

news release

Child and Family Center/University of Oregon

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In November 2007, three women at the University of Oregon Child and Family Center challenged each other to see who could save the most carbon emissions from the atmosphere by not driving to and from work. Each woman set out to either walk, bike, or bus her way to the highest number. It wasn't long before the idea of a contest gave way to a collaborative effort that would include other coworkers. The core group reasoned that the more workers who pitched in to help the environment, the better, whether each person had a competitive spirit or not.

By early 2008, 10 employees—more than one quarter of the total Eugene CFC work force—were walking, biking, or busing to and from work as often as they could and adding their “emissions saved” numbers to a growing total. They set their sights on a one-ton total and achieved that goal by the end of August 2008. At the beginning of September the group set a six-month goal to save another ton of emissions from being released into the atmosphere.

The CFC carbon savers group, now comprising 11 members, encourages other organizations, departments, and groups to begin concerted efforts to save emissions from being released.

Although the primary goal is environmental protection, there are other potential advantages, including improved health from simple daily exercise, improved health of the community, a sense of camaraderie as participants work together toward a cleaner environment, an opportunity to raise the consciousness of the community, and an excuse to celebrate the group's accomplishments when goals are met.

Calculating carbon emissions output is easy: $20 \text{ lbs} \times \text{number of days you did not drive} \times \text{total distance to and from work} \div \text{mpg of your car (or use a standard of 20)}$.

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Note: Quotes from participants are immediately following -

CFC carbon savers have this to say about their project:

“Riding my bike just three times a week gives me an added one hour of exercise. Plus for my commute, it takes only five more minutes one way than driving. That’s a very easy change to make.” –Charlotte Winter

“Walking three miles a day gives me time to think. My morning walk gives me clarity. On the way home, I decompress, sort things out, and get ready for a peaceful evening at home. At the same time, I’m much more aware of the nuances of my community because when I walk, I pay closer attention to the world around me.” –Cher Mikkola

“When I received my ‘Queen Green Bicycle Commuter Extraordinaire Award,’ my happiness was exceeded only by my renewed commitment and drive not to ... um ... drive.” –Jenene Peterson

“Days seem so short! Biking to and from work allows me to do two things at once—commuting and exercising. Coming from a large city with cold winters, I feel very lucky to live in a bike-friendly neighborhood where I can ride my bicycle all year round. Biking in the rain can be quite pleasant when one has good rain gear!” –Marie-Hélène Véronneau

“I love riding my bike in the mornings as the town is just waking up, and the ride home is like a special reward for making it through another busy, office-bound day. It’s made all the sweeter by knowing it’s having a beneficial effect on our environment, and having friends to share that experience with at work.” –Kori Wanner