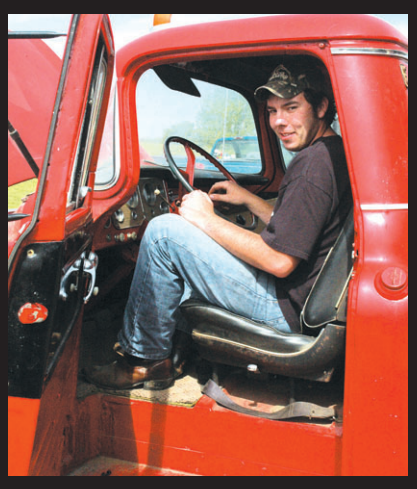
May 26, 2010

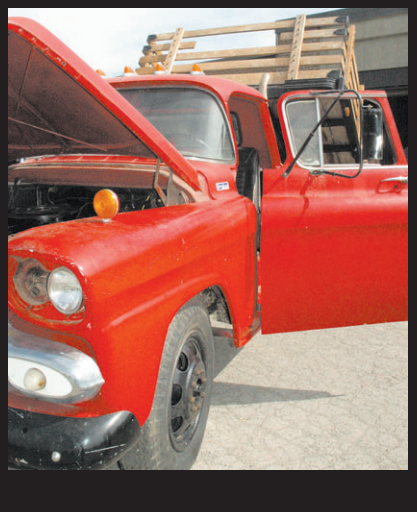




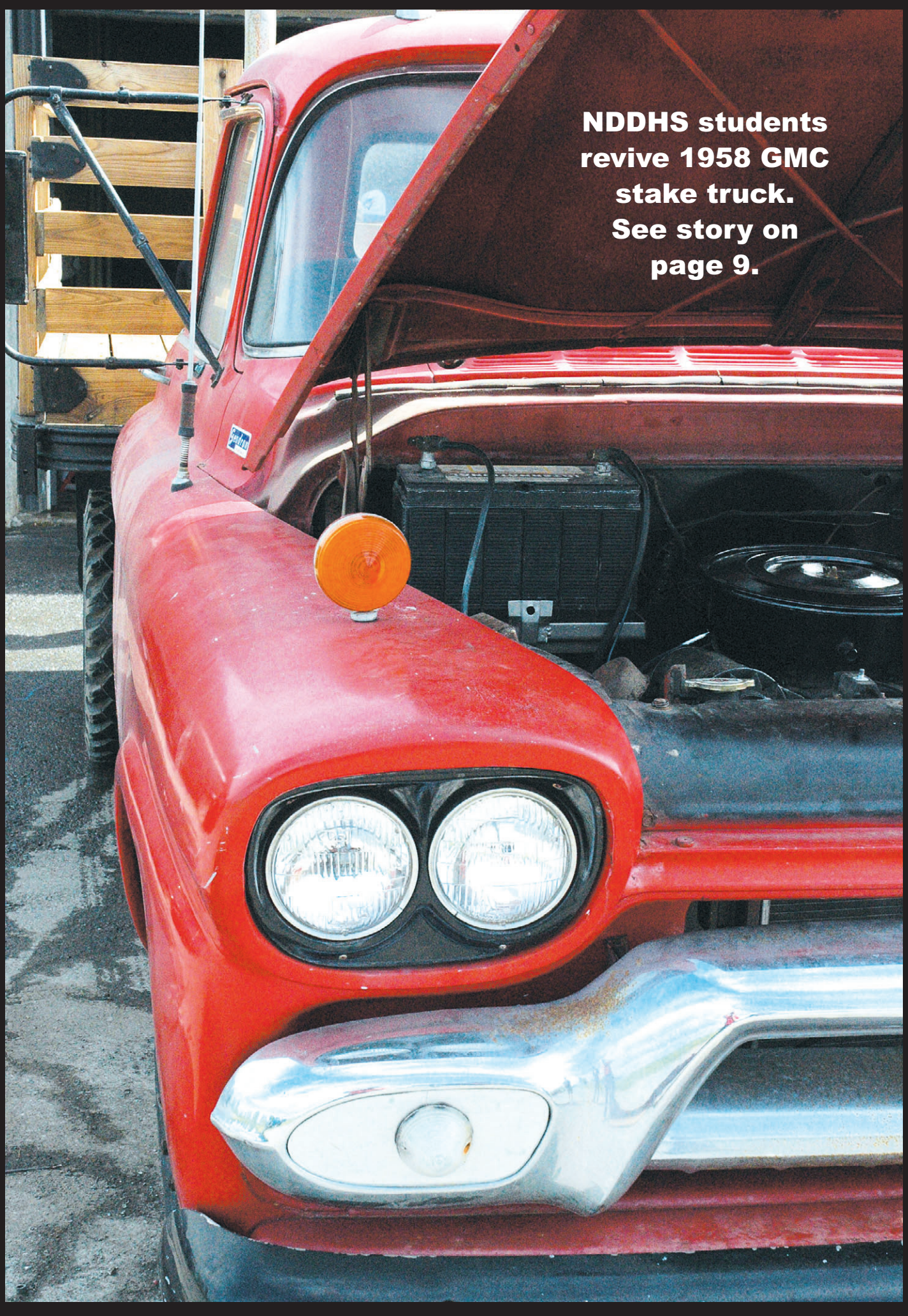








Spring CAR CARE



NDDHS students revive 1958 GMC stake truck. See story on page 9.

A special section of the
Winchester Press

Sweet 16: Too young to drive?

by Amanda Smith-Millar
Press staff

It's a fact – drivers aged 16 to 20 are involved in the highest number of accidents per age group.

But despite that, the Government of Ontario says it won't raise the minimum driving age from 16.

"The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) realizes many teenagers regard a driver's licence as an important step towards independence and adulthood," reads the government website. "Some would even like to see the driving age lowered to 15."

However, the ministry says that the status quo is the way to go.

Introduced in 1994, the Graduated Licensing System requires new drivers to complete a written test first, which will earn them a G1 licence. These novice drivers can only get behind the wheel if they have someone with four year's driving experience in the car with them, supervising their actions and helping them along. G1 drivers can have absolutely no alcohol in their bloodstream. They're also banned from 400-series highways, as well as driving between midnight and 5 am.

The G1 stage lasts at least a year – or eight months for novices who have taken an approved Beginner Driver Education course. (Many teenagers also take "driver's ed" because it can decrease their insurance rates later on.)

Novices can get a G2 licence, which allows them to drive on their own, after taking a practical exam known as a "road test." They can drive on 400-series highways, but must have a blood alcohol content of zero. Later, they can take their "G" road test to become fully certified.

"The Ontario government reviewed all provincial laws that set a minimum age," reads the site. "Our province wanted to make sure it didn't discriminate under the Ontario Human Rights code and the Canadian Charter of Rights. After this review, the government decided to maintain 16 as the legal minimum age for many 'adult' activities such as leaving school, working full-time and driving."

It remains unclear if raising the minimum driving age would cut down on crashes, anyway. Research from the Ottawa-based Traffic Injury Research Foundation suggests that parents need to be more involved with their kids, and not expect driver's education lessons to give them all the practice they need.

