

# Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

## 2009 Subaru Forester

BY KATHLEEN CARR

In its first full redesign since the 2003 model year, the Subaru Forester has moved closer to the mainstream than some fans might have hoped it would. The old model's boxy charm has been toned down, and what's left is a compact SUV whose driving dynamics are on same level with some of the nimbler players in this segment. A few Forester die-hards may cry foul, but I suspect the changes will widen the car's appeal to the market in general. The SUV remains as practical as ever, but now boasts enough refinement to merit serious consideration from anyone shopping the latest Honda CR-V or Toyota RAV4.

Although it's still based on the same platform as the compact Impreza, this new Forester can look the competition square in the eye. The 2009 Forester rides on a 103.0-inch wheelbase, some 3.6 inches greater than before. It's also 3 inches longer overall, about an inch taller and has more ground clearance. Combined with a more traditional SUV styling treatment, these changes give the Forester an unprecedented rugged persona, even if few owners are likely to put its



Specifications: 2.5L Horizontally-Opposed SOHC Engine; five speed manual transmission; 20 city mpg, 26 highway mpg; MSRP \$21,764.

middling off-road chops to the test.

The outgoing model's carlike handling has generally been retained, thanks to improved chassis rigidity, wider front and rear tracks and a new double-wishbone rear suspension in place of the old car's strut-based

setup. However, don't expect the new Forester to corner like a sport wagon -- extra height and ground clearance along with increased suspension travel add up to lots of bounce and roll in corners. Happily, the trade-off is a compliant ride, and the compactness of the

new suspension frees up extra space inside -- especially in the cargo hold. Rear legroom and overall comfort have also been dramatically expanded, and the new Forester sports a well-constructed and attractive control layout. Towing capacity is 2,400 pounds with either

engine. That beats most four-cylinder SUVs, though some of the Forester's V-6 competitors can tow 3,000 pounds or more.

Overall, the Forester is a comfortable and practical people mover that looks like an SUV, drives like a car and offers the security of standard

AWD. And although there are no major engine upgrades for 2009, the Forester's performance remains satisfactory. On the whole, though, the 2009 Subaru Forester has outgrown its quirky phase and looks like a legitimate contender for the compact crossover SUV crown.

## Meals Delivered on Bicycle Wheels

continued from Front

port his own groceries, but hit on the idea after he retired and read that Meals-on-Wheels was having a hard time keeping volunteers due to rising fuel costs.

He has discovered many benefits to his service, aside from avoiding using fuel.

"It's great exercise for a man my age," he said. "My blood pressure has gone down 15 points from the combination of biking and helping people."

Lyles says riding his bike is very nearly as quick as driving through traffic, and adds, "It's much more personable—people like to see me ride up on my bike, and want to talk about it."

He says when he bicycles, he gets to know people in the community and has often ridden past some of his recipients on his way to others' homes.

When asked, Lyles says he does not consider weather an impediment to his deliveries.

"When it's hot, I stay hydrated and deliver the meals half an hour earlier," he said.

Lyles also has clothing appropriate for riding year-round, and enjoys delivering meals in the rain, saying it cools him down as he rides. Surprisingly, the biggest difficulty he has encountered was theft.

His coolers are bags designed to hold Macintoshes, and a thief took one from the trailer, apparently thinking he was getting a new desktop computer. However, a beneficent local Mac user gave Lyles a newer, nicer bag.

Across town in northeast Portland, a New Seasons Market employee Jamie Gabel independently thought of a similar concept, launching of a "meals on bike wheels" delivery program at the Concordia store.

"The idea first came to me on a perfect fall day in Portland, when I was delivering meals in my car," Gabel said. "It was one of those days where you want to be out-

side so you can hear the leaves crush under your feet. So I said to my coworker, 'What a gorgeous day—I wish I was on my bike.' Then it took me about two seconds to realize that I COULD do this on my bike! All I needed was a bike trailer and some willing volunteers."

Her store manager gave her the go-ahead, and now store employees at three stores can sign up to deliver meals while on the clock, picking up lunches for seniors and disabled in the community and delivering it to the recipients.

Store Operations Specialist Heather Schmidt says, "So many staff want to do it, I hear there's competition about who gets to."

Regarding Gabel's idea, Schmidt says, "This is very typical of New Seasons. Someone has a spark, an idea, and there is a very good cultural infrastructure to support them."

Describing the benefits of the program, Gabel cites the obvious environmental and health reasons,

but adds, "It builds camaraderie among the cyclists. A different relationship is formed when you bike together rather than riding in a car." Schmidt says, "It's cheering to the recipients when they see we're having fun."

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## Volunteer Tutors Train at Mt. Hood

Did you know that one in five Oregonians cannot read? Many of these individuals are high school dropouts lacking the basic reading and writing skills needed for today's jobs.

Mt. Hood Community College is committed to helping reduce these statistics by training volunteers to become tutors.

The college's Adult Basic Education's Volunteer Literacy Tutor program offers free workshops that teach attendees the techniques used in tutoring an adult.

Volunteer literacy tutors are in demand, because there are more students requesting assistance than there are tutors available. The requirements to become a volunteer tutor are a high school diploma or general educational development (GED) certificate, a willingness to help others and a commitment to the program.

Once trained, tutors are asked to donate two to four

hours per week for three or more months. Tutoring sessions are held throughout the area, including the College, local libraries, businesses, churches and community cen-

ters. For more information, call the MHCC Adult Basic Skills Department at 503-491-7406 or email Maria.Pelayo@mhcc.edu.

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