

## Looking to Escape

By Elizabeth A. Sublett/Daily Press Creative Services

Everyone knows the importance of making a good first impression. But does that apply to a new vehicle on a dealer's lot? Absolutely, according to Ben Topping of Newport News.

"My wife, Faye, and I decided we needed a new vehicle for traveling back and forth from our other home in Natural Bridge," says Topping. So, he made a list of dealers in the area that he had heard good things about and Freedom Ford of Hampton (757/838-0222) was first on that list.

"I pulled into the lot and noticed quite a gathering of people around a red SUV," says Topping. "From where I stood, I could see that the sticker said it was a Ford Escape and it looked like it had a lot of the features that I wanted." What he didn't realize was that he was admiring the first Escape on the Peninsula. But, Topping wanted to keep looking. "So I spent five hours that day driving around to the other dealerships," he says. "But I found I was comparing everything else to the Escape."

"The next day, I went to see [salesperson] Tony Shultz at Freedom Ford," says Topping. "Tony was very patient with me. I told him I was looking for a vehicle with good gas mileage, automatic transmission, a V-6 engine and four-wheel drive." Shultz showed him trucks, vans, SUVs and cars. "Then I asked him about the Escape. Come



"It fits all of our needs," says Ben Topping of Newport News, pictured with his 2001 Ford Escape XLS FWD.

to find out, it had everything I was looking for and more." He drove it home that night. Topping's XLS four-wheel drive Escape has a treader red exterior with medium graphite interior.

The 2001 Ford Escape is available in two trim levels: the XLS and XLT with two- or four-wheel drive. The manufacturer's suggested retail price for the base model XLS is \$17,645.

### 2001

#### Ford Escape XLS FWD

**Standard Equipment:** Seating capacity of five, automatic full-time four-wheel drive, V-6 engine, remote keyless entry, side impact bars, air conditioning, driver's and passenger's front airbags.

**Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP): \$22,320. For exact pricing information contact your local dealer.**

Once inside, it was the roominess that really surprised Topping. "Our dog and cat go everywhere we go," he says. "So, we needed space for them, too. All we do is fold down the rear seat and we have room for us, the animals and any antiques we decide to pick up." With the rear seats removed, the Escape offers 68.5 cubic feet of cargo, according to Edmunds.com.

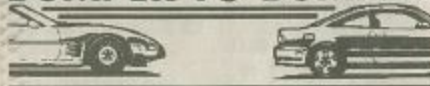
Topping also had a number of options installed including: side step bars, AM/FM stereo with cassette and CD player, perimeter alarm, retractable cargo cover, floor mats, speed control and four-speed automatic transmission with a 3.0-liter, V-6 engine. "The power of the V-6 is what I was really interested in," says Topping. "The Escape handles beautifully on the flat of the interstate and the challenges of the mountains and the four-wheel drive will get us through the snow."

Topping laughs about choosing the Ford Escape. "I didn't even know this vehicle existed before I saw it on the lot," he muses. "But the next day when I returned to the dealership. I knew I had found the vehicle I wanted. It fits all of our needs. I couldn't have asked for a better vehicle if I'd sat down and ordered one myself."

The 2001 Ford Escape's rear seat folds down or can be removed to provide additional cargo space.



## BUMPER TO BUMPER



◆ **Hall Auto Mall in Newport News** invites the public to see NASCAR's #36 M&M's and #20 Home Depot Pontiacs on display Saturday, Sept. 2 from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at Hall Auto Mall, 13151

Jefferson Ave. Admission is free.

◆ **POMOCO Kia of Hampton** welcomes Assistant Manager Anthony Scilabro. He transferred from the Chrysler Plymouth sales division.

◆ **Gloucester Toyota** welcomes Al Strickland and Rob Nelson to the sales staff. Both invite their families and friends to visit them at the dealership.

◆ **POMOCO Auto Group**, headquartered in Hampton, announces the Sept. 1 grand opening of its Lincoln Mercury store. The new facility will be located at 4206 Mercury Blvd. and will sell and service Lincoln Mercury products, as well as Ford.

In addition, grand opening celebrations continue through the month of September at POMOCO of Smithfield and POMOCO Nissan.

◆ **Holiday Chevrolet Oldsmobile Cadillac** of Williamsburg encourages everyone to visit during its 18th anniversary celebration and to register for one of the numerous race ticket packages for the Richmond Monte Carlo 400 at Richmond International Raceway. The packages includes hospitality tent access and race tickets to the Craftsman Truck, Busch and NASCAR series races the weekend of Sept. 7-9. No purchase is

necessary. Call (757)877-4004 for more details.

◆ **Tysinger Motor Company** of Hampton welcomes Ken Stockermann to the Mercedes-Benz sales staff. Stockermann brings over 12 years of automotive experience to the dealership.

◆ **Want to see your dealership news in our weekly Bumper to Bumper column?** Call: 247-4989, fax: 247-4651 or e-mail: esublett@dailypress.com.