

Dating to the Extreme

Leave the cliché flowers behind and come up with a date that's a little edgy for your sweetheart. Soar effortlessly through the air in a basket or descend to the murky depths of an underwater cave. Feel the wind rush against your face as you jump from a plane or test the limits of speed. Legally, of course. Whatever tickles your adrenaline fancy, here are some ideas that will take your date to the extreme.

Speed dating takes a new meaning at Gainesville Raceway

By Callie Polk

Surprise your date with a little friendly competition with legal drag racing.

Just imagine, you glance over at your significant other and rev up the engine. Your hands tightly grasp the steering wheel, and you turn back to a set of lights that tell you when it's time to hit the gas. You hold your foot on the pedal, waiting impatiently for the light to turn green when you'll unleash your car down a

straight path. All you care about is being the first wheels at the finish line.

If you take your date to Gainesville Raceway's test and tune, you can bring everyday cars out on a track and see who has the fastest moves.

"If you have any competitive juices in your body at all you're gonna have a blast," said Donald Robertson, executive general manager of Gainesville Raceway.

The test and tune, what the raceway has dubbed days where it has public drag racing, is available on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and you can race against a date, friend or complete stranger as long as you have a set of wheels.

At Gainesville Raceway, there is always a winner because the track has all electronic timing devices. After each race, you receive a time slip that tells how fast you left the starting line, who was in the lead along the track and essentially who wins the race.

"It's cheap fun," said Robertson, "Twenty-five bucks and you can run all evening."

You have to be 18 years old to race at Gainesville Raceway or if you're 16, you can have a parental waiver signed.

If you're worried about your car being too slow to race, you can race to beat your own times and see how much you can improve. Or if you're really competitive, you can race with handicaps that let a slower car start earlier for a fair race.

Once your car is lined up on the track and you're between the safety walls, it really hits you, according to Robertson. You find yourself trying to push your foot through the floorboard, you want to go faster and you start yelling at the guy across from you.

"It's a place where you can have a lot of fun seeing how fast you can go without worrying about the law," he said.

More information about test and tune is available at www.gainesvillraceway.com.

