

Der Sonnenfleck

Sunshine Bimmers Newsletter

Spring 2014

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Annual Chapter Picnic

The Annual Chapter Picnic will be held on Saturday, June 7, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm at Pelican Beach Park, 1525 Highway A1A, Satellite Beach, FL 32937. The Chapter will provide food and non-alcoholic drinks. Just come and enjoy this beach setting; venue info is at www.satellitebeachrecreation.org/Pages/PelicanBeachPark.aspx.

Recent Chapter Events

In addition to our monthly Teutonic Tuesday gatherings on the fourth Tuesday of every month at OLV Café in Orlando, your Chapter conducts a number of special events every month.

The Valentine's Day Weekend Sunrise to Sunset Tour began Friday night at the Coquina Beach Surf Club on St. Augustine Beach. Our party of 10 had great food and conversation. We stayed overnight at the Ascend Collection Castillo Real. We got up early the next morning to view the sunrise over the Atlantic Ocean, but the weather did not immediately cooperate. However, by the time we finished breakfast at the La Cocina International Restaurant, the skies had cleared. We then started our tour on less-traveled roads to St. Pete Beach, our sunset destination. The target was the Postcard Inn on the Beach, who's Beach Bar & Grill is the oldest bar in St. Pete Beach. But before we got there, we stopped briefly in Mount Dora, stayed a bit longer at our next stop to dine at Yalaha Bakery, and then strolled the Old Florida streets of Tarpon Springs before making the final dash to St. Pete Beach. We arrived just a few minutes before sunset, having driven many backroads and only getting lost once or twice.

The following weekend, we joined with the Suncoast Chapter BMW CCA to participate in the annual Lakeland BMW Concourses d'Elegance. We also supported our neighboring BMW CCA chapter by co-hosting the BMW Car Corral at the Sebring 12-hour race, March 12-15.

Our next event was the Sunshine Bimmers Winterfest BMW CCA Club Racing Weekend March 29-30 at Sebring International Raceway. The event included a great cookout Saturday night for the racers and Chapter members. Thanks to Patrick Spikes and Mark & Amy Rutenberg, everyone who attended received a colorful commemorative Tee-shirt created especially for this annual event.



Dinner at Coquina Beach Surf Club



Sunrise at St. Augustine Beach



Sunset in St. Pete Beach



Post-event debriefing at the Postcard Inn Bar



Sunshine Bimmers at the Ranch
(All photos on this page by Al Butler)



Some of the assembled BMWs at the Ranch

In April, we had two events. On the 19th, we enjoyed a technical session at Vlad's Autobahn, 354 West Drive, Melbourne, FL 32904, 321-622-5665. You can get more information about this business at www.vladsautobahn.com. A week later, the Sunshine Bimmers Chapter joined the three other peninsular Florida CCA chapters (First Coast, Suncoast, and Everglades) for the 3rd Annual Ride to the Ranch Cookout, hosted by Al McKay. Our chapter members took home several car show prizes.

May found us back at Señor Tequila's Restaurant in Winter Springs, where we enjoyed good Mexican food and drink. Unfortunately, our hosts Mark & Amy Rutenberg didn't make it due to a problem with their car just a couple of miles from the restaurant.



Chapter members enjoying Señor Tequila's (photos by Bob Compton)

Yalaha Bakery Driving Tour

Chapter Member Joseph Lenart agreed to share his favorite way to get to the Yalaha Bakery from I-4 north of Orlando:

1. Starting at I-4, head west on SR 434 in Longwood
2. About 1 mile west of I-4, turn Right onto Wekiva Springs Road
3. About 4 miles later, and just after Wekiva Springs Road makes a sharp turn to the left (South), turn Right (East) onto East Welch Road
4. At the end of East Welch Road, turn Right onto Vick Road
5. At the end of Vick Road, turn Left on West Ponkan Road
6. At the end of West Ponkan Road, turn Right onto US 441
7. After driving Northwest on US 441 for 1 mile, turn Left in Tangerine onto Sadler Avenue (CR 448), which heads West
8. At the end of CR 448, turn Left (Southwest) onto SR 19 by the Lake Harris Resort; you will cross Little Lake Harris heading toward Howie-in-the-Hills
9. At the north end of Howie-in-the-Hills, SR 19 forms a Tee intersection with CR 48; turn Right onto CR 48 to reach the bakery. Yalaha Bakery is on the left around a big curve at 8210 CR 48, Yalaha, FL 34797, 352-324-3366.

