

Main Street Clinton has its “Wheels A’ Turning”

By Sherry Lucas

Wheels A’ Turning was an early and, turns out, farsighted tagline for Main Street Clinton.

Its revitalization aim put events, economics and enthused volunteers into motion, driving attention and engagement in the city’s historic core.

In recent years, those wheels have been turning faster and faster, and turning up at storefronts, corners and intersections both in Olde Towne and on Clinton Boulevard. Cruiser bicycles populate the pedestrian-friendly Olde Towne, while motor vehicles tag the boulevard’s Old Highway 80 roots.

Main Street Clinton’s first events concentrated in the more natural gathering spot of Olde Towne’s brick streets. But, as branding and identity building in the Boulevard Business District took hold, unique events put the pedal to the metal there, too. A 2009 car show, *Cruzin’ the Boulevard* (born at Clinton Plaza and now expanded as *Cruzin’ Clinton*), was a natural fit with the area’s vehicular slant, and parked an annual event on the City calendar. A mural by Mississippi College art professor Albert Smathers and his students brought a welcome spot of color to the area in 2014.



Photo by Katie Tracy

One of the many “bicycle art” examples around the Main Street Clinton area



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Cruzin’ Clinton started as *Cruzin’ the Boulevard* and was originally held in the Clinton Plaza parking lot on Clinton Boulevard, in the heart of Main Street Clinton’s Boulevard district.



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The first *Cruzin’ with the Arrows* community pep rally was held in 2015 in Clinton Plaza’s parking lot. It has become an annual event.

In 2015, *Cruzin’ with the Arrows*, a big community pep rally, drew spirited support for the high school team, hit a bullseye with residents and cruised back on the calendar in 2016,

establishing an annual tradition. The barbecue competition “BBQ on the Boulevard” joined the mix this past October, with proceeds supporting district improvements.

“By our standards for the area, it was wildly successful,” Main Street Clinton director Tara Lytal said. It’ll be back this October, bigger and better with a hoped-for boost to fifteen teams.

Wilson Tire and Auto Service’s Susan Wilson picked up a Mississippi Main Street Trailblazer Award last year for her volunteer work in the boulevard district, where the business her husband, Marc, started has been an anchor for thirty-six years.

“We’re just trying to do what we can to keep its integrity and keep it an economic, vital area of the community,” Susan Wilson said. That means planting seeds for better aesthetics, from encouraging fellow businesses to spruce up, to transforming an old Volkswagen Beetle into a sunny bloom box.

“That has been one of the most positive things we’ve done,” Wilson said of the bright yellow Beetle-turned-planter in front of Wilson Tire. “Everybody loves the bug and are watching to see what we’re going to do with it next. ... It’s just a fun, interest-getting happy thing.” Also in the works: a real antique car, strategically placed at one of the boulevard district’s entrances.

“She’s just a fireball,” Lytal said of

cont. on page 12

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