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Why Buy a Fast Car...if you Can't Drive it Fast?

By Jennifer Thompson

Growing up in WV, I would drive to escape and express. It was like dancing with mountains. Every stretch of narrow asphalt snaking among farms and forests offered potential. How fast could I go before the next turn? How much could I experience what that car was built to do before some unsuspecting vehicle appeared and blocked my private race?

Driving a sports car is joy, a calling forth of life and adrenaline. A fast car is a marvel of engineering, art made performance: from the engine compartments displacing power to the road, to the bodylines luring the eye into fantasy and coaxing the wind into partnership. Sit in a sports car and smell the promise of release. Touch the gas pedal and feel the eager response of power. A sports car reflects and describes its owner. And like their owners, sports cars all have different personalities if you will. No one confuses the muscular Mustang with the precocious Mini Cooper or the movie star Jaguar.

Jeremy Porter loves cars and the sport of all things motor, be it 2-wheel, 4-wheel, or racing karts: the precision, the speed, and the design that informs the machine coupled with the skill to bring the performance to life. But while his passion is cars, faith is his core and family his motivation. When you love sports cars, you pursue excellence over the make-do and commitment over compromise. So nothing was left behind in his pursuit of the dream that has become Atlanta Motorsports Park (AMP).

AMP is a private country club for serious motorsports enthusiasts while offering a wealth of other amenities for the entire family. The facility offers a track where drivers can become adept at, and ultimately experience, the thrill of sport driving. The professionally designed track covers over 2 miles, encompasses aggressive elevation changes of 141 feet or more, and offers six unique courses.

Astonishing to say and even harder to grasp, AMP is the first "green" sustainable racetrack in the world and is located in Dawsonville, GA, a small town with a 2000 census population of only 619 and proud of its racing heritage, long known in auto racing circles for its tradition of involvement in the sport.

But there is more to this than a racetrack. Conversation with Porter belied a man of faith, introspection, passion, and thoughtfulness, who is concerned with the future; not only his family's but also of society and the earth we reside upon. Observant and aware, he spoke of sustainability, the fracturing of family units, and of the effects of corporate greed in the pursuit of a bottom line. Several minutes into the interview, I asked how cars, and particularly AMP, fit into all this.

"It's not about the money," Porter responded. "... but if we can be green and sustainable, what is everybody else's excuse? If we can impact ministry with the 10% charitable giving... if we can give away the track for teen driving programs and save teen drivers...if we can impact generations with our mentorship programs...if we can be known as a business that does things differently, that's known for high ethical moral standards, that would be the last check..."

This may sound infeasible and exclusive but AMP proves otherwise. Internships are geared to those coming from ministry-based programs that want to learn a solution-based approach to business. Non-motor based amenities; including pool, tennis, hiking, kids' indoor/outdoor play areas, and fitness facilities; are geared to reach family members of all ages; though the 340 degree view encompassing 80% of the track may lead other family members to appreciate the beauty that is racing. But most of all, AMP is a track geared for all lovers of sports cars.

"Seventy-five percent of our demographic are people that own a sports car that does not watch racing or have a Road & Track on their magazine rack. They're just someone that wants to drive that sports car fast and safe."

In the current economy, AMP is the only large project in the state. Discretionary income is non-existent. Yet, AMP is exceeding every hope. Porter says, "It's an amazing, amazing divine intervention story. Call it what you will, something's supporting us, because I'm surely not smart enough to come up with all this."

Sustainable Measures:

- Storm and well water retention use
- Grass and vegetation selected by water consumption
- ACT 2 micro water treatment
- Recycled guardrails, asphalt, flooring
- Earthen retaining walls
- Solar-powered LED signs, low-flush toilets, faucets

Successes:

- \$2.1 million in memberships*
- Leased every rental garage in phase one*
- Leased every weekend but two outside of membership days*
- Have over \$900,000 in sponsors*
- Paid 34% of debt down

*beating projections

Atlanta Motorsports Park is located at 20 Duck Thurmond Road, Dawsonville, GA 30534. For more information, go to www.atlantamotorsports.net.