Sylvie Bazinet – who owns Signature Driving School branches in the local area – couldn't agree more.

"The whole point of the Graduated Licensing System, which was activated years ago, was to force the kids to practice," Bazinet said. "Back in our day, we could get our licence on our 16th birthday."

She explained that the 10 hours of driving with Signature should be supplemented with lots of practice with Mom or Dad in the passenger's seat.

"Parents are not taking that seriously," she said.

Bazinet said she gives her students homework at the end of each lesson – such as practising hand-over-hand turns, parking, or three-point turns – but about 90 per cent of teens don't do it.

However, some parents force their kids to practise, she said, and those teens become competent drivers.

"There are some parents out there whose kids practise every day," Bazinet acknowledged. "Once that kid gets their G2, they're on their own. I understand it's scary, I do [...] But the more they practise, the better."

Rather than having the minimum age increased from 16, Bazinet said she'd like to see the practical test be more challenging, especially in Winchester.

Specifically, she'd like to see students forced to show good city driving skills before they get their G2. Many new country drivers are not prepared for the high volume of traffic, complicated lane changes, traffic lights, and roundabouts in Ottawa, she said.

"I don't think Winchester is difficult enough," she said.

In rural areas, access to a vehicle can be a source of conflict in a family. Until kids get their licences, it means moms or dads — or older siblings — have to re-arrange their days around soccer practice or shifts at Tim Hortons.

And then, there's the issue of getting home, too. It can leave many parents feeling like a taxi service.

NDDHS student Stacey Williams is licensed to drive. It means she can go home during a spare at school, and drive instead of taking the bus.



NDDHS student Stacey Williams (pictured here with pal Tabitha Thompson in the passenger's seat) said it's okay to drive when you're 16 — if you're ready. "There are a lot of responsible 16-year-olds," she argued. Press Photo — Smith-Millar

Williams said she thinks it's important for teenagers to be able to drive by themselves, especially in the country.

"Then you don't have to rely on your parents to drive you everywhere," she said. "There are a lot of responsible 16-year-olds."

Bazinet agreed that teens should be learning to drive sooner, not later, especially with graduation on the horizon.

