

## **Small steps to save the planet**

### **Solar-powered Model T among EcoFest displays that attempt to take the old and make it new**

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Right there in the midst of a weekend festival dedicated to saving our planet sat a replica of the beast that helped get us addicted to burning fossil fuels.

But the Model T Ford displayed at EcoFest came with a twist.

Instead of running on the liquified remains of long-dead dinosaurs, this vehicle's roof will eventually be crowned with three solar panels.

According to Laura Pinchen, one of the Waterloo Collegiate Institute students building the replica Model T delivery truck from scratch, the solar panels will feed a small bed of car batteries with enough energy to power it.

"We liked the idea of taking the old and making it new," said Pinchen, one of about 20 students building the zero-emission vehicle.

The truck was one of about 30 displays at EcoFest.

The second annual festival, primarily sponsored by the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, was held at The Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo on Friday and Saturday.

Indoor and outdoor displays seemed to be geared toward two audiences -- nature-loving children and their taxpaying parents.

Brian Bechtel, energy specialist for the Region's facilities management office, pointed to a brightly shining traffic light.

Incandescent traffic lights at nearly all of the region's 460 plus intersections have been replaced with more energy-efficient light-emitting diodes (LEDs).

The upgrade saves about \$500,000 a year in electricity costs, Bechtel said.

At an adjacent display, brochures informed homeowners that replacing their large old-fashioned toilets with low-flush models can cut toilet water consumption by up to 30 per cent.

But EcoFest was mostly geared toward the kids.

Children romped around the site with their faces painted and limbs plastered with temporary tattoos bearing environmental messages.

And staff from the Laurel Creek Nature Centre in Waterloo brought along critters that children could pet.

It was an attempt to get children to appreciate nature in hopes of getting them to eventually think of how their consumption habits affect nature, said Heather Hughes, staff member at the nature centre.

Doug Quibell, Waterloo Region's manager of environmental health, said EcoFest was designed to help bring about a long-lasting transformation.

For years people have been hearing messages to cutback on water and energy consumption. Now, the goal is to turn their knowledge into changes in behaviour, he said.

Quibell said we have already undergone a similar kind of cultural change.

When people piled into their cars two decades ago, nobody thought of fastening their seatbelts, Quibell said.

Now, most people strap on seatbelt without even thinking about it.

"It's just natural," he said.

Quibell said he can already see that kind of transformation happening in his six-year-old daughter who turns off unused lights at home without being told.

"I think that this generation will be able to pull it off," he said. "Our children will be able to do it."