

Builders, start your engines: Create your own hot-rod racer

The Plain Dealer - Cleveland, Ohio

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Date: Sep 28, 2007

Start Page: T.45

Section: Friday

Text Word Count: 476

Document Text

Note: Distribution zones: All

LONNIE TIMMONS III THE PLAIN DEALER READY, SET, GO! The racetrack at American Hot Rod Racer at Beachwood Place is one of the store's main draws.

SHOP TALK

American Hot Rod Racer isn't just a store it's an experience.

Opened at Beachwood Place this summer, the 4,500-square-foot space sells remote-control and pinewood derby cars; NASCAR and racing gear; outfits; collectible model cars; toy boats, planes and rockets; and other motoring-themed items.

But the merchandise isn't the main draw. It's the whole package: the ability to design and build your own pinewood or remote-control cars; the 24-by-16-foot race track in the center of the store; the jumbo racing screen; the weekly races that anyone can enter; and the many party options the shop offers.

"People are looking for an experience, to be able to create something, to spend quality time together," says co-owner Jack Prause. "You can buy remote-control cars anywhere, but you don't get that emotional attachment of when you build it."

Prause says most of the store's customers and racers have been kids 4 to 14, though it did host a birthday party for a crowd of fifty- and sixtysomethings recently. And they had a blast.

"We want kids of all ages to have a positive experience and use their creativity to build something of their very own, then race it," he adds.

Pinewood derby cars cost \$12. Remote-control cars range from \$35 to \$280. Parties begin at \$225.

The cost of spending time building and racing your own car with your friends and family?

Priceless, says Prause.

Shopping list

Coventry Crawl: One of the city's coolest shopping areas celebrates the end of summer with the daylong Coventry Crawl Saturday in Cleveland Heights. A festival-like atmosphere will overtake the street beginning at noon, with sidewalk sales, outdoor dining, performers, musicians and more.

Vintage Victrola Show: The stereos will be really old school at the antique Victrola show and sale at Quality Inn Richfield, 4742 Brecksville Road, from 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday. Find Victrolas, talking machines and Edison phonographs, plus 78 rpm records, Regina and Swiss music boxes and smaller paper roll-playing organettes. Admission is \$8 from 7 a.m. to noon, and free after noon. Call 330-325-7866.

Strongsville tag sale: Strongsville Historical Society hosts a Harvest Festival and tag sale this weekend from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. through Sunday at the Roe-Chapman House in the historic village, 13305 Pearl Road. There also will be a pig roast at 2 p.m. Saturday.

Have information on a store or sale you would like us to include in Shop Talk? E-mail the address below or send a fax to 216-999-6269, attn.: Laura DeMarco

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MORE INFO

American Hot Rod Racer

Hours: 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday; noon-6 p.m. Sunday.

Where: Beachwood Place.

Info: 216-831-1817 or visit www.americanhotrodracer.com.

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