

30 YEARS LATER: Vincent Chin remembered. 8A

CLASSIC CARS: Woodward Warehouse opens. 7A>>

CRASH: Car carrying 5 teens barrels into garage. 6A



METRO

Woodward Warehouse lets fans of collectible cars cool their wheels

By Bill Laitner
Free Press Staff Writer

It's being called a yacht club for classic car owners.

For \$250 a month, members can keep their cars in the new Woodward Warehouse — a spotless, climate-controlled space in Royal Oak that's one-part private museum, one-part tinkering spot for car geeks, and two-parts 24-7 social hangout.

"We're trying to create the car enthusiast's ultimate environment," owner Joe Polito said Saturday, as he showed open house visitors the members-only car hoists, auto detailing area, kitchen, cigar room, showers, pool table and private dining room. The open house crowd strolled past him clutching glasses of beer and hot dogs.

Tucked into a small office park that's a two-minute drive from Woodward Avenue north of 13 Mile, the building previously housed a commercial heating and cooling firm and numerous other businesses before it fell on hard times and the roof began leaking, said Polito, 61, of Troy, a retired lawyer who said he has been collecting cars since he was 16 years old.

Polito bought the building and put more than \$500,000 into the gleaming build-out, replete with neon automotive logos and a sturdy color scheme of white, gray and red. The garage area — with a speckle-finish resin floor as clean as the clubhouse dinner plates — has space for about 43 cars.

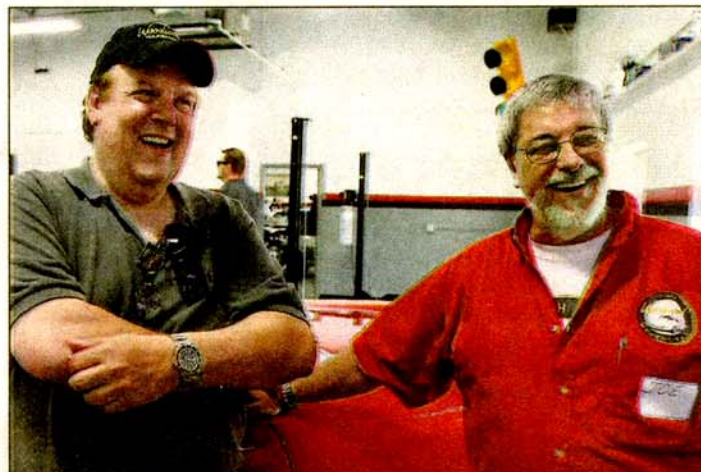
"It's fantastic," said new member Anthony Garth, 38, of Royal Oak, whose 2003 Vespa motor scooter and 2012 Harley-Davidson Sportster Forty-Eight motorcycle — a replica of a '48 Harley — drew admirers. Nearby, Garth parked his 1983 Cadillac Fleetwood, swallowing far more floor space than his bikes.

"If they're just in my garage,



PHOTOS BY JARRAD HENDERSON/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Visitors check out cars Saturday at the Woodward Warehouse, a new 14,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art automobile storage facility in Royal Oak. Its focus will be on cultivating car enthusiast culture.



"We're trying to create the car enthusiast's ultimate environment," said warehouse owner Joe Polito, 61, right, of Troy, a retired lawyer and car collector since he was 16. Polito's sidekick Ron Pruette, left, joked: "We're open to any kind of car — we're nondenominational."

there's nobody to talk to," Garth said over the buzz of the crowd.

It was a car scene laden with American iron, including a bright-red 1955 Ford Thunderbird, a 1959 Edsel Corsair convertible in white with turquoise

trim, a 1966 Oldsmobile Toronado — the first year for that landmark front-wheel drive car — and Polito's own 1963 Chevrolet Corvette Sting Ray, from the first year of the Sting Ray body style when the rear window was

split. But several Porsche owners said they planned to bring their wheels for storage.

Polito's sidekick Ron Pruette, 60, of Oxford Township, who helped with the build-out of the Woodward Warehouse, quipped: "We're open to any kind of car — we're nondenominational."

Pruette said he plans to store his 1966 Ford Mustang at the site. But for those who don't have a car to store, there are social memberships for \$150 a month.

"It's awesome," said Kathy Ostdiek of Birmingham, as she sipped a glass of wine at the open house.

Her husband, Dave Ostdiek, a retired partner in the Henderson Auto Glass chain, has a 2002 Porsche 911 that might find a new home in the warehouse.

Gesturing to Polito, Dave Ostdiek smiled and said, "We're talking."

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