



# SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

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## All charged up

### Electric car show kicks off National Drive Electric Week

By MITCHELL WHITE, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

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While environmental advocates enjoy the eco-friendly benefits and others brag about the financial perks, one Santa Ynez woman who owns an electric vehicle perhaps got the biggest saving of them all. Her marriage.

"Instead of being under the car every weekend, we'd be going places as a family to see," Jen Van Schmus told the News-Press on Saturday afternoon during an electric car show in Solvang.

Mrs. Van Schmus was displaying her family's two Chevrolet Sparks and said it costs around \$55 per month for electricity for both vehicles.

That, along with saving up to \$250 on gas and receiving rebates from the state and Pacific Gas and Electric Co., has made the decision to shift from gasoline to electric that much easier.

"It's kind of a no-brainer," she said. "We just keep getting money for this car."

The couple is able to charge their vehicles overnight, which she compared to plugging in your cellphone before bed. Her husband is able to make the commute from Santa Ynez to Goleta and she is able to make trips around town.

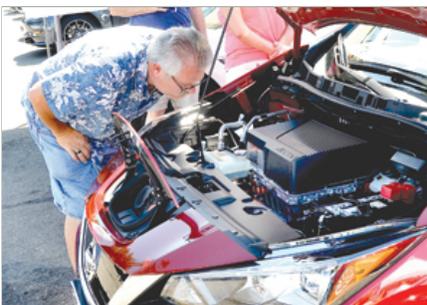
The family still owns a gas-powered truck they use as a towing vehicle, though Mrs. Van Schmus said they are more likely to get a Chevy Bolt rather than buying another gas-powered vehicle in the future.

The cars are low maintenance, she explained, adding that she's owned one of the vehicles for more than two years and opened the hood on Saturday for the first time in a while. Inside was ash, possibly from the Thomas Fire in December or the Whittier Fire last summer.

Mrs. Van Schmus was among a couple dozen electric car owners who had their vehicles on display in the Solvang city parking lot. In total, 27 cars filled the lot as owners were able to share their stories with others.

With more electric car shows scheduled over the next week or so for National Drive Electric Week, the goal is to get local residents to explain the advantages of why they made the switch from gas to electric, said James Reach, of Oxnard, who organized the event.

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Russ Jacobs of Ventura checks out the engine compartment of a Nissan Leaf at the Solvang Electric Car Show on Saturday.

BILL MORSON/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS



Saturday's car show included 27 electric vehicles.

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Members of the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District, Community Environmental Council and Los Padres Chapter Sierra Club were on hand in support of the showcase.

"We really want people to understand that these vehicles are convenient, they can fit into almost anyone's day-to-day life at this point because the driving ranges have gone way up," Cameron Gray, transportation and climate specialist with the CEC, told the News-Press.

Most of the vehicles coming out this year have driving ranges of as much as 200 miles, he said.

The distance and potential savings make it worth it.

"Most of the families in our communities pay a lot for transportation ... and they can lease a hybrid or a pure battery electric vehicle for a very, very affordable price and they can get the rebates from the state when they lease and that can subsidize the cost of the monthly payments for a year or two years," said Mr. Gray.

Jane and George Morash, of Santa Maria, have had their Tesla for about two months. Mrs. Morash uses it for her daily commute and said she is constantly turning heads every time she pulls out of the garage.

"We live in a city where there's not much electric cars yet," she said. "So when I drive I get some attention - which I kind of like a little bit. It's different for now, until Tesla will flood the city."

Advertised at \$35,000, the vehicle actually cost \$66,000 due to the interest rates and other included features.

"It's an expensive car," Mrs. Morash told the News-Press. "It's a luxury car, so that's why I keep it in the garage."

The vehicle didn't come with a paper manual so the couple had to learn to use the computer on the interior, which Mrs. Morash admitted was a little intimidating. Overall, they are both happy and are constantly finding out about new features.

"It's a learning experience," Mr. Morash said. "You meet all sorts of people and learn about some of these benefits you didn't even know about that you can file for and do different things."

An estimated 421,000 electric vehicles are on the road throughout California, and approximately 4,500 public charging stations, officials said.

In Santa Barbara County, approximately 2,200 residents own or lease electric cars with a total of 100 charging stations available.

Derek Ward, of Manhattan Beach, was showing off his 2017 Model S Tesla parked off Alisal Road. He hasn't been to a gas station since February 2017 and his vehicle only has six replaceable parts - the four wheels and two windshield wipers.

The car is completely self-driving and self-parking and had a slick white interior with several customizations added. The baseline for the Model S starts at \$151,000 and Mr. Ward paid \$164,000 before rebates for his ride.

"It's the best car I've ever owned," he said, adding that he always envisioned he would be driving an electric car.

Mr. Ward also operates an Electric Wash Supercharger concierge service, a waterless hand wash and wax. The goal is to save 1 million gallons of water and report back the Environmental Protection Agency that Tesla owners not only save fossil fuels but also water.

He has pitched the idea to Tesla and hopes "accelerate the transition of California's car culture into waterless washing to avoid future drought restrictions," he said.

The electronic car shows will continue this week at the following time, date and locations:

- UCSB Drive Electric Workshop: 10 a.m. Thursday at Bren Hall;
- Santa Maria Electric Car Show: noon to 5 p.m. Sept. 16 at Santa Maria Town Center West, 225 Town Center West;
- Lompoc Electric Car Show: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sept. 16 at Lompoc Chamber of Commerce, 111 South I St.

To find out more about National Drive Electric Week events or to sign up to participate, visit [www.driveelectricweek.org/events](http://www.driveelectricweek.org/events).

email: [mwhite@newspress.com](mailto:mwhite@newspress.com)

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