Let us know about your favorite country drive in a BMW. All we need are some basic directions; it's easy. Joseph wrote his directions on a piece of paper and sent it the editor. Coming soon: *The Official Sunrise to Sunset Tour Driving Guide*.

Chapter News this Month: Increasing Your Participation in the Club

Several Chapter officers attended the BMW CCA Chapter Congress in Dallas, Texas in March, where we learned more about the National office's plans for marketing the Club and supporting the chapters. We also confirmed that most chapters have similar experiences and problems.

According to research that was recently conducted by the National office, the most important membership benefit—listed by 85% of members—was the discount received by members on parts and service at BMW dealers and other supporting businesses. Next on the priority list, at 73% of members, was driving schools. Our own surveys found that Sunshine Bimmers Chapter members rated driving events highly and wanted more of them.

Here's our basic problem with driving events: the market is saturated in Florida, resulting in the paradox of there being no good dates available for track rentals and, even if we did get a good date, there are so many driving events that our attendance numbers would probably not allow us to recover our costs. A weekend event at Sebring, for example, costs about \$35,000. That's 100 BMW CCA members paying \$350 each to break even, plus about 25 driving instructors and 15 volunteer workers handling registration, pits, grid, etc. Florida is stuck in a corner with almost no adjacent population centers from which to attract participants in other CCA chapters. There is a school or race almost every day of the year in Florida except when the pro teams have rented a track for developmental practice. So, we partner with other groups whenever we can in order to provide track events for our members.

Every month, we have great events for our members, ranging from Club Races to technical sessions and social events. Our level of member participation is on a par with other CCA chapters. Yet, Chapter activities and participation by our members also represent a bit of a paradox. Of the \$48 you pay annually for membership in BMW CCA, the Chapter gets \$15.30. You cannot run any active club for \$15 a year. We make it work, as do the other chapters, in large part because most chapter members don't participate in our local events. Out of almost 500 members, we typically get 15-20 to participate in Chapter events, with some of the more popular events reaching as high as 50 attendees. If we only need to pay for 50 active Club members (10%), then we actually have a budget of around \$150 per active member. It's no wonder members who participate really have a good time. But BMW CCA wants us to invest more volunteer time into increasing member participation and to work more with the local BMW dealers in our area because they believe the key to membership growth is by getting the chapters to do more. We know from our own surveys that you want more events and a larger variety of opportunities, so we can't fault the National office in wanting the same thing.

So here's the deal: If you want the Chapter to do more, then you need to do more. We need volunteers interested in helping to plan and conduct events. Our Chapter is not a company for which you are customers. We are members of the Club. We participate in Club activities. Not like Sam's Club "members," but real club members who want to meet and work with other members. We joined a Club; we didn't buy a BMW discount card or magazine subscription. Members participate. Events don't just magically happen.

Our most immediate need is to get a few volunteers to serve as BMW dealer liaisons. We have brochures, training, and lots of corporate support for this program. Your task would be to make contact with senior management at a dealer, set up a meeting, go through the materials we will provide, and set a time for follow-up. BMW is telling its dealers to participate in this program, so this is not a hard-sell project. A Chapter Board member will participate in the first meeting with the dealer. Many CCA chapters have dealer-sponsored events as a major part of their member activity program. We can, too, if just a few of our members will participate in this new outreach effort. Contact Al Butler at abutler@mpzero.com to learn more or to offer your time to this important program.

New Publication

There is a new track day magazine for the high-performance driving education enthusiast. It is available at <http://www.meetup.com/trackweekend/boards/view/viewthread?thread=43703682>. You should also consider joining the driving events notification program offered by the High-Performance Driving Club of Florida through <http://www.meetup.com/trackweekend>. They will send you a weekly notice e-mail about HPDE events in our area.

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Special Note: The Sunshine Bimmers Chapter was required to rent an official post office box as a condition of charter by BMW CCA. Our new official address is PO Box 3214, Windermere, FL 34786-3614. You should directly contact the person listed above who is most likely to be able to respond to your need, as the post office box is not checked daily.