"A lot of students will buy a used car and drive from Winchester to Carleton University every day, because they can't afford to live there," she said.

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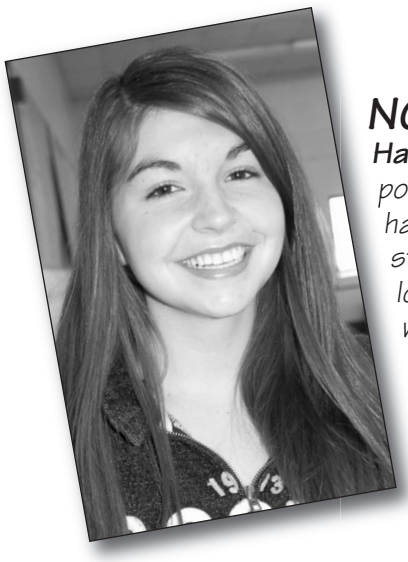
Word on the Street

Rules surrounding minimum age limits for young drivers remain controversial. In Ontario, 16-year-olds can drive with supervision after taking a written test to obtain their G1 licence. A practical test can land them their G2 licence within a year – or eight months for those who take "driver's ed."

Many adults think 16 is too young. So we asked some teenagers this question:

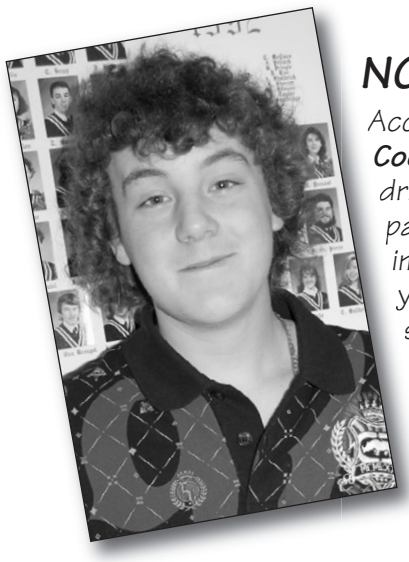
Should the minimum driving age be increased from 16?

Why or why not?



NO:

Hannah Greenough *pointed out that 16 has been the age to start driving for a long time. "Plus, I want to be able to drive when I'm 16," she added.*



NO:

According to ***Jordan Cooper,*** *if you can drive well without parental supervision immediately after you turn 16, you should be allowed to do so. "It shouldn't take as long to get your G2," he said.*



YES:

Brady Barbeau *said 18 is a better age to start driving — after all, it's the year you legally become an adult. He also said 16-year-olds might be more prone to accidents. "They're less experienced," he said.*



NO:

Kaas Spruit *said teenagers usually need access to a car to get to a job in the country, unless their workplace is within walking distance. "I don't think [the minimum age] should be raised because parents would have to drive you everywhere," he said.*



MAYBE:

Emily Cameron *said there are good and bad drivers of all ages. "People can still be immature when they're 18," she said. "It doesn't matter what age you are, really."*



MAYBE:

Erin Elliott *said it's hard to pick an age, because every driver is different. A 14-year-old might be a more responsible driver than a reckless teenager two years older. "It all depends on their maturity," she said.*



NO:

Courtney McMillan *said teenagers should learn to drive when they're 16 so that, if necessary, they're ready to commute to college or university after graduation. "A lot of kids go to college at 17 and 18," she said.*



YES:

Rachel Taylor *said the evidence is in the statistics – teenagers get into more crashes. "That's why insurance is so high, especially for boys," she argued. Taylor wondered if it's because young people feel invincible: "Teenagers don't usually think that they're going to get into accidents, because you just don't think it'll happen to you."*

Press Photos — Smith-Millar

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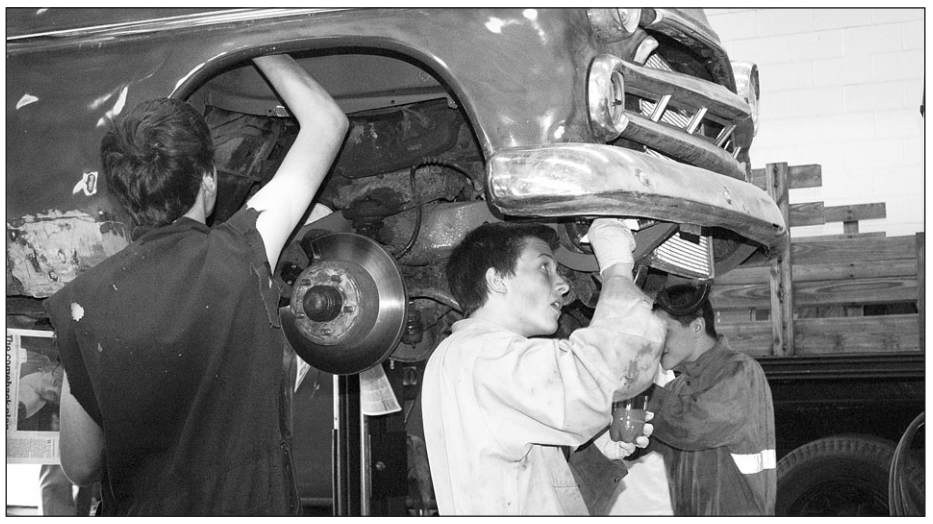

