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International gathering of “silver bullet” RVs underway in central Virginia

Doswell, Va., July 20 – Having arrived in more than 750 trailers and recreational vehicles, about 1,500 Airstream owners from throughout the U.S. and Canada are camped this week at The Meadow Event Park, 25 miles north of Richmond.

This is the 62nd WBCCI International Rally for Airstreamers. It has been an annual event for six decades, but this is the first time it's being held in Virginia. A sea of Airstream trailers and motor homes covers the grassy fields at this former Virginia horse farm that was the birthplace of the famous, Triple Crown-winning thoroughbred, Secretariat. This explains the rally's logo and theme: “Enjoy the Ride!”

Opening ceremonies are Saturday evening, July 20. The week to follow includes seminars, tours, food, music, crafts, classes, and good fellowship.

Airstream trailers are iconic and instantly recognizable. With their curved roofs, bright aluminum exteriors, and sleek aerodynamic design, they are often affectionately called “silver bullets.” Included in the assemblage at Doswell are over 60 vintage Airstream trailers made from the 1950s to 1990s. At the Vintage Airstream Club camping area, there will be an Open House on Sunday, July 21, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The public is invited to see these old trailers with their retro interior appliances and décor.

Dan Smith, who heads the U.S. National Park Service, is visiting the rally on Monday, July 22. He will speak to the Airstreamers and tour a 2016 special limited edition Airstream. Only 100 of these “Pendleton” Airstream trailers were built with an interior design celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the National Parks. The Airstream Corporation donated \$1,000 to the Park Service for each Pendleton's sold.

This rally coincides *exactly* with the 50th Anniversary of the historic first moon landing. On Tuesday, July 23, Samantha Martin, Airstream historian, will address the rally to recount Airstream's role in that monumental July 1969 event. Airstream built the special biological isolation trailer (NASA's “Mobile Quarantine Facility [MQF]”) into which astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin & Collins were ushered for several days upon splashdown for fear they might contaminate Earth with “moon germs!” On July 22, a busload of Airstreamers will visit the MQF at the Udvar-Hazy Center of the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, where it is on display.

The rally concludes Saturday, July 27.

Each year, the International Rally supports a local charity. For 2019, needed items and monetary donations are being collected from the Airstreamers for “HomeAgain,” which operates three homeless shelters for families and single women in the Richmond area.

The official name of the 13,000-member Airstream owners club is Wally Byam Caravan Club International (WBCCI), but it is also known as the Wally Byam Airstream Club (WBAC) and the Airstream Club International. It is one of the nation's oldest RV associations, formed in 1955. Wallace M. (“Wally”) Byam (1896-1962) designed the first Airstream travel trailer, founded Airstream Inc., and organized the owners club that bears his name. Club activities include rallies and many adventurous travel “caravans.” The Club's headquarters is near the Airstream Company factory in Jackson Center, Ohio. Airstream trailers have been manufactured in the U.S. since 1931.

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VISIT THE RALLY WEBSITE: <https://doswell.wbcc.net/>