

Commentary: Toy cars and so much more at the new Automobuild store on Main Street



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OLD CARS, TOY CARS, BIG AND LITTLE BOY CARS. Next door to Gina's at 21 W. Main St., a model car collector's dream is a reality. Automobuild, a specialty toy store based on the theme of toy classic cars, opened June 19 in the fully renovated 1800s building owned by Dave Flick.

Longtime Los Gatans will remember the place as home from 1938 until 2000 to John Sorenson Plumbing.

Town Mayor Diane McNutt officially opened the door to throngs of car club members, curious parents and lots of kids with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Out front, in 15 reserved parking spaces along Main Street, a gleaming collection of vintage cars, including a Tiger, an old Woody and a sleek racer, awaited awe.

The idea for it all came when Los Gatos resident and store owner Kirsten Dryden, 39, gave birth to son William, now 3. She was determined he should grow up understanding engineering and how cars are built. Husband and cohort, John, whose Campbell company, SV Techsol, Inc., manufactures mechanical solutions for the semiconductor and pharmaceutical industries, also collects and restores antique cars, "some working, some not."

Kirsten believes that by offering William an environment filled with toys requiring patience and thought, like model car building, he might share a passion for classic cars and stop to think about how they work. "I want to pass this on to other children as well," she says.

Beyond model kits, her store is filled with "build toys," as she calls them, such as Legos, Lincoln Logs and Erector Sets. And they're not just for boys. Daughter Reagan, 6 and a first grader at Hillbrook School, grew up with build toys. "She loves cars and how they're built," her mom says. There are even pink model cars in the store, should feminine fancy require them, and car-themed apparel to match.

Store manager Susan Lupkin and a staff of five are there to welcome visitors Monday through Wednesday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m., and Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Call 408.402.3818. A website is under construction.