



Julie Sharpe
Columbia

Moving Forward

Forget following trends—Julie Sharpe would rather set them

While driving down the streets of Columbia, S.C., Julie

Sharpe heard a yell from outside her car window. “You’re my hero,” screamed a young man.

He, like so many others, was responding to seeing her all-electric car, the Xebra from ZAP (Zero Air Pollution). Not to be confused with a hybrid-electric vehicle that is more common, this three-wheeler is a non-stop attention-getter attracting a paparazzi-like spectacle. “Whenever we park, five or ten people end up gathering around the car and asking questions,” she says. That gives her the opportunity to spread the word about electric cars as a viable way to end our country’s dependence on foreign oil.

Sharpe and her husband, Steven Isom, got their first all-electric car in December 2006, and just recently picked up an all-electric truck. “We have always had an interest in environmental issues and are early adopters of alternative fuel,” she says. “We purchased the first hybrid car in the state when we ordered our 2000 Honda Insight. Even the local Honda dealer was not up on the hybrid at the time.”

The ZAP car was more of a fluke. While surfing the Internet, Sharpe’s husband came upon an eBay auction for an electric car and was intrigued. The couple had a brief discussion and decided to put in a bid. They got it.

“While Steven was waiting for the results of the bid, he did more research on the ZAP car,” says Sharpe. “The more we

learned about them, the more interested we were in the growing movement among ordinary citizens to embrace

alternative fuels.”

The car costs about a penny-per-mile to operate, and can reach speeds of about 40 mph. For now it’s a bit limited on range and speed but these make a good choice for short distance jaunts. Though it can’t be used on the Interstate, Sharpe has no problem getting around Columbia, and points out that the technology is improving every day.

“Someday soon affordable electric cars will travel at speeds over 100 mph and over 100 miles between charges,” notes Sharpe. Julie and Steven are spreading the word. In addition to talking to friends, neighbors and curious strangers about the car, they have met with government officials to find ways to encourage electric car use. Just recently they spoke to a South Carolina state senate committee about legislation that would offer tax incentives to help individuals purchase the cars. For more information visit www.evcarolina.com.

A true advocate for conservation, Sharpe loves talking to people about her little electric car and seeing their reactions. “My favorite thing about owning this car is being in traffic and seeing people in their vehicles looking as if they have the weight of the world on their shoulders. And when they see my car, they beam. It gives a little hope, a little feeling that good things will happen. And that’s important, to affect people in a positive way.” ●