Molto Bella 2026 – Historic Farm, Historic Automobiles

By Jim Weed

September 21, 2026

Ohio. Mid-west. Flat land. Corn fields as far as the eye can see. Barns and silos in the distance. These are the things most of you would think about when you think of Ohio.

No, not all of Ohio. The hills of the Appalachia mountain range run from central Alabama all the way to the Canadian province of Newfoundland. In Ohio the flatlands of the western part of the state give way to the hills and valleys that become greater mountains as the land flows toward Pennsylvania and West Virginia further to the east.

This is where Akron, Ohio sits. Not flat, not mountainous, but gentle hills and valleys laced with creeks and rivers that will flow to Lake Erie. Close to Cleveland, not far from Pittsburgh, this area has been the heart of industry for decades.

The automotive industry still features prominently within its manufacturing base. As such, automobiles are very much a part of the culture in this area. Muscle cars from the Big Three still rule when it comes to showing off your steed. That doesn't mean there is no room for other exotic automobiles.

Enter Molto Bella. Automobiles of all kinds are welcome. Classic brass era and farm tractors, to fifties and sixties muscle cars. German, British and Italian cars along with a growing population of Japanese automobiles help to fill the fields.

Hale Farm is the location. Here is a historical, working farm from the 1800's that has many historical buildings and active workshops showing what life was like at the time. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Molto Bella was formed to honor Mel Todaro. Todaro's son, Frank Todaro and David Nelson thirteen years ago conspired to create a show that would generate funds for the Kidney Foundation of Ohio in Mel Todaro's honor. Over the years the show has gained popularity with automobiles arriving from the surrounding area. This is a display-only show. There are no awards, no trophies, no accolades for Best-of-Show, bring your car and enjoy the day looking at everybody else's pride and joy.

Why? Because all proceeds go to charity. Volunteers do everything.

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It all starts on Friday evening at Todaro's Party Center. Did I mention Frank Todaro's business is event planning and catering? His facility holds several hundred guests who have come to be wined and dined with fine Italian food before wallets are loosened up for a charity auction.

Located around the banquet room are silent auction baskets filled with items from wine and Bourbon bottles to games and puzzles. One basket was filled with lottery tickets. Linda bid on that one but was quickly out-bid. Up on the stage were other items waiting for the auctioneer to work the room.

As dinner and conversation wound down it was time to raise some money. A Ferrari shop sign went for $2,500. Box seat tickets to a game in Cleveland went for $8,000. There was a print of S/N 06885, the only 275 GTB Competizione with race history that brought $3,000.

All in all, the night was successful because sponsors, like Coca-Cola, Summit Racing, Cornwall Tools, and Goodyear Tires offered some extraordinary items. I think the Goodyear item was the best with a ride in the blimp and some test track time in the vehicle of your choice. Money well spent to further the charities.

Several charities benefit from this event. The Summit County Kidney Foundation was the reason for Molto Bella in the beginning. It has now expanded its reach to Grace House, Valor Home, Rotary Camp Special Needs Children and Prancing Hearts along with several others.

David Nelson is my host, and I got to drive his GTC4Lusso to the show. The GTC4Lusso is a Taylor Made car with special trim and emblems. David is bringing several of his cars to display. He is driving a 275 GTB, S/N 8047, that is a long nose, right-hand drive version in silver blue. It is the oldest Ferrari at the show.



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With our grand entrance to the show, photos and entrant packets are taken, and we find our way to our special spot on the grass. Already there are many Ferraris and other exotics lined up taking their position in the large open field.



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Pretty soon the areas holding the various groups are filling up. The weather is gorgeous and the Ferraris are basking in the sunshine along with Porsche, Mercedes, McLaren, Lamborghini and other brands filling the grassy areas near and around the historic structures.

The Ferraris are mostly modern cars, 296 GTS and 12Cilindri, but there are also some F8 Tributo mixed in with California and 599 GTBs. All across the lawn there is the entire Skittles palette of colors.



There are vendor tents with Goodyear bringing a couple of race cars and a giant display perfect for getting a souvenir photograph. Cauley Ferrari commandeered a prominent corner and displayed several Ferraris, including a 296 Speciale, Purosangue, and a Roma in Celeste Trevi, a color that seemed to transform from green to blue depending on whether it was reflecting the grass or the sky.



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The Cauley folks were busy all day showing off their cars, answering questions and, I hope, taking a few orders. This was the second year Cauleys has displayed at Molto Bella. It is always good for the dealership to join in the fun and excitement of this event.

There is always something for everyone at Molto Bella. Automobiles you might never see at any other show. The creativity of any automobile owner is only limited to the imagination. There was a vintage Mini Cooper with a Honda V-Tec motor installed. It was a very clean installation. I actually had to do a doubletake as I walked in front of the car.

Then there are the stories every owner has about how they became the owner, or what they have restored. Many are serial collectors. One I talked to has owned a dozen or more Mustangs and is always on the lookout for just one more.

