

Riding into the future

Electric car arrives on Grosse Ile for test run around island

BY TERRY JACOBY

THE ILE CAMERA

The future could be driving around Grosse Ile this week.

Richard Marks has brought his electric car to the island and it won't be difficult to spot. The



Richard Marks

squarish car might look a little silly, but the owner and engineer behind it says it's even sillier to be paying such high gas prices at the pump.

"There are two big differences and the gas-powered cars," Marks said. "One is this car is run on electricity. The other is that you can smile when you drive past a gas station."

The EcoV Electric is a unique, fun and, most importantly, a practical vehicle. It is pure electric and very economical to own and operate. And it will be cruising the streets of Grosse Ile until Wednesday.

Marks has loaned the car to some

friends and former co-workers on the island. They promise not to keep the vehicle hidden in the garage.

The car is an engineering marvel, created and designed by Marks using mostly off-the-shelf parts and components. It is the featured product of Marks' company, Grosse Pointe Woods-based Environmental Transportation Solutions LLC, which he started after working as an engineer at General Motors 25 years. One of his jobs at GM was to look at "other options."

Marks worked on the GM EV-1 electrical vehicle program and said he was disappointed when GM pulled the plug on the program in the 1990s.

"They weren't ready to accept this so I left," Marks said.

With gas prices hovering around \$3, consumers might just be ready to accept this, especially on Grosse Ile.

"This is a perfect vehicle for Grosse Ile," Marks said. "The car is state approved for 35 mph streets, which works out well on the island.

With just 50 cents worth of electricity, the car can go between 25 to 40 miles."

The "ecology-friendly vehicle" has a battery that takes about eight hours to fully charge and requires just a basic electrical outlet. The battery lasts about three to four years. "The great thing about it is there is only one moving part on the motor and you don't need tune-ups or oil changes or spark plugs," Marks said. "It's basically maintenance free."

The base price of the vehicle is less than \$10,000, but the cost for a vehicle best suited for the island would be around \$11,500.

Marks, who says he can start production in a Detroit Chassis production line as soon as he gets funding, plans to market the vehicle to utilities, planned communities that now encourage the use of golf carts, the government, the military and the post office. And, of course, consumers looking to beat the high costs of gasoline.

For more information, log onto www.ecovelectric.com.



EcoV Electric: The specs

Length: 133 inches
Width: 58 inches
Height: 67.5 inches
Frame: Tubular steel, all-welded
Tires/wheels: 185/65R14 high-way tires
Brakes: 4-wheel hydraulic drums
Suspension: Solid rear axle
Motor: 72 volt separately excited DC motor
Batteries: six 12 volt gel lead acid, maintenance free
Range: 25-40 miles
Price: \$9,995 (base)

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Hitting her stride

■ Grosse Ile dancer is finding success at home and abroad.

Erica Marshall has had a busy year.

The Grosse Ile High School junior finished the 2005-06 dance season with a trip to Europe as part of the Blue Lake Ballet Ensemble, dancing Pas de Deux and Ensemble works in the performances.

The ensemble performed in Denmark, France and Germany during the three week tour and finished with performances in Charlotte and Muskegon after the European circuit.

"The people we met on the tour were so generous," Marshall said. "They made sure we had everything we needed to make each performances a great success and our stay very comfortable."

Erica Marshall is collecting plenty of trophies for her dancing skills.



Marshall was selected for the ensemble last summer when she studied on scholarship at the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp under the direction of Jefferson Baum. Baum also awarded Marshall with another \$800 scholarship for this summer's dance session at Blue Lake.

The trip to Europe was the finale on a banner year for Marshall. During the spring competition season, she won two dance titles in regional competitions along with many special, gold and platinum awards. She also was the overall soloist dancer at the Applause Competition in Southfield.

At the Star Systems Competition in Walled Lake, she was crowned Miss

Super Star 2006 with the highest score for the competition. She also was crowned Miss Star Power 2006 at the Star Power Competition in Walled Lake.

"I am really excited about getting started with the next dance season," Marshall said. "In two weeks I am looking forward to taking class from Dawnell Dryja and Alexey Klopov from the Grand Rapids Ballet."

Marshall studies dance at the Grosse Ile Academy of Dance. She works on her talent five to seven days a week in all forms of dance and studies classical ballet technique with Dawn Greene, owner and director of the Grosse Ile Academy.

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