

Organizers: Don't tune out on tune-up program

By Alex Breitler

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Thousands of dollars worth of free car repairs were left unclaimed the last time a Tune In & Tune Up smog check event was held in Stockton.

Local organizer Jose Marin doesn't want that to happen again.

He wants a full parking lot at the San Joaquin County Fairgrounds for this Saturday's event — full, like it almost always has been.

"This is a service for the community, and it's recapturing dollars that remain in our community," Marin said. "It's important."

Not that the event last July was a bust, exactly. Almost 500 cars showed up.

The problem is that officials had enough funding to provide free repairs to 525 cars, giving out vouchers totaling \$500 each. Typically, that capacity is met without any difficulty, as motorists show up before dawn and wait in line for an informal smog inspection that reveals whether repairs are necessary.

The last event in July was different. Marin said Tuesday that he did not know why. It's certainly not, he said, because most of the cars that need repairs to pass smog have already been fixed.

He emphasized that Saturday's event is open to everyone — not only low-income residents. And the event will happen rain or shine.

Last spring, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District approved another \$4 million to fund these events up and down the Valley.

The money comes from air pollution fees that all Valley motorists pay as a part of their DMV registration.

Valley Clean Air Now, a nonprofit business-oriented advocacy group, hosts the smog event program which is formally known as Tune In & Tune Up. The event does not substitute for a real smog check; no certificates are handed out. It does allow people whose cars are not prepared to pass smog to get financial assistance, which leads to cleaner-running cars and less air pollution.