Nearing completion

North Dundas District High School students Mason Steele (left), Rob Kerr, and Mitchell Kirkwood applied rust proof paint on the underside of the 1954 Dodge Mayfair last week (Wed., May 19) during Andrew Whitton's transportation class. The restoration and customizing project was started last year and will be painted before the end of this semester. "What is special about this project is the fact every part we put into it was used," said Whitton. Students refitted the old Dodge with many updates including a 1996 Dodge Ram, 5.2L multi-port, fuel injected V8, and an overdrive transmission.

Press Photo — Van Bridger

Spring car care should involve more than just a quick shampoo

Canada's long, harsh winters not only add stress to our lives, but also to the systems that keep our vehicles safe and reliable, and that means a spring makeover should include more than just cosmetics.

While your immediate focus will likely be on restoring your car, van, SUV or truck's exterior and interior to pristine condition, make sure you also give its mechanical systems a careful once-over to ensure they're ready to deal with the hot summer weather ahead, particularly if its an older or high-mileage vehicle.

By following some basic procedures you can spot potential problem areas yourself and then have them dealt with if necessary by a pro.

You should have been keeping your vehicle washed regularly to help keep rust at bay, but if you haven't you need to do so before checking it over as it will be easier to spot damage or problems.

A do-it-yourself spring cleaning process also allows you to flush out salt and sand deposits from areas that a quick run through the car wash often misses. Don't forget the radiator, which may have become partially clogged with debris. A fine spray and a fairly soft brush with long bristles can help here, but don't be too aggressive and damage the thin fins. Visually check it for corrosion or leaks.

With the engine stopped and cool you can clean the compartment with an engine specific spray cleaner, followed by a rinse (avoiding high pressure spray on electrical parts). This will not only make this area look good but often reveal problems.

Hoses should feel firm, not mushy, be free of obvious cracks and show no evidence of leaking at connections. Belts shouldn't be cracked, frayed, brittle or glazed looking and should be firmly, but not too tightly tensioned.

Make sure the engine is completely cool before you check coolant levels. This can usually be done by looking at the reservoir which is marked with maximum and minimum levels. Never remove the radiator cap of a hot engine. If your coolant level is low you can add a 50/50 mixture of anti-freeze and water, but make sure you check it again in a few days and if it is down, or you notice fluid under the vehicle, you probably have a leak that will require attention. Car Care Canada recommends flushing your cooling system and refilling with fresh coolant every two years as the beneficial chemicals in the coolant break down with age.

A look around underneath your vehicle - don't actually get under there unless you have the right equipment and knowledge - might reveal a muffler or a hidden part of the body that has been damaged by road debris. Also look for fluid leaks, particularly from the brakes, and under the engine and transmission.

Now, after checking tire pressures, take it for a short test drive. We tend to compensate for developing problems, so adopt an analytical approach when you do this. The brake pedal should feel firm and not move more than a centimetre or two. If travel is excessive, if you have to pump the pedal, or if the car pulls to one side, have the vehicle inspected immediately.

Simply driving in a straight line while holding the wheel lightly can alert you to alignment problems. There shouldn't be any side-to-side wander, or pull under braking. If steering response isn't direct and linear and if body roll and reaction to bumps doesn't feel controlled, or if you hear any clunks or clonks, components may be worn or have been damaged by winter road conditions.

There's no sense in putting more dry-road kilometers on those winter tires that kept you safe than is necessary, as this can rapidly reduce their effectiveness. And you should never use winter tires all-year round as they won't provide the same level of traction as summer tires, particularly if they are part worn. Hot weather highway travel can cause their coarser treads and soft compounds to overheat, possibly leading to failure.

If you're re-using last year's summer tires, have the person installing them check them carefully for tread wear, damage and balance. If you've kept your summer tires mounted on your "good" alloy rims and are installing them yourself ensure they are inflated to the correct pressure and lug nuts tightened to the correct torque.

Check winter tires for damage before storing them, preferably in plastic bags and out of any direct sunshine, so they won't present you with any surprises next fall.

