation's Creative Director. The Wilton based award-winning designer is responsible for all of the foundation's print and digital materials. New Canaan's Maria Homann is a Special Advisor who helped launch Ferrari's North American Motorsports operations. Kevin Gosselin, is also an advisor to the Piston Foundation. The Westport resident is the Global Creative Director for Save the Children and brings decades of marketing, advertising and automotive experience to the board. Gregory Nussbaum of Black Rock is the Piston Foundation's Partner Program Manager.

A silent auction generated brisk bidding with exciting auto-themed donations from Lime Rock Park, Skip Barber Racing School, Canossa Events, Vintage Auto Posters and the Cavallino Classic. Those funds combined with ongoing donations to the Piston Foundation go to fund skilled trade education for students and apprentices who want to pursue a career in automotive craft, restoration specialties, and service.

At the end of the evening, Piston Foundation President and COO Jeffrey Mason summed up the event. "Young people are looking for career opportunities and the collector car industry needs their energy, talent, and skills. Supporting the Piston Foundation is the way all of us who share a passion for cars, can help build a sustainable future for our car community."

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The Piston Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that funds skilled trade education for students and apprentices who want to pursue a career in automotive craft, vehicle restoration, and service. More information about Piston Foundation is available at PistonFoundation.org.