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Car Heaven

by Michelle Cinelli
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If you're still a car addict, you may be trying to cut back on your consumption or updating your vehicle – trading in your old, treasured car that's full of memories, but spewing carbon dioxide. If you do need a car, an update is not the worst way to assuage your guilt – today's cars are far more fuel efficient than yesterday's vehicles, and your old car can go to good use.



So where should your car go when you're ready to say good-bye? Car Heaven, a program of the not-for-profit Clean Air Foundation. Car Heaven was initially launched in the Greater Toronto Area with the help of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's Drive Clean Office and the Ontario Automotive Recyclers Association back in 2000, and the program has recycled over 52,134 cars from all across Canada to date. In addition to sparing the Earth of thousands of tonnes of emissions, Car Heaven has raised over \$1.2 million for various charities.

Car Heaven will tow away your car free of charge and donate it to be recycled leaving you with a charitable tax receipt. Jeff Harti, program coordinator for Car Heaven, said the tax receipts don't come from the program; they work with partners and make a donation to a charity. "We just facilitate the exchange," Harti, said. "We make sure the cars are recycled in a responsible way, with the donor getting something, of course."

Cars are the most recyclable product on Earth, with 76 per cent of the materials being reused. "We would like to see an improvement in that 24 per cent," Harti said. "Most of the plastic components and interior still end up in a landfill."

Nonetheless most everything else is recycled in some way or another. First the car is drained of its fluids and things like coolant, fuel and refrigerants are either

reused, or sold, while things like grease and oil are recycled. The battery can be resold or recycled and the car's mercury switch is sent to the Clean Air Foundation's Switch Out Program for mercury recovery and storage.

There is not yet a recycling program for tires so the good ones are resold or exported as fuel along with unusable ones.

As for the metal components, Harti said many can be reused. "If someone gets into an accident and needs a side panel Car Heaven recyclers can provide that," he said. "These parts are taken off of donated vehicle and stored for these purposes so that lower cost parts can be provided for people, while reducing the amount of new parts that need to be manufactured." He said that larger metal pieces are melted down to create new components.

But the benefits of Car Heaven stretch far past just reducing manufacturing. According to the Car Heaven website (www.carheaven.ca), the average car produces about 2.4 kilograms of CO₂ for every litre of gasoline used, or three to four times its own weight in CO₂ every year. Older cars do not have the technology that cars now have in ensuring that they are reducing emissions. Improvements in tail pipes and exhausts have also helped with reducing smog over the past 20 years. Older cars just can't keep up.

Harti said he feels the program has been successful, but it is constantly evolving. "Last year we recycled over 20,000 cars, but we'd like to surpass that this year and collect 25,000." He added that last year was the most successful year for the program, but they would still like to see more people get their old cars off the road and change them for another, more efficient one.

Visit www.carheaven.ca to donate your vehicle.