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Girls learn what makes autos tick

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Encore Motorcars of Sarasota, together with Girls Inc., is hosting a program to teach girls the basic knowledge and skills of car maintenance and repair.

"Girls Under the Hood" began Feb. 13 with a test of the girls' knowledge of car parts and tools. They attempted to identify pictures of the components.

By the time they finish a second session Saturday, the girls will know what each part is along with its function. The girls were taught about several systems, including the brakes, tires, cooling and power steering.

"I feel really empowered knowing more about my car," said Kimberly Manooshian, co-owner of Encore Motorcars.

Ever since Manooshian's father taught her to change her car's oil, she felt more confident when bringing her car to be serviced by a mechanic. The program was developed to enable girls to be knowledgeable and assertive when dealing with car maintenance and mechanics.

Service manager Devin O'Brian spoke to the girls about the overall functions of a car. He told the girls to think of the car as a human body.

"The oil pump is the heart, the air cleaner is the lungs and if the air cleaner is dirty, the car cannot breathe," O'Brian said.

He said the tires are like arms and legs. The tires need to have good tread just as people need to wear good shoes.

The mission of Girls Inc. is to inspire girls to be strong, smart and bold. Life skills curriculum is offered to girls in kindergarten through 12th grade. The organization also teaches economic literacy, science, math and technology through various programs. Girls Inc. offers many of its programs at schools and community centers and also hosts career camps.

Fern Frye brought her granddaughter, Shannon Frye, who frequently participates in the programs Girls Inc. offers, to the car clinic.

"Being in Girls Inc. has done a lot for her self-esteem," Frye said, adding that the organization has been a safe and wonderful group for her granddaughter.

Lisa Merritt and her daughter, Amara, had been looking forward to the program at Encore Motorcars, and found the information presented helpful.

Merritt has become an advocate for the group.



Master technician J.V. Yelinton, right, points out details of the underside of a car at "Girls Under the Hood," a Girls Inc. program at Encore Motorcars. Shown, from left, are Joanna Perry, Amara Merritt, Shannon Frye, Dyanna Perry and Lisa Merritt. The two-session program concludes Saturday. CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS / KATHRYN BRASS

"It's a great organization, and I think more girls should get involved," she said.

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