

Electric Cars Still Running Strong at Kickapoo and Cashton High Schools

Back in the 1970s, when fuel prices took a huge jump after OPEC's oil embargo, the interest in alternative transportation began to really take hold. Iowa has been the heart of alternative vehicle interest since the 1970s, and because of the annual alternative vehicle competitions held there, the interest has spread.

Locally, Kickapoo and Cashton High Schools have programs for students interested in the design, construction, and implementation of alternative vehicles. Not only is the program fun and interesting, but the students gain valuable skills in engineering, physics, math, science, ecology, and economics. The skills these students are learning are already in high demand in business and industry and will look great on a future resumé.

Both the Kickapoo and Cashton High Schools' teams competed in Wisconsin Electrathon's two competitions. As you are reading this, the big races are probably over. This is the fourth year Wisconsin has had this competition. The first race was the Road America competition in Elkhart Lake April 27 and 28. The second was the Fox Valley Tech Spring Classic in Appleton May 2 and 3. To check results



of the competition and see how our local teams fared, log onto www.wielectrathon.org and look for the "results" link. In 2007 Kickapoo finished third in the overall competition while Cashton brought home a 12th overall finish.

The Kickapoo High School team, aka KART (Kickapoo Alternative-Energy Racing Team), is mentored by teacher Francesco Accomando. The team consists of two juniors, Joe O'Donnell and Brittany Halverson, research and development/designers; and one senior, Ben Baumgardner, electrician/engineer.

The Cashton High School program is lead by teacher Mike Schmitz. His students are Ben Schmitz, Esden Schreier, and Andrew Dahl. Mike explained that the Wisconsin Electrathon Program involves high schools and colleges in Wisconsin and other states in researching, designing, building, and competing in Electrathon vehicles. These are small, one-person electric vehicles with limited battery capacity. The competitions that Cashton and Kickapoo participate in require two 12-volt batteries in the vehicle.

The goal of the Wisconsin Electrathon is to bring attention to the environmental problems of conventional cars and demonstrate the viability of electric vehicles. The program provides a means of teaching young people how to evaluate alternatives and make sustainable lifestyle choices, and uses a prob

