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ZENN electric car draws a crowd

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SUMMERFIELD — One man's effort to minimize expenses and be more environmentally friendly, yet maintain comfort and convenience, often draws a crowd.

Ted Heggem attracts attention wherever he parks his new automobile, a ZENN, which stands for Zero Emission No Noise. It is also known as a neighborhood electric vehicle, or NEV.

Heggem usually allows extra time when he drives to Wal-Mart or his doctor, dentist or local restaurants, and is accustomed to answering questions from onlookers.

"The first question I always get is, 'Where do you plug it in?' This is usually followed by 'How far can it go on one charge?' and 'How fast does it go?', said Heggem.

He typically ends up giving people a look under the hood, or has them sit behind the wheel. If time allows, some might take a "test" ride.

going green

Heggem said he became aware that most of his commuting was well under 50 miles and began searching for a vehicle to replace a Chevrolet Malibu he used as the family second car. He came across the ZENN while doing a computer search for a vehicle that would provide him comfort and convenience, and at the same time be economical to operate.



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Ted Heggem parks his ZENN at a restaurant in Summerfield. The vehicle is all electric and is recharged by using a standard household outlet.

He now often is spotted cruising along in the green low speed vehicle. Howard Foote, who recently had finished lunch at a local restaurant, was walking to the parking lot when he noticed the small car with the decal on it's front door proclaiming that it is electric.

"There is a future in this because of the way they are gouging us with the gasoline," he said.

Sitting in the driver's side bucket seat, Foote ran his fingers over the steering wheel and air conditioning and radio controls. "This is something," he said, glancing up at the opened sunroof. "Very comfortable."

Later he took a peek under the hood, looking at the electric motor and transmission, before leaving with the statement, "Yes, this is going to be the future."

OTHER FEATURES

The manufacturer's specification sheet states that the vehicle comes with standard features such as adjustable seats, power windows, rear window defroster, interior heating, a digital clock and remote keyless entry. Several add-on options are available such as air conditioning, a sunroof and a radio.

Florida statutes require low-speed vehicles to be registered and insured and drivers must have a valid license. The vehicle may only be operated on streets where the posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour or less, but may cross a road or street at an intersection where the road or street has a posted speed limit of more than 35 miles per hour.

Heggem said that with the growth of planned retirement communities in Marion and surrounding counties, he is aware of future transportation needs for individuals to do shopping and errands in an efficient and economical fashion with zero impact on the environment.