Another recreated a 1968 Mercury Cyclone "Cale Yarborough" special. In 1969 Ford, actually, Lincoln-Mercury Division, created these special cars to satisfy NASCAR rules. My father worked for L-M Division and orchestrated these cars to be driven on Atlanta Raceway for three laps before the race. Dealers were brought in from the Southeast Region, and each was assigned a car to be driven and to take back with them to their respective dealership. It was a big promotion, and I got to drive many of these cars as we washed and positioned them on the track the night before. At the tender age of fourteen we positioned about two hundred cars on the track.

The owner of this tribute, Charles Edwards, recreated the 1968 Daytona winning Cyclone with incredible detail. He had the original Wood Brothers sign the trunk after they had inspected his car to be authentic. What a piece of nostalgia!



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This is the essence of Molto Bella. Car guys (and gals) bring their automotive love to share with other like-minded folks. This is one of my favorite events because of the people. Everybody is so friendly, the crowd is respectful of the cars, and of course, it is all for charity.

From the Friday dinner at Todaro's Party Center to the entry fee for the show all the funds are going to great causes. The volunteers make sure it is possible to squeeze every last dollar for the cause. Well done, Frank Todaro and David Nelson! Thirteen years are now in the books and millions raised. I'm looking forward to next year! You should too.





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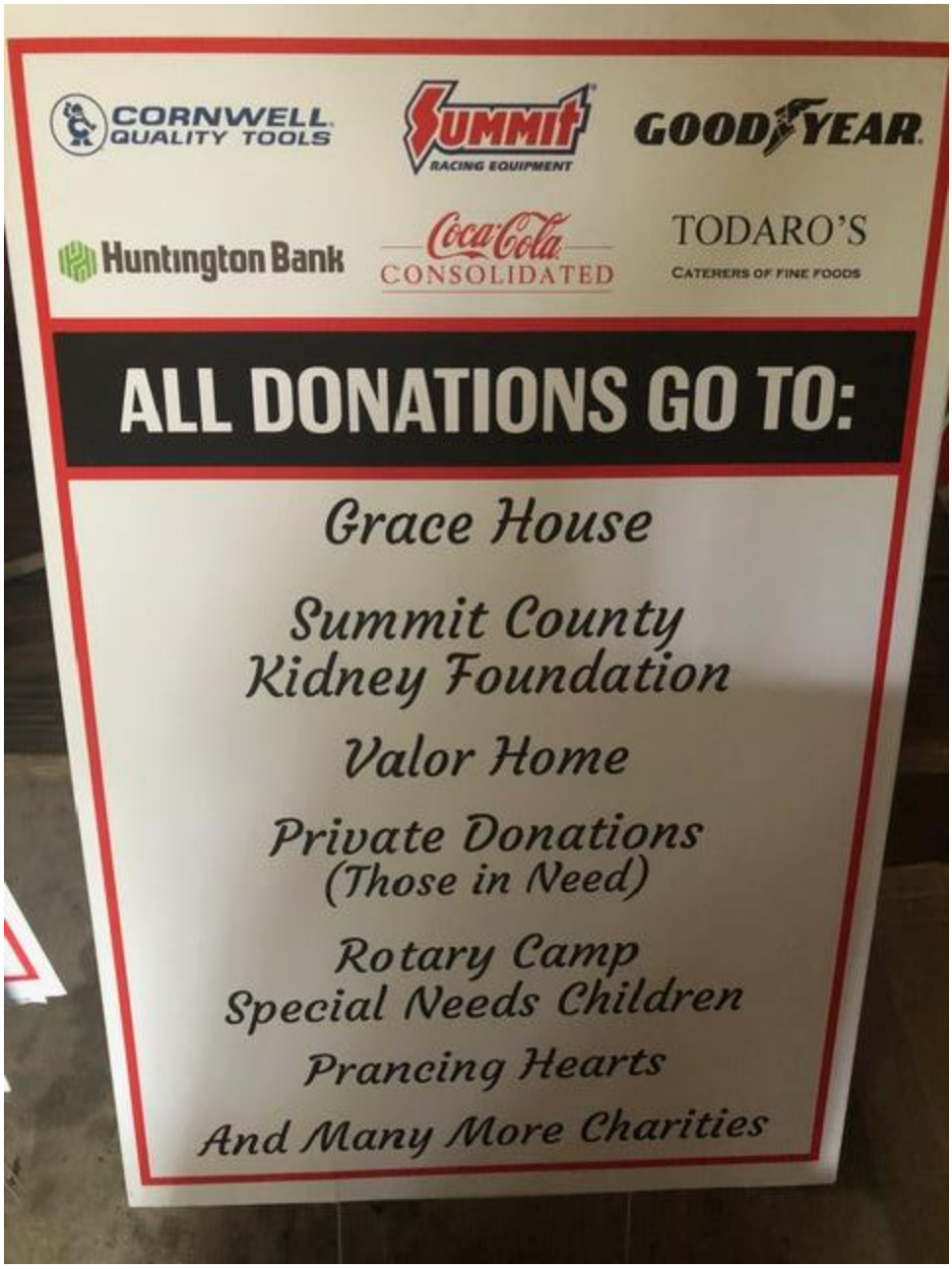


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