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Hot Dogger Stephanie Corte has to catch up on refueling the Oscar Meyer Weinermobile during its Altadena stop



Gallery: Oscar Meyer Weinermobile [5 Images] Click any image to expand.

by Anne Louise Bannon

To be frank, the first thing you notice when riding around in the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile is all the mobile phones and tablets popping out to take your picture.

“You don't do anything inconspicuously in it,” said Hot Dogger Stephen Hays, 23, of Missouri.

Hays, and his partner Stephanie Corte, 22, of El Paso, Texas, are spending the year traveling around the United States in the iconic vehicle shaped like a hot dog in a bun. The Wienermobile made its most recent stop Saturday at Super King Market in Altadena.

“You don't see something like that everyday,” said Eunice Patron, looking at the picture she'd just snapped with her mobile phone.

She said her daughter had decided not to come to the grocery store that day.

“She missed it,” Patron said.

“I had to take a picture,” said Juan Reyes, of Altadena. “I'm talking to my girlfriend. I thought that was only in the movies.”

Lisa Herron got a selfie with the mobile.

“I had to do it,” she said. “I was driving by and I saw it.”

Corte and Hays say the picture-taking and the waving is a pretty normal reaction.

“You're just casually going down the highway and people get ecstatic,” Corte said. “It's really one of those rare jobs where people are glad to see you.”

Super King Assistant Manager Garo Ovasapian said that the visit was part of the market's plan to do regular events.

“It's like an event for the kids to have fun,” he said, adding that he'd only wished the Hot Doggers had brought coupons to use in the market.

Hays explained that they normally do carry coupons, but that they'd run out.

“There was a mustard stain on the floor,” said Triston, age 4, about the mustard yellow squiggle on the floor of the interior. “It was awesome!”

Both Corte and Hays were recruited for their one-year job as seniors in college: Corte at the University of Texas, Pan America, and Hays at the University of Missouri, Columbia. They are two of 12 Hot Doggers total

who do stops around the country in pairs, driving the fleet of six Weinermobiles and building good will for Oscar Mayer as brand ambassadors. The pairs are recruited annually from 1,500 to 2,000 applicants from around the country.

"My future goal is to get into politics," Corte said, adding that most hot doggers are aiming at careers in public relations or advertising. "So I've seen the benefit of traveling around the country, and just being able to be on all the time."

And it is all the time. Just the simple act of pumping gas into the Wienermobile caught a lot of attention, including one man approaching quite carefully.

"I hear there's a rumor that you can get a wiener whistle from you guys," the man said quietly.

And he got one, plus a quick visit inside the spacious interior, decked out in blues, ketchup red and mustard yellow. The mobile (model year 2009) is 11 ft at its highest point and is powered by a six-liter 8-cylinder engine.

"Gotta be sure we can haul buns when we need to," Hays said.

Duriel Carr-Ellis, of Pasadena, was so excited to see the Wienermobile, she pulled out her just-purchased package of Oscar Mayer hot dogs. And also got a whistle.

"I got my wienie whistle!" she exclaimed.

After a stop in Anaheim, Hays and Corte will be heading back to her alma mater for a recruiting trip. Then it's back on the road, this time to Tucson, Arizona, and San Diego, passing out wienie whistles, taking pictures and generally "wienie-ing" hearts over.

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