

# It's all in a name: Small town brings in unique festival

**By Ron Wilson**  
*Director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.*

When my two little boys play with their Hot Wheels cars — as they like to do frequently — they are really after one thing: Speed. They want to make those cars go as fast as they can. So they set up their racetracks in all kinds of funny, creative ways so as to achieve maximum speed.

Making cars go faster seems to fascinate kids, and for some of us, that interest lasts a lifetime. Of course, having a fast car is especially useful in the heartland of the country, where people must travel long distances. So, how fitting that a special, national festival to celebrate the American automobile in general and Hot Wheels cars in particular is being held in rural Kansas. Denise Lyon is the mayor of the town of Speed. She grew up at Speed, went to college at Hays, married a young man from Phillipsburg, and after a few years moved back to Speed. Denise says, "This is a great small town."

On Aug. 6, her town of Speed is expected to be host to a remarkable, one-of-a-kind festival.

This all started with Mattel, maker of Hot Wheels. Mattel executives wanted to do a special mid-year promotion. They had the idea of a community-based festival that might attract thousands of people and generate national attention. But where to put on such an event?

After doing a national search, they came upon the town of Speed. What a great name for a place to host a Hot Wheels festival.

Company executives were intrigued by the name of Speed, but the name itself was not enough. A company representative came to Speed, and what he found gave him great encouragement. The people were very nice, very willing to work, and very excited about the possibility of hosting such an event.

So plans are moving forward to put on this special event in Speed. Speed is truly a rural, heartland community.

It is located in Phillips County in northwest Kansas. Yet Speed only has a population of 43 people. Now, that's rural.

How can a town that size put on an event with thousands of people? The answer is, in the same way that people in rural America have managed through the years: Friends and neighbors work hard and pull together. In this case, numerous task

forces of people from across Phillips County are working hard to put on this event.

Jackie Swatzell is Director of the Chamber of Commerce in Phillipsburg, county seat of Phillips County. She is serving as events coordinator and working with an army of volunteers to bring this about.

Jackie says, "This will put Phillips County on the map. It's a great opportunity to show what a small town can do. We want every town in the county to benefit."

So what will we find in Speed on Aug. 6? A parade, Miss Hot Wheels pageant, live bands all day, food, vendors, and — what else? — cars. Lots and lots of cars. Mattel plans to bring some lifesize models of Hot Wheels concept cars. A hot rod show is being held, with a goal of having some 200 cars. Motorcycles are also expected.

A free Hot Wheels commemorative car will be given away while supplies last.

The city will temporarily rename two intersecting streets Power Drive and Performance Boulevard. Thus it can be truly said that this is where Power and Performance meet.

This fun event is expected to draw national attention. It is sure to

bring in Hot Wheels collectors as well as kids and families. Some 5,000 people are expected to attend. More details are available at [www.hotwheelscollectors.com](http://www.hotwheelscollectors.com).

When my two little boys play with their Hot Wheels cars, they want one thing: Speed. So how fit-

ting that the town of Speed will be the site of this remarkable festival. We commend Mayor Denise Lyon, Jackie Swatzell, and all those involved with putting on this tremendous event.

Not only will it benefit all of Phillips County and the region, it

will showcase rural Kansas and respond to our need for speed.

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*The mission of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development is to enhance rural development by helping rural people help themselves.*

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**Colby's  
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**Saturday, July 15 - 10 a.m. - 11 p.m. CT**  
 Youth Contest - 10 a.m. Followed by Open Stage Shows (Evening Show begins at 6:30 p.m.)  
**Sunday, July 16 - 10:00 a.m. - 2:10 p.m. CT**  
 Gospel Show and Sing-along at 10 - 11:30 a.m.  
 Day Shows - 11:40 - 2:10 p.m.

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 Friday only, gate.....\$10  
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 Sat. nite (6-11 p.m.) gate.....\$10  
 Sunday, gate.....\$10  
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**Tickets:**  
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 460-7643 or 1-800-611-8835.  
 Check out the web: [colbybluegrass.org](http://colbybluegrass.org)

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