



JOYCE WILDEN

Earth Friendly Transportation

Businesses Come Together to Promote Green Alternatives

This Thanksgiving weekend, the Brevard Zoo will host a different kind of conservation event, as Segways, scooters, bicycles, eco-friendly autos and other means of green conveyance will join the animals for the first annual Earth Friendly Transportation Expo.

The transit-related event will cap a series of presentations during the zoo's observance of Conservation Month.

The focus will be on lowering the impact of travel on the environment by supporting methods of transportation that achieve greater energy efficiency, cleaner emissions or the use of alternative fuels.

More than a dozen transportation-related businesses in the area will demonstrate the advantages of going green with their products.

Zoo volunteer Ken Mitchell worked to bring the companies together and he sought help from the Brevard County automotive sales community.

"I know so many people who are confused about new car technology" he said. "There are hybrids, low-emission vehicles, high-mileage cars, alternative fuels. For someone like me to get good information, I might have to visit a dozen car dealerships. With these transportation options all in one place, consumers can easily compare what's available."

Environmentally responsible autos, including the iconic Smart *ForTwo* and Toyota *Prius* will be displayed and Southeastern Honda and others will also put forth their greenest vehicle offerings during the expo.

Lexus of Melbourne, the event's major sponsor, will display vehicles throughout the month, and if cars by Lexus don't immediately come to mind as eco-friendly, general manager T.R. Page is quick to correct the misperception.

"Lexus has more hybrid models than any other luxury automaker. That surprises most people. The company has a strong philosophy of environmental responsibility that's reflected in these new cars. We are bringing several to the zoo for people to check out," he said.

The American Automobile Association (AAA) also will be on hand for those who are looking to improve the mileage efficiency of existing vehicles.

The company best known for assisting roadway travelers will provide displays and lectures inspired by its *Gas Watchers' Guide*, with tips for conserving fuel, saving money and protecting the environment.



Segway of New Smyrna Beach will showcase its two-wheeled "personal transporter" and is working on a tour program for the zoo.

The battery-powered two-wheeled vehicle, which is designed with "dynamic stabilization" technology, represents a 93 percent reduction in greenhouse gases compared to the average American car.

Spokesperson Grace Burns is enthusiastic.

"The Segway PT can take you places that a car or bicycle can't, including inside many stores, office buildings, businesses and airports. They're ideal for short trips, but can travel up to 24 miles on a single battery charge."

Business participants will donate to the zoo's conservation committee, which has contributed several hundred thousand dollars to wildlife conservation programs since 1984.

"The idea is to focus on different ways to help protect the environment for all living things," says Beth Armstrong, the zoo's field conservation coordinator. "Each day, people ask us about the environment and want to know how they can reduce their impact on the planet. We are glad to host the first expo for businesses who want to provide earth-friendly transportation choices for Brevard residents."

Statistics in support of greener thinking abound.

For every person who bikes to work, there are 150 people who drive to work alone in their car. Although the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that Americans drive 900 million car trips every day, half of those trips are less than five miles.

For Armstrong, that doesn't make sense.

"That's a perfect distance for a walk or a bike ride, for a Segway, a golf cart or motor scooter. And those with longer commutes can always join a car pool or consider public transportation."

Ken Mitchell sees the expo as a perfect complement to the zoo's environmental mission.

"Imagine a day when roadways are not clogged with gas guzzlers, but filled with a variety of alternative transportation," Mitchell said. "If we're lucky, that day may not be very far away."

The Earth Friendly Transportation Expo will take from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Nov. 28, 29 and 30 at the Brevard Zoo.

Joanne Corby is a Melbourne city councilwoman and president of U Expansion Inc., a full-service corporate education company that offers programs, consulting and event planning.

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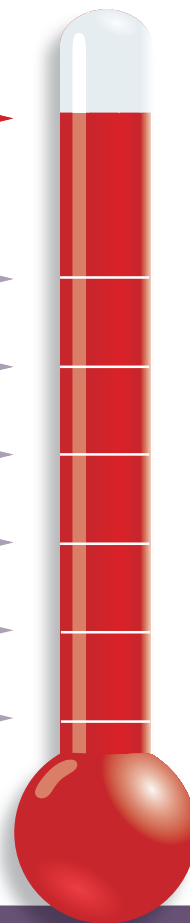
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