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Complimentary
JULY/AUG 2024
Volume 15 | Issue 4

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for eating alfresco

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Pedal to the Metal!

BY MARY AGRUSA

After two-and-a-half short years, Cartersville's Savoy Automobile Museum has proven it's an attraction to get revved up about.



Visitors admire the bevy of beauties on display during the museum's annual Connection Car Show.

In December 2021, Georgia Museums Inc. (GMI) unveiled a new jewel in its cultural crown, the Savoy Automobile Museum, and in this short time frame, attendance has surpassed more than 200,000 visitors. During construction of the museum, which is nestled in a 37-acre park-like setting along State Route 20 in Cartersville, the town was abuzz with rumors such as, "We're getting a Costco!" Instead, you'll find the Savoy, a mecca for car lovers with a sleek, modern European architecture that creates a visually stunning first impression.

The museum derives its name from a rusty 1954 Plymouth Savoy that was discovered on the property during site preparation. Originally found with a tree growing from the trunk of the car, the vehicle was carefully removed and later repositioned in a prominent place by the building for all to see. And they even planted a new tree in its trunk to

complete the story.

As the newest program in the GMI family of museums, which includes the nearby Bartow History Museum, Booth Western Art Museum, and Tellus Science Museum, Savoy is helping to bolster Cartersville's claim as Georgia's "Museum City." But Savoy is more than just a simple display of cars. It's an interwoven tapestry of history, artistry, and community engagement. Here's what makes it a must-see destination for any Northwest Georgia visitor.

Connecting Through Culture

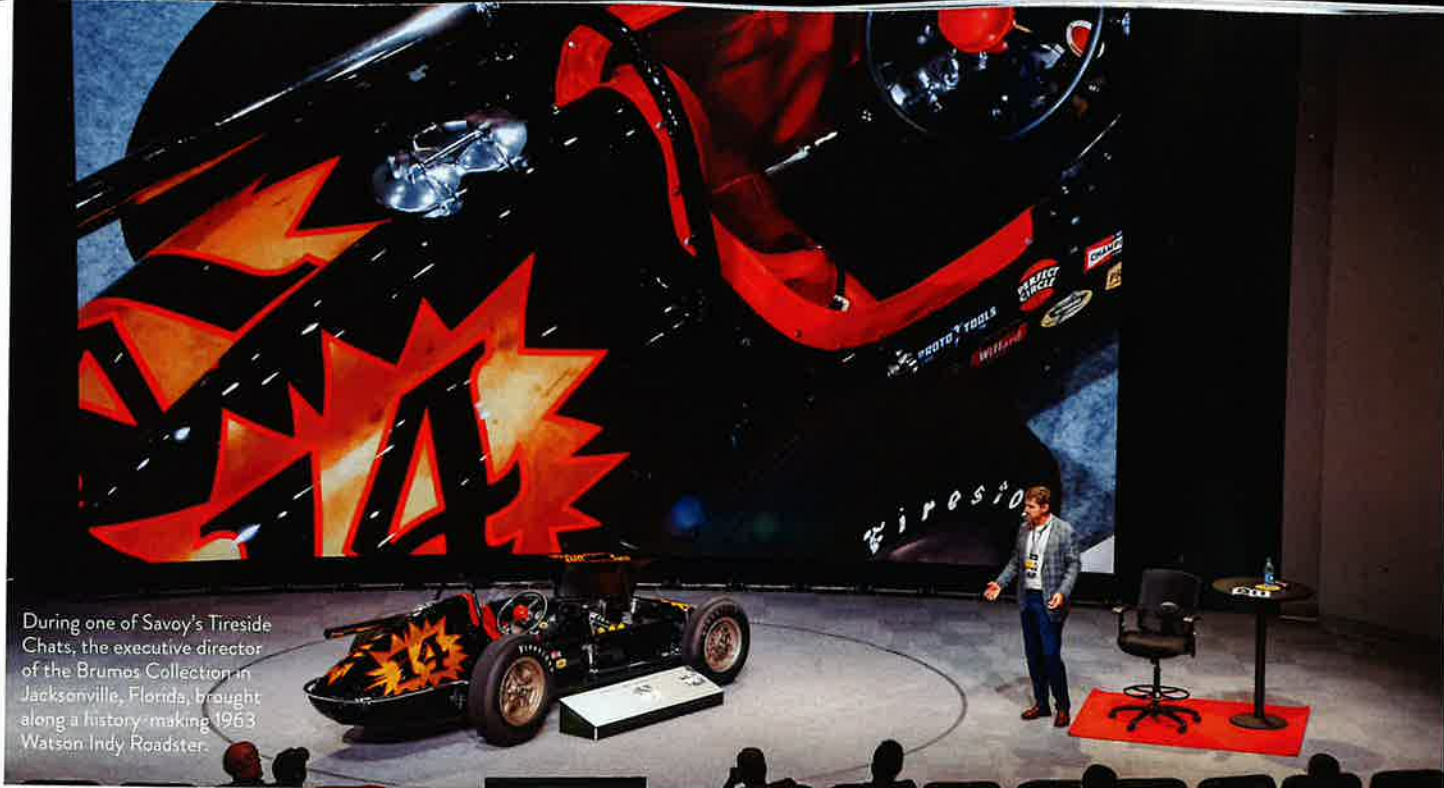
The museum's mission statement, "Connecting people to the cultural diversity of the automobile," is accomplished through exhibitions of cars from around the world, and also through its presentation series, called Tireside Chats, which showcase cars and their history. In addition, informational reader boards and Highlights Tours



