



Calling All Cars, Calling All Cars

Flexible Fuel Club of America seeks to help drivers use ethanol, improve lives

By Sandy Alexander

On highways and rural roads, in parking lots and tucked into garages, there are seven million vehicles designed to run on fuel made of up to 85 percent ethanol, and many of their owners don't know what those vehicles can do or why it is important.

Burl Haigwood wants to find those cars and, through the new Flexible Fuel Vehicle Club of America, put them to work to help cut air pollution, reduce the importation of oil and boost the U.S. economy.

"I was tired of hearing people say consumers don't care," said Haigwood, an environmentalist, educator and concerned citizen. "When they understand how they can help the environment, the country and themselves, I believe they will respond."



FFV Club Van: Coming to an event near you?

Haigwood, with the support of Clean Fuels Foundation and its Ethanol Across America campaign, launched the Flexible Fuel Vehicle Club of America on July 31 at the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Expo on Capitol Hill.

The goal of the club is to locate existing and new owners of flexible fuel vehicles (FFVs), educate them on why their vehicle is important and motivate them to use higher blends of ethanol.

"We think this is a very distinct objective that is different from other ethanol stakeholder organizations, but that will compliment and support their goals," Haigwood said. "We have already received support and encouragement from the major FFV makers, auto dealers, policy makers, our Congressional board of advisors, and other government/ industry leaders interested in ethanol," Haigwood said.

On the day of the launch, Congressman Lee Terry and fellow legislators introduced a resolution recognizing the creation of the club and the important role consumers play in moving the renewable fuels movement forward.

Flexible Fuel Vehicle Club members will have access to information resources and opportunities to network through the club's Web site, www.flexiblefuelvehicleclub.org.

In the future, he hopes companies that sell FFVs, alternative fuels and other products and services will offer incentives to club members through the group's rewards program.

"It is going to be a unique group because it will be an opportunity to pull together and harness the power of consumers," said Douglas A. Durante, executive director of the Clean Fuels Foundation. "I think we've already reached a tipping point where people care very much about finding alternatives to oil, and they are ready to do something."

After 30 years working to promote alternative transportation, Haigwood still talks about the potential of ethanol with the zeal of an evangelist.

He has been part of the alternative fuels arena since the second oil embargo in 1979, and has worked with several renewable energy organizations, including the Clean Fuels Development Coalition, the Renewable Fuels Association and the Clean Fuels Foundation.

With this new endeavor, Haigwood is planning to take his 2003 factory-produced Dodge Caravan fueled by 85 percent ethanol, or E85, to public events to seek out FFV owners and community leaders. He will be hard to miss with an energy security theme painted all over the van, including flag designs, a big yellow ribbon and messages such as "What you can do for your country and yourself?" and "Support our troops."



We are a consumer activist group trying to empower consumers with fuel and vehicle choice.

The FFV club launch coincides with the 20-year anniversary of the Alternative Motor Fuels Act of 1988. That act created incentives for automakers to produce cars that could, with no additional effort from the owners, run on any combination of gasoline and ethanol up to 85 percent.

Most FFV owners are currently running their vehicles on the gasoline mixed with 10 percent ethanol that is sold in most gas stations, because E85 pumps are hard to find. That situation is made worse by the fact that many FFV owners who could be demanding the fuel don't even realize their car or truck can use it.



In Search Of: You and Your FFV

The new club will start by encouraging people to look for a sticker inside the gas tank door that will indicate a vehicle can use higher blends of ethanol. The FFV Club's Web site will also help people use their VIN number to confirm that E85 is an option.

The club will encourage people who have FFVs to fill them up with E85 whenever they can. A list of stations offering the fuel is also available online

The club will also motivate people to ask for a FFV model when they buy a new car or rent one from Enterprise. Currently, more than 30 makes and models from a variety of manufacturers including Chrysler, GM and Ford, come with the flexible fuel option. Because of federal incentives, consumers will not see an added cost in the sticker price.

Finally, Haigwood hopes club members will become advocates for ethanol and all alternative fuels. He would like to see them help promote the cause by displaying FFV decals, encourage their local gas stations to put in E85 pumps and let their elected officials know it is important to continue nurturing ethanol production and use.

FFV owners hold the key, Haigwood said, because they are the ones that can increase the use of ethanol right now, which will have immediate benefits and lead to long-term changes in how this country solves its energy problems.

E85 is priced comparatively to gasoline when one factors in the lower price at the pump and the lower miles per gallon it offers. But, Haigwood said, when you consider the envi-

ronmental costs of greenhouse gasses, the health care costs of pollution and the personal and financial costs of protecting oil resources in the Persian Gulf, "The true price of gasoline is much greater than what Americans pay at the pump and far beyond what the country can afford."

Plus, he said, ethanol production keeps U.S. farms in business, protects land and food supplies, creates jobs in this country and keeps consumers' fuel dollars in the U.S. economy.

"The energy business has become personal," Haigwood said. "It has an impact on every person every day. The majority of Americans want to do something, want to be involved, but they don't know where to start."

Fortunately, many have the answer right in front of them.

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 increased the national renewable fuel standard from 7.5 billion gallons, established in 2005, to 36 billion gallons annually by 2022.



*You could already be a winner:
The first step in finding out if your
car is an FFV*

According to Merrill Lynch, the 10 percent ethanol in most automotive fuel has already led to a savings of 50 cents per gallon at the pump by adding more supplies and increasing competition in the marketplace. But people who can use higher percentages need to do so in order for the country to meet the 36 billion gallon goal.

"Congress and the president heeded the call about oil imports and gasoline prices," Haigwood said. "Now that they have done their part, it is time for consumers to do theirs."

Increased use of E85 is the only way to encourage increased availability, so consumers can find it more readily, he said. It is also the way to encourage increased production of FFVs.

More drivers using ethanol also creates economic incentives for ethanol producers to work on new technology that can lead to advanced biofuels and increase the use of cellulose in place of corn.

"We need to change from a war of propaganda to a movement of empowered consumers," Haigwood said. "Citizens have been handed the baton of opportunity. They need to run with it or efforts to roll back the hard work that has been done to reduce our dependence on oil will succeed."