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# Roller-coaster enthusiast's driving passion helps Arthritis Foundation

### Efforts of car and roller-coaster aficionado help keep Arthritis Foundation on track

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By **Ken Gordon**

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Which races faster is tough to determine: the mind of Jeff Brashares as he dreams up fundraising ideas or his beloved roller coasters.

The resident of Marysville has drive and passion to spare.

He loves classic cars and owns about 50.

With several partners, he bought, built and sold a multimillion-dollar company.

Besides his commitment to family — wife Angie and their six children (one together, five from previous marriages) — the 61-year-old devotes much of his time and energy to the Arthritis Foundation.

During the past 30 years, Brashares has led the annual Classic Auto Show & Cruise-In — conducted in Dublin — and filled committee roles for other foundation fundraisers.

He has donated more than \$1.3 million to the cause through his own foundation.

And, two years ago, he spearheaded a new initiative — along with Cedar Point amusement park in Sandusky — that last year raised \$75,000.

For that, the Arthritis Foundation in December honored Brashares with the 2013 Innovative Philanthropy Award.

“He’s just absolutely tireless when it comes to thinking up new ways to raise money and awareness,” said Mary Kudasick, chief development officer for the foundation’s Great Lakes region. “I am so impressed by the breadth of his volunteerism.”

Brashares grew up in Mansfield. His paternal grandfather, Joseph, and both of his parents — Bob and Ruth — suffered from arthritis.

His grandfather was completely disabled by the disease, he said, and his father was marginally functional.

“He never used a cane, but he wasn’t what I would call mobile.”

Despite those challenges, Brashares said, his father visited arthritis patients in hospitals “until the week before he died” in 1991.



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Jeff Brashares with an AMF Sky Lark pedal car, and a 1983 Buick Electra behind him, at his Marysville home

Inspired by that example, Brashares began raising money for the cause shortly after he moved to Columbus in 1978. By the early '80s, he was overseeing the cruise-in, which raises more than \$200,000 annually.

Meanwhile, he and two partners bought a transportation company in 1984, then sold it in 2009 for a large profit. Brashares put a chunk of his share in a trust and donates to several causes.

"Arthritis isn't sexy, but most people will be affected in their lives, particularly if they played sports," he said. "And most people don't know that children are affected as well."

Those close to Brashares marvel at his energy and enthusiasm.

"He is probably the most dynamic leader I've ever met," said Andy Trux, a Dublin resident who has served with him on the cruise-in committee since 1997.

"If he says he'll do something, it's done; it's handled. And there is no job beneath him. He goes from meeting with corporate executives to going out and picking up trash."

About 10 years ago, Brashares said, he fell in love with roller coasters ("Something in my brain clicked").

His favorite is Millennium Force at Cedar Point.

That passion led him to team with the park's marketing department on his latest Arthritis Foundation fundraiser, called Ride for a Reason. People buy tickets for an hour of riding time on the coaster, and some of the proceeds go to the foundation.

In September 2012, he and Angie got married at Cedar Point — after which the wedding party hopped on Millennium Force.

"He's not a man who can do anything halfway," Mrs. Brashares said. "I just go along for the ride."

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