This sexy 1957 Chevy Corvette convertible surely would have turned heads as it cruised down the street.

go beyond the basics to delve into the historical, social, and cultural factors that impacted the automotive industry and the world. A comprehensive approach that makes history come alive gives visitors — even the ones who might not be big car buffs — a deeper appreciation for not only the vehicles themselves, but also the reasons for their creation, and in some cases, their demise.

The museum's schedule of rotating exhibitions gives visitors the perfect excuse to return again and again. Of the five separate galleries, only one is dedicated to Savoy-owned cars, and it remains relatively stable with minor



During one of Savoy's Fireside Chats, the executive director of the Brumos Collection in Jacksonville, Florida, brought along a history-making 1963 Watson Indy Roadster.

changes made throughout the year. The remaining four galleries have frequently changing themes.

Dynamic Exhibits

Savoy is committed to keeping it fresh. Take, for example, a recent standout exhibition called "Women in Motorsports," which opened in March and included tributes to influential women like Shirley Muldowney of NHRA drag racing fame and NASCAR trailblazer Janet Guthrie. They're prime examples of successful female drivers who endured discrimination and a lack of support to pave the way for other women in the industry. "Women in Motorsports" was the first of two planned exhibitions featuring women, past and present, whose impact on motorsports is important but often overlooked.

Other notable exhibitions have included "Evolution of BIGFOOT," which was dedicated to monster trucks and allowed the museum to host its first-ever children's event, with participation exceeding all expectations. Last year's summer-themed exhibition of convertibles with their tops down was also a big hit. For the first time in his career, well-known California car designer Chip Foote loaned a museum a collection of his personal vehicles, allowing Savoy to create the exhibition "What's in Chip's Garage." "Rolling Sculpture" showcased prewar 1930s

European art deco-styled cars. An exhibition of little-known but historically significant Czechoslovakian-built Tatra cars and the "British Invasion" exhibition brought in vehicles from around the world, helping to fulfill the museum's mission of highlighting the cultural impact of the automobile.

Currently on display are special cars, both foreign and domestic, from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, some of which have participated in America's longest-running motorsport event.

Beyond the Exhibits

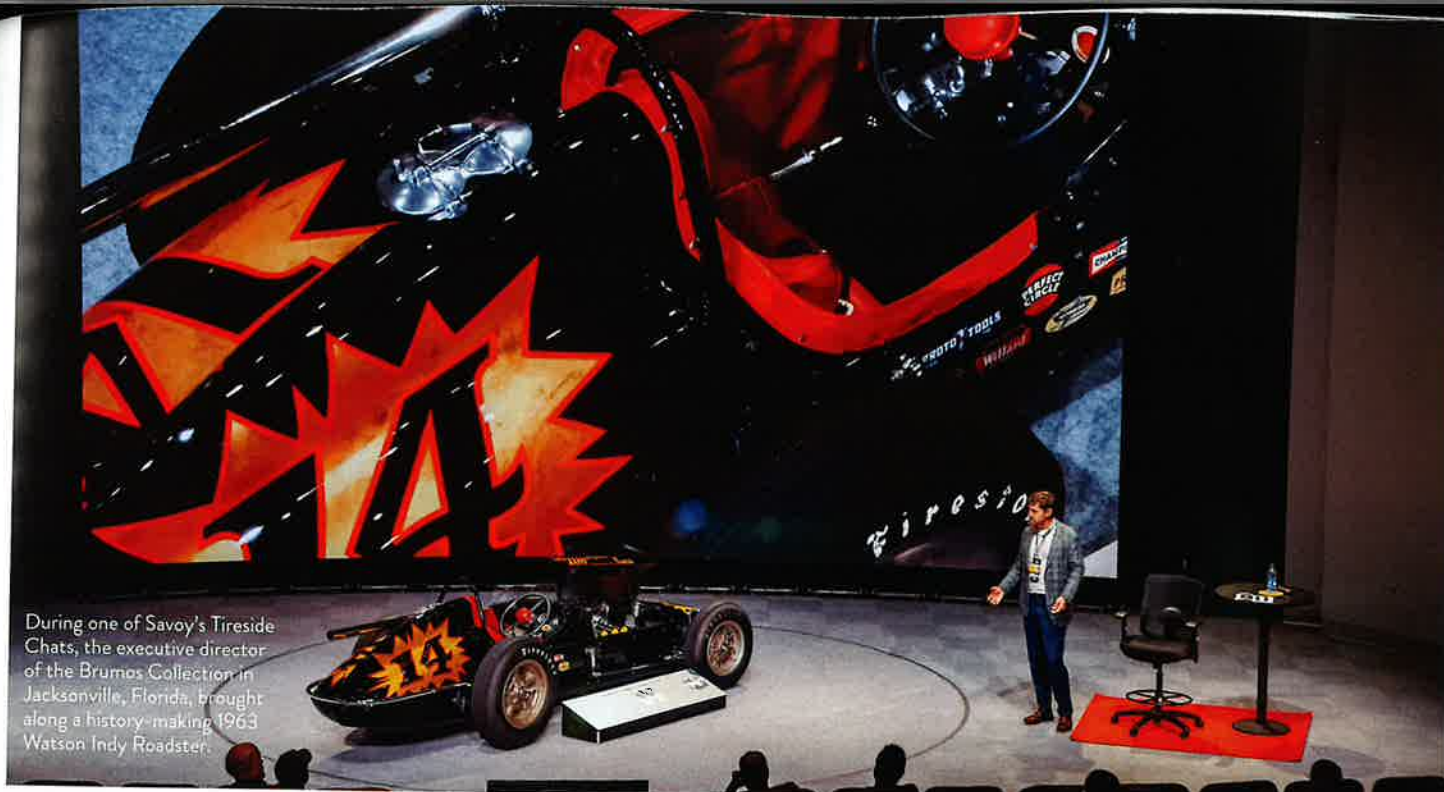
Savoy's dedication to automotive culture extends beyond cars. The museum also houses an impressive collection of original automotive-themed artwork. Imagine, for example, a piece in which a group of artists used 903 Rubik's Cubes to create a portrait of a 1946 Mercury Woodie Wagon. And easy to miss is the largest piece of art in the building,

