

It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air

I bolted into our white, medium sized van for the ride home from school. Mom had left the vehicle idling in the parking space to keep it warm in the cold December air. As I climbed in, I noticed that the back tires both look flat. “Mom,” I exclaimed, “don’t the tires look a little low?” Mom leaped out and hurried to examine the old car. We hadn’t inflated any of the tires since the last oil change, some five thousand miles ago.

At the gas station, the air pressure read 26, when it should have been about 35. I reminded mom of the time when we had driven our tires so long and hard that the mechanic actually pulled the worn out tread apart with his bare hands. On the way home, we also stopped at the IGA for some eggs we had forgotten at the store several days before.

At home, we baked chocolate chip cookies for our favorite high schoolers. We jumped in the van again to deliver them to the farm next door. Even though the freezing wind howled like crazy outside my window that night, I stayed toasty warm with the thermostat set at 78 degrees Fahrenheit.

The next week in school, my science teacher started an interesting unit on air pollution. Little did I know how much my family had been polluting by our bad choices. At the dinner table, I shared my new knowledge with the other five people in the family. We had been ignoring one of the most important natural resources-clean air.

I taught mom to turn off the car while she waited on us at school, at piano lessons, and at church choir. I drew maps that would combine several car trips into one. I wrote on mom’s calendar to check the tire pressures the first day of each month, the same day we change the return air filters and put flea and tick medicine on our dog Benji. Now we have a sticker on the windshield to remind us when to change the van’s oil. The next time we take treats to the boys next door, we plan to walk or bike for exercise instead of wasting precious gas.

Mom and Dad have wages a little battle over turning, down the house thermostat. Dad walks by and usually turns it up to 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Mom walks by and usually turns it down to 63 degrees Fahrenheit. The last person to go to bed wins every night. It has been cold, that we even got electric blankets for Christmas. Mine is great! Also, my sister’s science project seeds germinated poorly, because the air temperature was so low in the room where they were trying to grow. She learned a lot anyway.

But I have been proud of my family’s efforts to decrease our amount of pollution. A few sacrifices from everyone will all add up to cleaner air.

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3rd place winner of \$50, “It all adds up to cleaner air” essay contest

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