If you didn't replace your windshield wipers last fall, a hard winter will certainly have seriously reduced their effectiveness. If you replaced wipers with the winter type you'll want to switch back to the summer variety.

If you're not sure about any of the things you may have discovered on your spring inspection have them checked out by a properly trained service technician.

It's a good time to go and see him or her anyway, for that spring oil change and tune-up, or just for the peace of mind of having a pro check to make sure you didn't miss anything that will cause problems during the (hopefully) long hot summer. And speaking of that, an annual inspection of your air conditioning system is also recommended, certainly for older vehicles.

To learn more, visit the Be Car Care Aware website at www.carcarecanada.ca.

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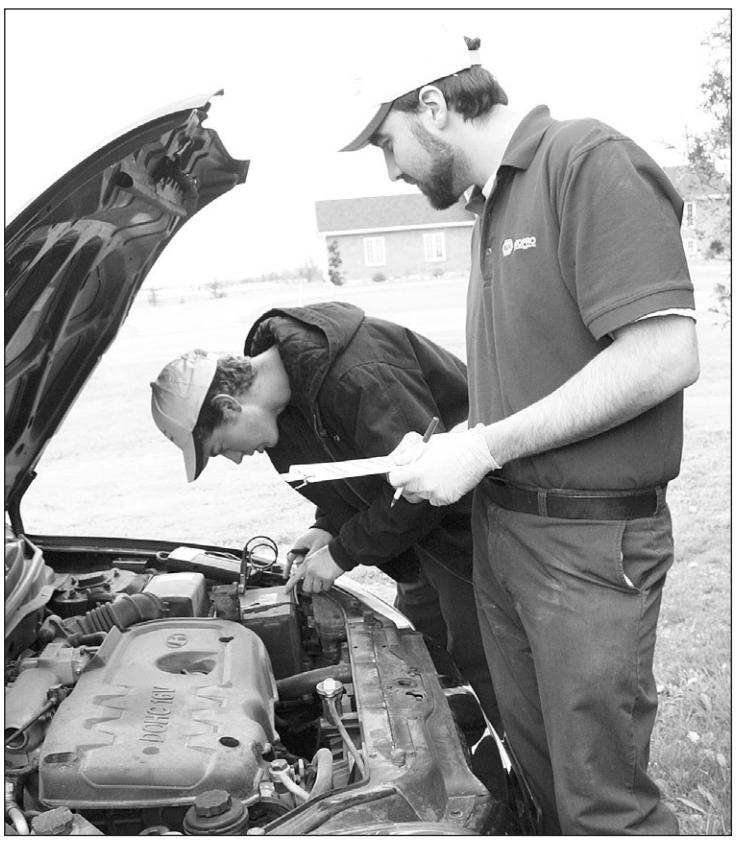

Safety first

Winchester AutoPro employees Justin Garvey (left) and Paul Kozmin at Winchester Autopro's free vehicle inspection day on Sat., May 15. Press Photo — Uhrig

Drivers should be car care aware

Local Autopro offers free vehicle inspections

WINCHESTER — Many drivers pride themselves on having good skills behind the wheel — the kind that keeps them out of accidents and unsafe situations.

However, those good drivers sometimes don't put quite as much thought into the care of their vehicles.

Regular checkups can not only lengthen the life of your vehicle, they could save you some money too.

With that in mind, Phil Van Noppen and his staff at Winchester Autopro held a vehicle inspection day on Sat., May 15. The event was sponsored by Car Care Canada, and included free 41-point inspections for anyone who brought their car or truck in.

"It's all geared [toward] vehicle maintenance," said Van Noppen.

Van Noppen continued by saying that regular checkups will allow mechanics to find troubling signs under the hood before problems escalate. As well, he said that sometimes, the solution is simple.

"Tire inflation could increase your fuel mileage," said Van Noppen.

Within the inspection, Autopro mechanics looked at eight main areas, with subsections inside. The target areas included general items, such as wiper blades and mirrors, as well as lubricant and fluids, the vehicle's battery, and more.

Van Noppen stressed the fact that drivers should follow the service schedule within their owner's manuals. By doing this, money can be better budgeted toward the necessary repairs, as opposed to having to pay a lot of money for sudden, unexpected maintenance, such as a new transmission, said Van Noppen.

"It's more than just an oil change," said Van Noppen, adding the need to have the engine's belts checked regularly, as well as the transmission's fluid. "Drivers need to be diligent."

Fuel-efficient driving

What is it and what's in it for you?

By changing your driving habits, even a little, you could save hundreds of dollars a year in fuel and help reduce your carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions. Fuel-efficient driving is a safe way of driving that produces the lowest fuel consumption from every vehicle, regardless of vehicle size and age.