The unique artwork shown here is a massive oil on canvas created by Atlanta-born artist Mark Boomershine.



a giant wheel affixed to the ceiling, so when you enter the café, be sure to look up.

The Savoy Automobile Museum isn't just a place to admire cars; it's a hub of activity. Continuing with the theme of art, Savoy hosts Sip n' Paint evenings throughout the year. Participants eat, drink, socialize, and paint with assistance from a visiting artist. It's not guaranteed that your masterpiece will grace the museum's walls someday, but you never know where the next budding Rembrandt will come from. Also, while strolling through the museum, pay attention to what appears to be wood paneling throughout the building.



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Front and center here is one of only 9,000 DeLoreans made before production was halted in 1983.



It isn't veneer or contact paper; it's all hand-painted.

There are also Trivia Nights that provide attendees a chance to match wits and discover who knows the answers to some of the most obscure car questions. Monthly high-definition car-themed movies, shown on the big screen in the presentation theater, provide another form of entertainment for the public to enjoy.

Another important aspect of the museum is as an event venue. During regular hours, and even after hours, the museum hosts corporate, public, and private sector events. Private dining rooms with full catering capabilities, a fully-equipped presentation theater with the largest curved screen in the Southeast, and museum exhibition availability make the museum a popular event site.

Looking to the Future

Savoy's next big event, The Connection car show, is scheduled for Saturday, August 17, on the showgrounds of the museum. It will be the first opportunity to incorporate the newly built

15,000-square-foot outdoor pavilion, where visitors and families can enjoy a meal or a little shade while visiting the show.

The rest of 2024 will feature rotating exhibitions featuring moonshine cars, prominent Packards, Japanese collectible cars, and supercars. A second exhibition from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum will showcase race winners from different decades, including the first Indy 500 winner, Ray Harroun's 1911 Marmon Wasp. Movie nights, special guest speakers, presentations, and other upcoming events are listed on the museum's website.

Plan a Visit Soon

Whether you're a seasoned car enthusiast, art lover, or simply curious about Cartersville's cultural offerings, a visit to Savoy Automobile Museum is a must. An often-asked question concerning the museum is, "Why Cartersville?" Well, you can't spell Cartersville without "car" or "art," and Savoy Automobile Museum has both. If your travel plans have you cruising



Shirley Muldowney, aka The First Lady of Drag Racing, stands outside a display of some of her race memorabilia during the "Women in Motorsports" exhibit.

along I-75 in Northwest Georgia and you're looking for a unique attraction, drop by and see what's new at the Savoy.

For More Info

Savoy Automobile Museum
3 Savoy Lane, Cartersville, GA 30120
770-416-1500 | savoymuseum.org

Mary Agrusa is the curatorial research assistant at the Savoy Automobile Museum. Her first car was an early '50s-era VW Beetle that she had painted bright yellow. Consequently, she says she never got away with anything!