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Students turned off by **idling** cars

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Friday, March 9 BRATTLEBORO -- It's the little things we do that make big differences. And now a handful of local students seeks to make a big difference in the battle against global warming. The students are passing around an all-ages petition to be presented to the Brattleboro Selectboard at a future meeting. The petition asks the board to consider an ordinance banning **idling** of car engines for longer than two minutes. Other students are working on ways to increase public awareness.

Anti-**idling** legislation is wending its way through the Vermont Statehouse, but the bills would affect vehicles with diesel engines and school buses, not mom's mini-van.

"We've been working with local students, developing a public service announcement for local TV and radio," said Tim Stevenson, of Post Oil Solutions, a local group with a mission to "learn about and develop sustainable practices in our homes, neighborhoods, and larger communities, so as to begin creating the infrastructure in our region necessary for a post-oil society."

Three Compass School students created the radio spots, now airing on local radio stations, as part of "Winterm," one week of community service performed by students.

"It's good to stop global warming," said Manya Gordon, 12, of Putney, one of the students who wrote and recorded the spots using a computer program.

Leaving your car running might not seem like a bad idea, said 15-year-old Kyle Tansely, who with Gordon and Forest Jade, recorded the spots, "but it all adds up."

Tansely said he and his partners had to spend a little bit of time researching the issue before recording the PSAs.

"It really opened up my eyes," he said. "Changing a little bit would really help a lot."

For each minute of **idling**, the average vehicle emits 23 grams of carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, and **idling** for 10 minutes per day wastes an average of 26 gallons of gasoline per year.

And though there has been some debate over whether turning off and restarting your car damages the engine or uses more fuel, a local mechanic said with a new engine, properly tuned, it shouldn't really harm your car to let it idle for a few minutes. But, said Scott Ethier, of Fletchers Auto Repair on Putney Road, it's not just about your engine, it's also about pollution.

"It's not just individuals," he said. "It's numerous people **idling**."

Ethier said people should think about the environment and shut their engines off if they're **idling** for more than a few minutes.

Only Brattleboro residents can sign the petition and there is no age requirement.

"The idea behind the petition is to demonstrate the community support for the anti-**idling** campaign," said Paul

Cameron, executive director of Brattleboro Climate Protection.

Along with other measures in town, including the reconstruction of Putney Road with four proposed roundabouts, Brattleboro residents can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by simply turning the key to the off switch, said Cameron.

"All of us see cars **idling**," said Cameron, "even when they're not cold. Most people just aren't aware of the effects. It's bad for the engine, bad for the environment and it wastes fuel."

Through the petition drive, Cameron, Stevenson and the students hope they can raise awareness to get people to shut off their engines voluntarily.

"This is an issue they'll be facing as they get older," said Cameron. "Perhaps the dominant issue of the century. To get them involved is very exciting."

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