Some tips to get you started:

• **Accelerate gently:** Every time you put your foot on the gas pedal, you feed fuel to your engine – the harder you apply the gas, the more fuel your engine uses and the more emissions your car produces.

• **Maintain a steady speed:** To avoid unnecessary acceleration altogether, drive at a steady speed. Not only will you consume less fuel, but you will also help enhance traffic flow, minimize exhaust emissions, and enjoy safer driving conditions.

• **Anticipate traffic:** Avoid the unnecessary fuel consumption – and safety risk – associated with hard braking and rapid acceleration by reading the road ahead and anticipating situations before they arise. This basic defensive driving technique negates the need for sudden stops and saves fuel.

• **Coast to decelerate:** As a driver, you often need to apply your brakes to bring your vehicle to a complete stop. By removing your foot from the accelerator as early as possible, you can decrease your speed, conserve fuel and save money all at the same time.

• **Avoid high speeds:** It's tempting to speed on the highway but by reducing your speed from 120 km/hour to 100 km/hour you can lower your fuel consumption by about 20 per cent.

For the average driver, fuel-efficient driving can result in a 25 per cent reduction in fuel costs or roughly $500 a year – $2,500 over five years. Not only does fuel-efficient driving save fuel, but it also reduces maintenance costs. During a recent challenge, drivers reduced brake usage by over 33 per cent.

You can find out more about driving and fuel efficiency at www.vehicles.nrcan.gc.ca.

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Get your car ready for road trips

• **Proper tire inflation.** Remove your snow tires and ensure your summer tires are properly inflated. For every 28 kilopascals (four pounds per square inch) of under-inflation, fuel use increases by about two per cent. Properly inflated tires will last longer, make your vehicle safer to drive and save fuel.

• **Remove the roof rack.** Although you might be tempted to stack your bicycles or lifejackets on a roof rack, a loaded or empty roof rack increases fuel consumption through aerodynamic drag. Try a removable roof rack instead.

• **Check fluid levels.** Check engine oil, engine coolant, transmission fluid and power steering fluid at least once a month or as indicated in the owner's manual, and change fluids according to the manufacturer's recommendations in your owner's manual. Also check around and under the car for fluid leaks.

• **Check for wheel alignment and brake drag that can increase fuel consumption.** Check for uneven tire wear. Have your vehicle serviced regularly, and don't rest your foot on the brake pedal when you are driving.

• **Remove unnecessary weight.** If you add weight to your vehicle for extra traction in the winter months, remember to remove it when the snow melts. Unnecessary weight results in wasted fuel and causes unnecessary emissions.

• **Use your air conditioning sparingly.** Even as you're heading out of town, remember that air conditioning can increase fuel consumption by 20 per cent in city driving because of the extra load on the engine. Open a window or use your vent. If you must use the air conditioning, set it to a level that allows the system to shut off once the vehicle is cooled.

• **Reduce unnecessary idling.** Even though it might be fun to stop by the side of the road to admire a landmark, idling for more than 60 seconds burns more fuel than it takes to restart the engine. Turn off the engine, roll down the windows and enjoy the fresh air.

Source: Natural Resources Canada, www.vehicles.nrcan.gc.ca.

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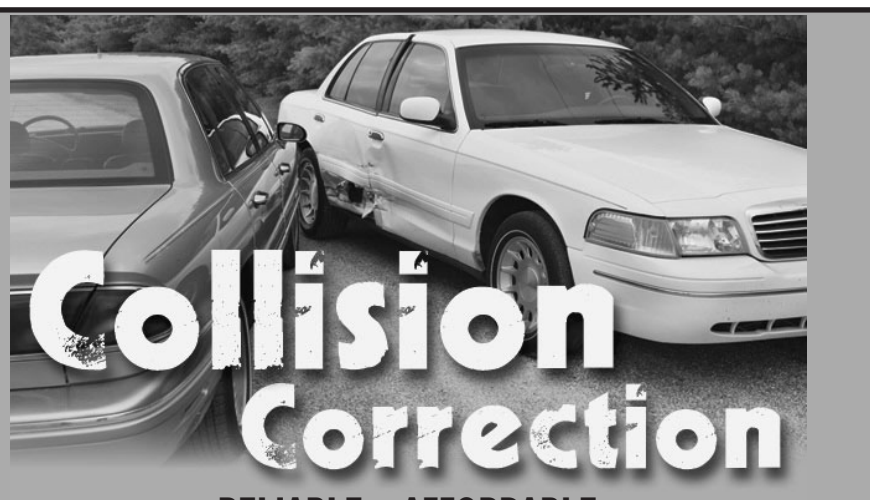

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Van-tastic!

