

TEMECULA: Motoring enthusiasts club growing

Monthly meeting features variety of vehicles

By JENNIFER KABBANY - For The Californian | Saturday, January 3, 2009 5:44 PM PST ∞



Temecula Valley Motoring Enthusiasts members Cy Rathbun, front left, Scott Shaw, back left, Justin Ballou, front right, and Ray Cargould, back right, helped form the car club about three years ago. They say members are required only to have a love of cars, whether they have a 1967 Austin Cooper as shown here or a fixer-upper. (Photo by Andrew Foulk - for The Californian)



Members of the Temecula Valley Motoring Enthusiasts club gather Saturday morning for their monthly meeting at the Bel Villaggio center. The club meets once a month and welcomes all who have a passion for cars, no matter what they drive. (Photo by Andrew Foulk - for The Californian)

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TEMECULA ---- Amid a cluster of flashy and run-of-the-mill vehicles, a group of car lovers met Saturday morning and chatted about rebuilt engines, horse power and turbochargers.

That scene is repeated on the first Saturday of every month, courtesy of the 3-year-old Temecula Valley Motoring Enthusiasts club, which adds more and more members each year, said its founders.

They attribute the growing popularity to the group's laid-back and open-minded attitude.

"We say anything that burns oil is welcome," said Wildomar resident Cy Rathbun, one of the founders. "The draw is we are not snobs. If they like their car, we like them."

Whereas some car clubs can be exclusive, only letting you in if, for example, you drive a Corvette or a hot rod, the motoring enthusiasts club has a "come one, come all" philosophy, he said.

Whether you drive a Ford Tempo or a Lamborghini, the only criteria for joining the club is a love of things that go vroom, he said.

Apparently that philosophy is a draw.

When the club was formed, there were only about 10 core members. Today, there are about 25, and the monthly meetings can draw as many as 40 people.

"It's been expanding," said De Luz resident Ray Cargould, another founder. "When a new car comes in, everyone runs to see what it is."

From flashy cars such as Ferraris and Vipers, to average cars and trucks, to old-fashioned cars and fixer-uppers, the meetings draw a wide range of vehicles.

At the December meeting, dozens of people showed up, and everything from a 1920 Oldsmobile to a 2008 Lamborghini was on display. On Saturday, wet weather kept many of the more exotic cars at home.

"I keep my car parked in a garage on carpet," said Temecula resident Jerry Cablayan, pointing out that the roads were wet and muddy Saturday due to recent rains.

Cablayan owns a Noble, a specialty vehicle of which he said there are only about 220 in the country. The steel-blue-gray car has a 400 horsepower, V6 twin-turbo engine.

"It'll go as fast as you want it to go," he said, adding that he's driven as fast as 135 mph in it.

Winchester resident Justin Ballou, another of the club's founders, also left his prized Audi at home Saturday.

"It's too wet," he said. "I just cleaned it, lifted the car and washed all the wheel wells."

His car has a rebuilt engine that boasts 800 horsepower, he said.

Ballou is a computer specialist, but fixes Audis on the side. He says the club is a great way to kill a Saturday morning.

"It's a fun group of guys to hang out with and share a love of cars," he said.

During the group's first couple of years, they were informally known as "The Car Guys" club, but as its popularity grew the core members wanted to give the club a title that would spell out its welcoming attitude and main focus, Rathbun said.

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Six months ago, the moniker "Temecula Valley Motoring Enthusiasts" was voted in, he said.

"We didn't want to lose any kind of car," Rathbun said of the thought process that went into naming the club. "We are pretty open-minded people."

The meetings take place from 8 to 10 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month in the parking lot in front of the Cusi eatery at 41493 Margarita Road in the Bel Villaggio Shops in Temecula.

During the gathering, people walk around and talk casually about cars and other related topics. Some people pop their hoods. Others ask fellow drivers questions.

Also during the meeting there is an informal exchange of magazines, mostly magazines that focus on cars, but a few that delve into audio and video subjects, computers or even lifestyle magazines such as the Robb Report.

Rathbun said the exchange gives people an opportunity to recycle their old magazines and read something new.

The club is working to launch a Web site later this month that will include vignettes and pictures about the members and their cars, and information about local mechanics the club's members recommend.

The club's founders said they enjoy watching their ranks grow and hope more people consider stopping by.

"We're easy," said Scott Shaw of Temecula, another club founder. "It's a no-headaches group. It's a chance to meet up with like-minded people and catch up."

For information, call Rathbun at (951) 675-3999.