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By Greg Meyer

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MOSCOW - The jury is no longer out on global warming. Even though the scientific community predicting dramatic climate change regardless of what humans do from now on, there is still growing interest in finding ways to reduce carbon emissions.

That's why the University of Idaho Environmental Club was displaying energy efficient vehicles Monday.

"Basically we're just trying to get the word out and educate more and more," said James Blake president of the UI Environmental Club. "This year we're just trying to make our events bigger more hands-on. Last year we just did tables and people weren't that receptive. So, if we can be in more hands-on stuff then maybe people will see the light."

Blakely said he's starting to see more young people changing their lifestyles and becoming more tuned into conservation.

"One of my fellow peers, she just saw "An Inconvenient Truth", the movie," said Blakely. "Since watching it she's started recycling and trying to get more involved in making a difference. I think as more and more people become aware they will start to get involved."

Outreach specialist Jim Ekins was showing off PCEI's (Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute) work truck, powered by biodiesel. Ekins admits that there are issues involved with biodiesel and other alternative bio-fuels, like using cropland to grow fuel rather than food.

"The biodiesel I believe is going to be the most helpful for the farmers, who run their diesel tractors who can produce the biodiesel cooperatively or at least on the ranch, on the farm," said Ekins. "I think it can be a step from petroleum to another fuel for transportation. I also think that we have to be very careful and not use farmland that we need for food to produce fuel."

Perhaps the most impressive vehicle Monday was an all-electric car.

"This is a 1993," said electric car owner Michael Jennings. "It's a Geo Metro body with an electric motor. It's an all electric car. It has 12 ordinary 12-volt car batteries in it, and it goes about 50 miles on a charge. So, my wife and I can run around town about all day. We can go from here to Pullman and back pretty easily. And, just plug it in the evening."

Jennings is a U of I adjunct geography professor who also works for the Nature Conservancy. He said some electric car advantages are obvious.

"There's no oil to change, there's no antifreeze," he said.

The car takes three hours to charge. With a range of 50 miles and top speed of 65, it's perfect for getting about town.

"All of our energy that we buy, all of our electricity is from the Avista wind power program," Jennings said. "So, all of the power that runs this car is wind power. So, other than what it took to build the car and build the windmills, there is a zero emission."

Jennings said it is costing him the equivalent of 25 cents a gallon of gas to run the Metro. The news is the company who made the car, Solectria, is no longer making them.

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