Mini van transformed into a tire-smoking hot rod

When you first look inside the 2005 Dodge Caravan parked outside of the automotive shop at North Dundas District High School, you expect to see seating for eight and plenty of room for your groceries.

What you do see is a 1984 Dodge truck 318 cubic inch V8 engine, an automatic transmission, a Ford Explorer transfer case, two drive shafts, dual exhaust running through the floor, engine coolant hoses, and a maze of electrical wiring and cables — and no room for your shopping.

When the back hatch and side doors are closed the typical soccer mom van looks normal, except for the exhaust pipes protruding out under both sliding doors and wide tires on the rear wheels. But there isn't much else that can be considered as stock.

Andrew Whitton's Grade 11 and 12 Transportation Technology classes have put about four months of work into the project but it has been ongoing for three semesters.

The van was a donation from Chrysler Canada in 2005 and since then has slowly been transformed into a radical hot rod that won't be highway driven.

Students did all of the fabrication themselves with used parts, many of which were donated. The V8 engine replaced the standard V6 and was placed in the cargo area of the van. The automatic transmission was hooked up to a Ford transfer case, which was then connected to a Dodge truck differential, the stock model was a front-wheel drive. The engine is cooled by the original radiator, which is still located under the hood.

Whitton explained that in order to actually drive this unusual beast one must have special one-on-one training to understand its operation and especially the forward/reverse transmission configuration.









Though the 2005 Dodge van looks normal on the outside, the cargo area holds a 318 cubic inch Dodge V8 engine, automatic transmission, and a Ford transfer case, all of which face the rear hatch.
Press Photos — Van Bridger

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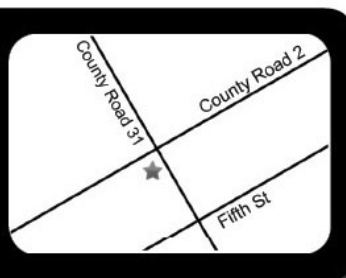

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1958 GMC stake truck is reborn and

READY TO ROLL

It's alive! It's alive! After sitting idle in a shed at Inkerman Station for 30 years and not running for 15 years a 1958 250 GMC, three-quarter ton stake truck has been reborn and is almost ready to start hauling again.

North Dundas District High School Grade 12 student Jonathan Thompson and his classmates have been working on the restoration since March break and have the GMC nearing road worthiness.

Thompson, 17, explained that his father, Harry, acquired the classic hauler at an auction sale in Iroquois about 30 years ago. So he decided this winter it should be restored and made useful once again.

"We need to do a little more work on the fuel system, replace a brake line, put in a head light and finish the cooling system," Jonathan told the *Press* last week (Wed., May 19).

He had originally hoped to have it ready for the school's prom (Fri., May 28), but realized that target was unattainable.

"It isn't going to be ready for next week. But it is close. I eventually want to paint it [red of course] and put it in shows and use it for fun — a Sunday driver," he said.

Thompson's transportation technology teacher, Andrew Whitton, explained that this GMC had some interesting features, including: a 336 Chevy V8, a dump bed, complete with a wooden floor and side racks (manufactured in Brantford), dual rear wheels, power brakes, chrome trim, a woodgrain dash and a four speed (one low, three high) standard transmission.



Thompson said that his classmates, Mike Rochon, Mike Blais, Jamie Dalton, and the Tilley twins, Ashley and Amanda, assisted him in the rejuvenation project.

"Mr. Whitton also stayed after school and helped me," he said.

Thompson and his pit crew did a complete brake job, replaced the spark plugs, ignition wires, condenser and points, repaired wiring and lights, cleaned the gas tank and updated the fuel system by installing a two-barrel Holly carburetor (scavenged from a Dodge), fuel pump and new fuel lines. They also completed a pre-safety check and solved a 20-year-old overheating issue (plugged radiator and thermostat) by installing a reclaimed rad from a Jeep Grand Cherokee.

The crew also sanded, sealed, and water proofed the wooden bed and racks.

A few more tweaks and the old jimmy will be rumbling around North Dundas.



Jonathan Thompson and of his fellow North Dunda District High School transportation technology students combined their talents in the restoration this 1958 250 GMC dum truck. Teacher Andrew Whitton provided the expertise and guidance Press Photos — Van Bridger





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Highway 43 Car Club to host Father's Day show

If you happen to see a lot of older vehicles and motorcycles in Kemptville on Sun., June 20, it's because they are heading to Riverside Park to take part in the Father's Day Show and Shine car show from 9 am to 3 pm.

