



News Release

Madison Environmental Group, Inc.

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CAR-FREE CHALLENGERS REDUCED OVER 16,000 MILES IN 2 WEEKS

Madison – 302 area residents tried car-free or “car-lite” living during the 2nd annual two-week Car-Free Challenge (September 22-October 5, 2004). Together, participants reduced 16,228 vehicle miles in two weeks, the equivalent of driving 65% of the way around the world, or 5.5 times across the continental United States. In just two weeks, the Car-Free Challenge reduced 12,963 pounds (6.5 tons) of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, equivalent to the emissions created by an average American’s household electricity use for one year.

Reductions in vehicle miles were recorded only if participants made a change from their normal behavior. Many of the participants were already using alternative transportation before the Challenge, therefore the actual impact of their actions is much larger when compared to the car-dependent lifestyle of the average American.

We invite you to join Madison Environmental Group in recognizing the achievements of the Car-Free Challenge participants:

Car-Free Challenge Awards Presentation and Prize Drawing
Saturday, October 16, 10:00-11:00am
Office of Madison Environmental Group
25 North Pinckney Street, on the sidewalk in front of L’Etoile Restaurant

In total, the 200 participants saved \$1,303 on gas in two weeks (current Madison price of \$2.01 per gallon). If participants kept up this behavior for a year, they would each save \$171 on gas, plus additional cost savings on car maintenance, insurance and parking.

Seventeen out of 200 participants were 100% car-free during the two-week challenge. Nine participants reduced more than 300 vehicle miles. These outstanding participants will be entered in a drawing for a new Schwinn Voyageur hybrid bike, compliments of Williamson Bicycle Works & Fitness. All 200 participants who reported results will be entered in a drawing for additional prizes.

Three Car-Free Challenge participants are being acknowledged for exceptional achievements at Saturday’s awards ceremony: Gabrielle Detjen (100% car-free, reduced 301 miles), Randol White (89% car-free, reduced 401 miles) and Allen Czecholinski (90% car-free, reduced 397 miles). In addition, we will recognize the achievements of six organizations that participated as teams: Dane County, Madison Children’s Museum, The Monkey Bar Gym, Physicians Plus Insurance Corporation, UW-Madison Department of Population Health Sciences, and Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation. The awards ceremony will also include fun awards such as “most creative transportation,” “intrepid hauler,” and “almost car-free.”

Participants shared stories that demonstrated what they learned and how they challenged themselves:

- Susan Schmitz, President of Downtown Madison, Inc.: “I had a great six days of not driving my car once. I learned a lot about using my bike for more than recreation. I think that I will continue this great means of transportation. It also led to new bike lights and other great accessories.”
- Judy Skog: Before the Car-Free Challenge, “I got on my bike *maybe* a couple times a year to ride less than 10 miles... Since the Car-Free Challenge began I have ridden my bike to the restaurant twice, to the gym, to a rally at the Capitol, to buy groceries and to church for a total of 30.2 miles. I’ve even talked [my husband] into biking to his job.”

- Darren Bush, co-owner of Rutabaga Paddlesports: “I walked to church Sunday morning with my wife and two children. People kept stopping and asking if we wanted rides. I told everyone we WANTED to walk, so they wouldn't bug us anymore. The coolest part of this walk was that we walked down Midvale Blvd. for most of our walk, and at 8:15 in the morning there are very few cars on the road. There was one point when no cars drove by for a few minutes...it was so peaceful.”

Last year, in the 2003 Car-Free Challenge, 53 participants reduced 6,014 vehicle miles and about 4,792 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions. This year's challenge results exceeded last year's results by 270%.

To learn more about the Car-Free Challenge, please contact Rebecca Grossberg at (608) 204-0400 or rebecca@madisonenvironmental.com.

Thank you to our sponsors and prize contributors who made the 2nd Annual Car-Free Challenge possible.

Sponsors: City of Madison, Dane County, Madison Gas and Electric, Physicians Plus Insurance Corporation, UW-Madison Transportation Services, Williamson Bicycle Works & Fitness, and Community Car.

Prize Contributors: Budget Bicycle Center, Just Coffee, Madison Children's Museum, Planet Bike, Revolution Cycles, Rutabaga, Scram! Couriers, and Yellow Jersey.

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