

Teens Talk Cars at Orinda Motors

By Sophie Braccini



John Vanek offers guidance to Orinda teens

Photo Andy Scheck

Emily Jorgens is a responsible sophomore at Miramonte who will be getting her driver's license in a few days. So the vice-president of the sophomore leadership class at Miramonte thought it would be a good idea to organize a class for her classmates and herself, to learn how to take proper care of their cars. "We are all at an age when we get our permits and driver licenses," says Jorgens, "so last summer I went to see John Vanek of Orinda Motors to see if he would help us." The idea was to make it a fund-raiser as well for the class of 2010 and Vanek, who is very active in the community, was happy to give some of his time to the project. Vanek explained that he'd rather interact with a small group of students, so three sessions were planned. The cost is \$25 and includes a lunch that was given for the first session by Village Pizza in Orinda.

Vanek believes it is important to give young drivers an introduction to auto maintenance and operation. "Often time those young people are given a car by their family," says Vanek, "however, they need to take ownership of operating the car. They need to understand it requires maintenance, and that they need to be prepared if trouble happen."

The class includes a good look under the hood and learning about a few basics like where is the spare tire on a car? Where is the emergency signal? And how to check the oil, break fluid, coolant and transmission oil level. Vanek teaches them too how to recognize trouble and intervene before the car breaks down. "We learned to be prepared," says Jorgens, "it

was a fun class and I will definitely take a more in depth look at my owner's manual." Vanek highlights the importance of reading the manual because it is there that is found the maintenance schedule of a car.

The second part of the session dealt with how to react in case of emergency.

"We were told to always have an emergency kit in the back of our car," remembers Jorgens. "It is important for these young people to have a plan if their car breaks down and what to expect if they drive in harsher conditions," says Vanek. He explained to them the importance of preparing a car when they'll start to embark in longer trip, "A battery in moderate condition can become a problem in cold weather, and if you're stuck in the snow, you better have food for a few days and extra gear available in the car."

Most of the questions of the boys and girls attending the class revolved around the price of buying and maintaining a car. Vanek recommended a Japanese import as a first car and stressed the importance of having used cars inspected, even if they are hand-me-downs.

The next class for the Miramonte sophomores will be on April 13th. Vanek is willing to give some of his time to other groups in the community if they would like to train other young drivers.