

Perdue's wheels always turning

By Sharon Knight
Houston County Editor

You are going to have to peddle fast to keep up with Jay Perdue.

He is always thinking of more efficient and faster ways of doing things that will improve lives through transportation – all the while doing his part to improve health and a greener earth.

And he is attracting lots of attention.

Perdue's latest invention, the ExerTrike tri-hybrid, completed a record-making trip in November and is now on the display in an Amarillo, Texas, mall. The exhibit will be moving to malls throughout Nashville in April.

Orders are coming in for all his "trikes," three-wheeled vehicles that combine human power with electric power, and as is the case with the tri-hybrid – gasoline power.

His tri-hybrid boasts a minimum speed of 45 mpg – fast enough for interstate travel – and 320 mpg.

So what's next?

"My next project will be a two-wheel tri-hybrid that he hopes will reach a speed of 72 mph.

"I figure we can get 250 mpg at 70 mph," Perdue said as he relaxed in his shop on one of the simplest of his vehicles, a three-wheel ExerTrike that uses only human and electric power.

His two-wheel tri-hybrid will differ from the older Mo-Ped in that it will add a gasoline engine and will be a recumbent ExerBike, meaning your feet will be more out in front of you than on a traditional bike or motorcycle.

"That's what makes it more powerful and more comfortable, by far," he said. "Guess what this is? It's a real comfortable chair and you can pick your feet up.

The ExerBike will also have a more comfortable seat than the traditional kind, complete with a back against which you can relax.

"It will be a little higher, making you more visible," Perdue said. That's always a plus."

Perdue preaches safety. He believes that is his responsibility as an inventor – to make his contraptions as safe as possible. That's why all of his vehicles are painted in floures-

cent colors – orange, green, yellow or blue – and why he always wears a helmet, even on a traditional bike and a life jacket when he is on the water."

It's more than safety, however. Perdue also stresses courtesy.

"We all have a responsibility to be courteous drivers when it comes to others, particularly pedestrians," he said. "It doesn't matter if you are on a trike, bike, or in a car or diesel truck."

Perdue and co-inventor, Larry Greenhill, have already secured a couple of bikes for the transformation project but have not actually started making modifications.

"I think what's going to happen is older folks will want the three-wheeler and college students – younger people in general – will want the two-wheeler.

Even before he gets started on the bike, he has already started researching another modification he wants to make to the Exertrike. This modification will make the vehicle accessible to wheelchair bound individuals.

"How many people who are paraplegic or have mobility problems wouldn't like that?"

"While I was trying to invent a completely hand-controlled vehicle where you could be free to exercise, I was coming up with a vehicle in which your legs wouldn't have to do a thing."

He said modifications would be to take off the peddles since they won't be needed, and add a spring loaded seat, even though he notes that getting off the It is already amazing simple to maneuver on and off the ExerTrike.

"What mobility that gives a whole other population," he said.

Perdue said he believes the conversion would be easy to make. He has already started flirting with a name that appropriately fits – Freedom Vehicle.

Perdue has just finished building the simplest ExerTrike for his wife and he plans to make one for himself. Its uses are almost endless.

"Starting in the spring, I would use it for everything in Erin," he said. "It's a great place."

I get exercise, not speeding any money and have beautiful scenery. I can take the bike the bicycle path (walking trail) so I am off the high-

way. It's cool to know you can go on the street and go as fast as a vehicle is supposed to go."

For now, Perdue is busy with tri-hybrid orders and dealing with publicity that has come his way. The Discovery Channel has been following his inventions and trips and is planning to air the Amarillo advection early this spring. No definite airing date has been released.

He is not planning any more trips anytime soon. In fact, he is still recovering from the last one, which put a lot of stress on his legs and lower back.

Perdue kind of marvels that his Exertrikes have caught such popularity this time of the year.

"I never dreamed we would sell a trike in the middle of winter," he said. "You've got to think if you can sell something like that in January, what happen in March April and May?"



Staff photos by Sharon Knight

Jay Perdue demonstrates his simplest Exertrike model.



Larry Greenhill puts the finishing touches on a ExerTrike Tri-hybrid, which is being custom made for a man in Illinois.