

New program focuses on future

CHRISTINA MUELLER
Feature Editor

Clackamas will pilot a new auto collision program in aluminum welding that is intended to become a standard program to premier auto collision training centers across the country.

The program will be designed by Clackamas instructor Marc Essig and the Inter-Industry Conference of Auto Repair (I-CAR). I-CAR is a national organization established to provide training for collision repair technicians.

Essig has been a member of the I-CAR education foundation board of trustees for three years.

The aluminum welding training will be beneficial to students now and in the future because more and more vehicles are being constructed with aluminum.

"Aluminum vehicles are coming and they're going to hit us like a bombshell," said Essig.

There are currently two fully aluminum cars, the Plymouth Prowler and the Acura NSX. And there are 40 cars with aluminum components.

"In the 1998 vehicles, even in the domestic American cars, there will be more and more aluminum components. I am estimating that by the year 2000, you are going to see the majority of vehicles being made out of aluminum," Essig predicted.

More vehicles are being made out of aluminum because of the many advantages versus steel. Aluminum is lighter, stronger, it takes less energy to produce and it's 100 percent recyclable.

"Most body technicians can weld steel but most of them cannot weld aluminum at all," Essig explained.

The new program will differ from the traditional I-CAR class, which is a traditional classroom setting. The

aluminum welding program will be more of a hands on experience.

In addition to the class, Clackamas will be a test center for the program which will allow students to become certified in aluminum welding.

The class and test should begin next spring.

Essig will be on sabbatical fall term. He plans to spend the entire time working on completing this pilot project.

"This program is being strongly endorsed by all of the collision industry, particularly the insurance industry, because they want to make sure that the technicians have this knowledge," said Essig.

The welding facilities at Clackamas have been "massaged" equipment-wise in order to be able to provide this training in auto collision repair.

Clackamas is currently an I-CAR test center for steel collision repair.

Most other schools in the country do not have and are not planning to get this new program.

"Most people don't know the aluminum car is coming. There will be tremendous changes in the car in the next three years," Essig said.

Essig predicts the next cars will be designed for one to two people commuting to and from work. The cars will get good gas mileage and will be more economical.

"The majority of the population of

the world better accept that we're running out of dinosaur blood," said Essig.

According to Essig, the new cars will be smaller with alternative fuel systems, whether alcohol or solar. Battery technology is also becoming more refined. People can drive to and from work and not have to charge the battery for two or three days.

"Oregon, like most of the west is very dependent upon the vehicle. We're not going to see Tri-Met or Max Light Rail going to Condon or John Day. We're going to get over the mountain driving a car," explained Essig.

Essig predicts that mechanics on the new cars will be easier to learn than the collision repair of the cars.

The next challenge is to see who can get the most horsepower out of the smaller engine.

At the recent I-CAR board meeting Allstate Insurance Company donated \$30,000 to the I-CAR program to develop new automotive programs. Aluminum was one of them.

The aluminum welding program will be funded by the tuition costs. The cost will pay off when the students leave with knowledge that 99 percent of the technicians in the industry do not have.

"Due to cutbacks in our education systems, particularly in K-12, the career exploration programs have been eliminated. Particularly the automotive and mechanical programs,"



CHRISTINA MUELLER / Clackamas Print
An Acura NSX, one of two fully aluminum cars in the United States - the other being a Plymouth Prowler - was donated to the college for use in the aluminum welding program.

Essig said. "We have a national crisis in the collision industry, of not enough technicians coming into the field."

The industry is losing 20,000 technicians a year due to retirement, promotions or leaving the profession. The industry only gains 7000 new technicians each year.

In the past five to six years, the average is five to six job openings for every student in the Clackamas program.

The starting wage for collision repair is \$8 to \$12 per hour, and \$30,000 potential in three to four years.

Essig stresses that the collision repair field is not limited to men. More than two dozen women have gone through the collision repair program. Making \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year is not uncommon for technicians in the field.

Essig explains collision repair as "a great career choice which has exceptionally high wages."

The aluminum welding program, as well as the changes happening in new cars, is guaranteed to change the auto world.

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Marc Essig
Automotive
Department
Chair

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Estonian Composer to visit Clackamas

JOEL P. SHERPERT
Staff Writer

Veljo Tormis, an Estonian composer, who is renowned not only in his native land but worldwide, will grace Clackamas with his presence on the week of Monday, May 5 through Saturday, May 10.

Tormis, through the efforts of the Clackamas Chamber Choir and the Portland-Tallinn Friendship City Association, as well as the Clackamas Choral, the Portland State University Chamber Choir, the Portland Symphonic Choir and the Cleveland High School Choir, will be flown to the states. He will be accompanied by conductor Hirvo Surva to work with the choirs, who will be singing some of his compositions.

Lonnie Cline, conductor for the Chamber Singers and Clackamas Music Faculty Member, met Tormis when the Singers toured in Estonia last year.

"I said that one of my dreams was to meet Arvo Pärt and Veljo Tormis ... and Hirvo Surva, who was one of the conductors approached Tormis and told him that there was an American Choir from Portland ... and that the conduc-

tor would like to meet him and just talk with him. And so he consented to do that," said Cline.

They met and talked. It was then that Cline first sowed the seeds for the event which is now to take place.

"I also asked him if he would like to come to the United States and work with some choirs, and [told him] that we would like to do a concert in his honor and in the honor of Estonia," Cline related.

This is unprecedented and likely to be a unique event in Tormis' life and

"It's an insult to go to another country if you can't speak their language."

Veljo Tormis
Estonian

in the our country's musical history.

Lonnie Cline explains: "At first he said no. He said, 'Why don't you come to Finland, and I'll work with you there.' And he said he had already made it public that he would never leave Estonia again. And he said that it's a problem with the language barrier and that he feels that it's an insult to go to another country if you can't speak their language."

"So I said that we could have somebody meet him and travel with him as an interpreter. And we could put him

up in an Estonian home. So I got up to do something else for a minute and while I was gone he leaned over to Hirvo and said, 'Well, maybe I will go,'" Cline said.

The motivation behind this endeavor is complex. It involves a love for the music of a man or country. It also involves a desire to honor that man and country, as well as to giving a unique opportunity to students and listeners.

"We're negotiating to get a boy so-

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