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Friends put on car show to benefit fatherless family

Before his friend died of a heart attack, Greg Santoro would listen for hours as Bill Trapani waxed vividly about his 1965 Chevy Corvette.

About how Trapani bought the muscle car as a twenty-something and lavished on it for decades until selling it some years back.

Trapani's diehard enthusiasm for early-model Corvettes fueled their six-year friendship and lingered until the afternoon he suddenly collapsed on the floor of his home office on Oct. 14.

Then Santoro read Trapani's death notice: in lieu of flowers, Bill's wife Joyce Griggs requested donations go toward an education fund for their surviving children Cole, 13, and Dante, 11.

That's when he knew exactly how to honor their friendship: a fundraiser car show.

"I can't picture my kids not having a father so when I saw the notice, it just kind of moved me into wanting to do this," said Santoro, 50, of Parkland. "I'd never done something like this before, but it's for something so meaningful."

Santoro is organizing a Benefit Classic Car Show to raise funds for Trapani's now-fatherless boys' college education. The event, which includes a live DJ and raffles, runs on Dec. 11 in the parking lot of Carolina Ale House in Weston.

He said more than 300 classic, vintage and custom car lovers are expected during the fundraiser, which aims to collect about \$3,000 through

entry fees and drawings. All told, the benefit will award 50 trophies to entrants.

Despite planning the classic car event the last month, Santoro's never actually met Trapani's widow and two sons.

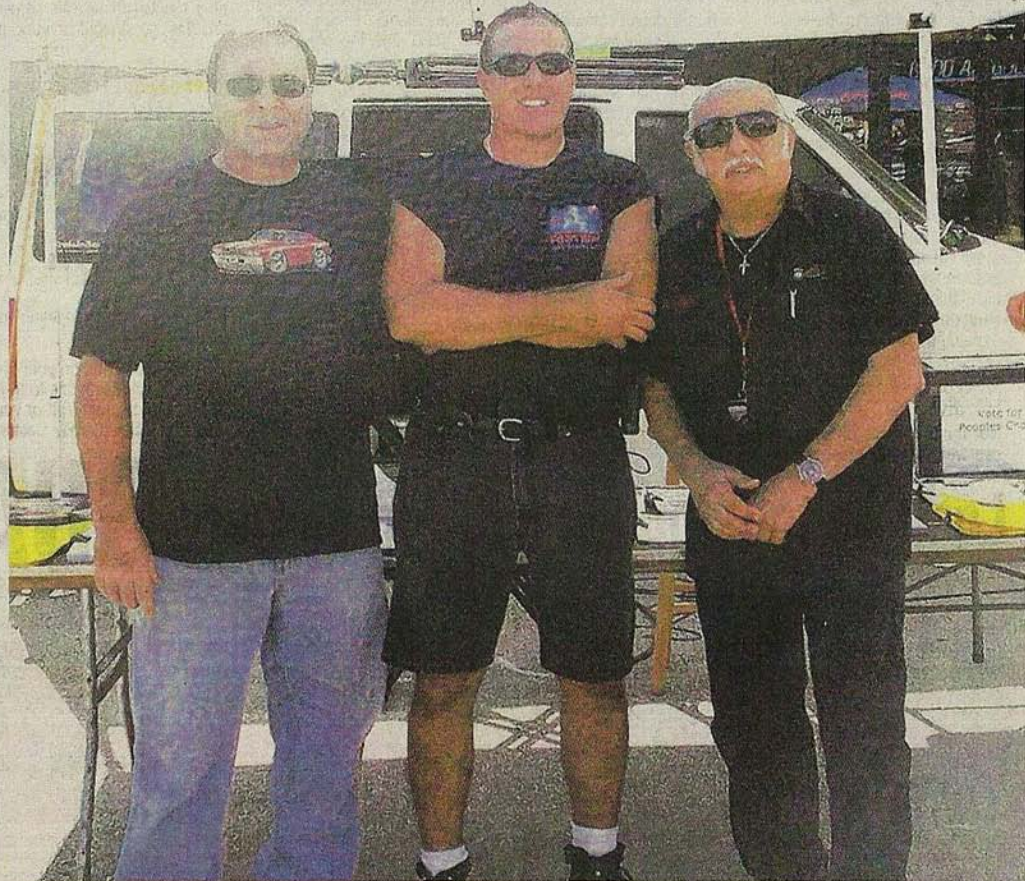
"You wouldn't think I would be doing this. I've only ever spoken to them on the phone, but it just meant a lot to me," Santoro said. "The situation these kids are in now is so desperate. We're hoping that we can do this every year, and hopefully after four or five years, they have enough money for a great college."

Joyce Griggs, who was married to 64-year-old Trapani for 17 years, said the car show fundraiser is fitting for her muscle car-addicted husband, whom she considered a "best friend" and very upbeat despite the heart problems that plagued him the last four years.

A routine checkup at that time revealed a blockage in his coronary arteries that required double bypass surgery. A month in hospital later, doctors discharged Trapani, but Griggs said he regained strength shortly afterward and returned to work.

"There was nothing to indicate he was feeling under the weather. He was going through his normal routine of driving the boys to school that day," Griggs said. "It was instant. His eyes were open. His eyes were just open."

During the car fundraiser, which is being coordinated free by local auto show promoter Russ Ga-



FRIENDS INDEED Organizer Greg Santoro, left, DJ "Scott the Musicman" and event promoter Russ Gagliano participated in the Dec. 11 car show in Weston, which was organized by Santoro to benefit the surviving family of his friend, Bill Trapani. SUBMITTED PHOTO

gliano, Griggs will make an appearance with Cole and Dante.

Although Gagliano promotes 50 auto shows a year, Trapani's story touched him personally. Last August, he suffered a heart attack and blacked

out during one of his car shows.

"I felt like I had to pay it forward because I had such a close call," said Gagliano, 67, of Tamarac. "I had a heart attack, I came out OK. He had a heart attack and left two young

children."

Griggs also plans to award the Best of Show trophy to the best car entry. Her winning choice? Santoro thinks he knows the answer.

"It'll be a Corvette," he said.

The Benefit Classic Car Show runs 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 11 at Carolina Ale House, 2618 Weston Road. Registration costs \$20. Call 954-560-5412, or visit www.CruisinSouth-Florida.com.

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