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Hemphill: Teaching your teen to go 'green'

By Alan Hemphill

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Now here is a "green" concept I can buy – Ripon College in Wisconsin is issuing new mountain bikes and helmets to incoming freshmen who promise not to bring cars to campus.

Ripon claims it will save the environment, keep the college from building an expensive, multi-story parking garage, and increase the fitness of the students.

That works for me.

I well remember the day early in my married life when my wife asked me to buy a lifetime membership to Vic Tanny's Gym. (That should date me.) I said, "Let me get this right. We have so many energy saving devices – washing machines, vacuums, even an automatic transmission – and you have saved so much energy we need to join a gym to use the energy you saved."

In Southern California, home of great weather, fitness followers and Greens, going "green" is good news for the Poway Unified School District. We could do away with gyms, buses, and parking lots – all in the name of saving the planet!

Now, you could never get your teenager to give up his love for automobiles for the sake of physical fitness, but for the planet? OK, I doubt that will work either in this consumer-driven, car-crazy society, except on the margin, but perhaps you can get teenagers to see how difficult it is to "save the planet."

We raise our children in familial socialism, providing everything and asking them to suffer not at all – probably remembering our deprivations of youth. Teenagers reflexively want to save the planet – but of course they want to do it cost-free because their lives are cost-free. "Ride the school bus? No way, Dad! That is so mass transit! If you won't lend me the family BMW, at least buy me a Mustang!"

If you take your PUSD teenager to a Web site that sells "carbon offsets" that he/she needs to buy in order to be properly "green," that will also reduce the amount of their disposable income for Baskin-Robbins (or more likely Budweiser), so there are so many ancillary benefits. The better the system works, the better for everyone.

Tell your teenager that you are preparing them for college. Auburn University in Alabama has increased their student usage of bicycles by 12 percent. Bike programs are being increased at universities in Georgia, Illinois, Maine and Pennsylvania.

There is absolutely no downside. If your teenager cannot wean themselves

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from an automobile, you at least have opened a dialogue where you can explain life to them, how there are trade-offs and costs involved with painful decisions.

No, you will not be successful, but you can say you tried, it will make you feel better, and repetition will eventually penetrate a teenage brain even if the teenage brain cannot get his limbs to obey.

No, I have no hope that I will see PUSD students going "green" this year. The left's war is on the poor and that does not describe the PUSD student body.

But wait until the liberal professors get them.

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