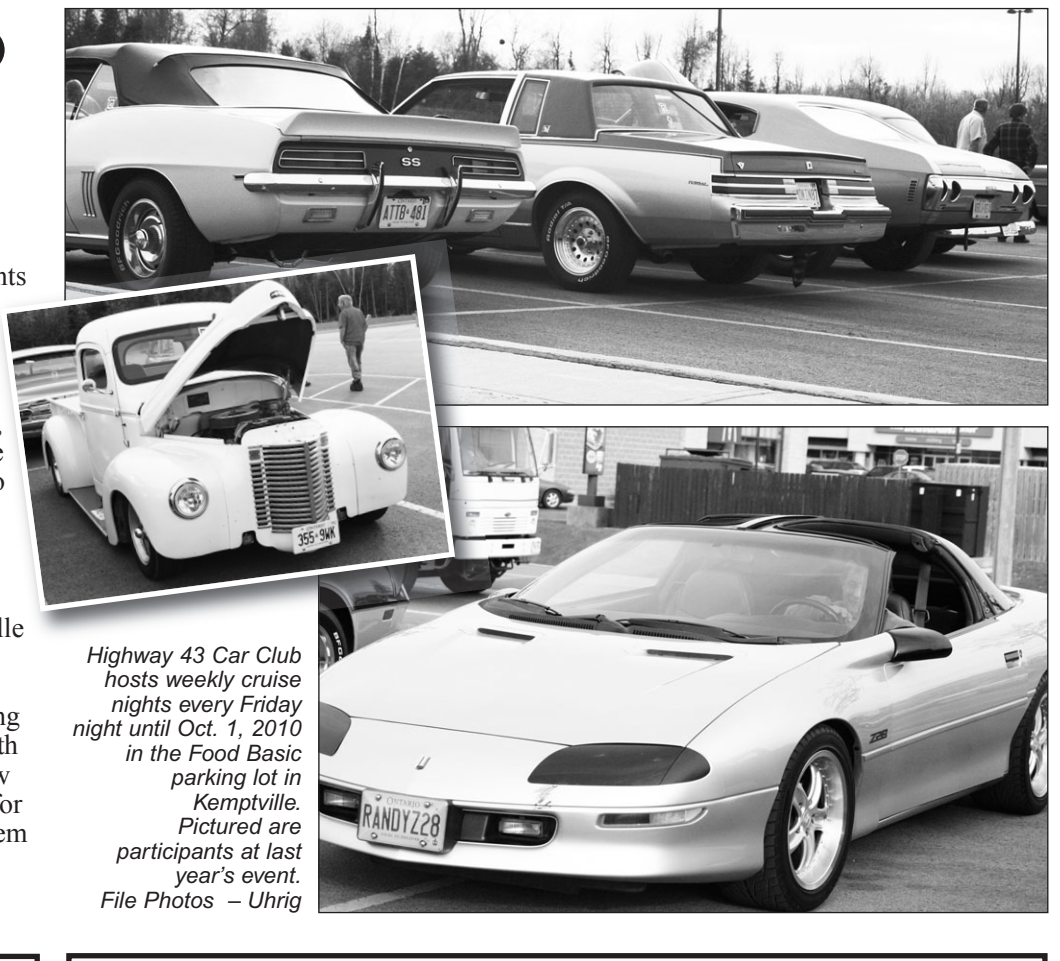
This show is being hosted by the Highway 43 Car Club, in association with the Kemptville Youth Centre, and will feature cars, trucks, and motorcycles of all makes and models. The show's work group is hoping to draw automotive enthusiasts from all over eastern Ontario and as far away as the northern United States.

As part of the show, there will be something for everyone as the planned events will include the Show and Shine car show, automotive vendors, large vehicle displays, a family-oriented craft sale, petting zoo, tethered hot air balloon rides, a dunk tank, great food, refreshments, and many other fun activities that the whole family can take part in.

Show and Shine fundraiser at Riverside Park in Kemptville

As one of the main events of the show, the Highway 43 Car Club will be hosting a controlled "burn out" competition, which Rod Rafter, club president, said he is confident will be the highlight of the day. To top off the day, there will be a parade through town organized for any of the show cars that wish to participate. The parade will travel from Riverside Park past the curling rink, through Kemptville along Prescott Street, turn up Rideau Street, and finish at County Road 43.

Proceeds from this event will be going toward the Kemptville Youth Centre with funds being used to relocate to their new facility, and to continue with activities for the youth of North Grenville to keep them active in a positive and constructive manner within our community.



Highway 43 Car Club hosts weekly cruise nights every Friday night until Oct. 1, 2010 in the Food Basic parking lot in Kemptville. Pictured are participants at last year's event. File Photos – Uhrig

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