



Onechange can change the world for the better

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BY ANDREW SZTEIN

EMC News - An Ottawa based organization has just wrapped up a campaign to change the world for the better, one tire pressure gauge at a time.

Onechange has recently wrapped up a campaign involving 550 volunteers and 63 community groups that went door-to-door, giving away free tire pressure gauges in an effort to engage in conversations about how the smallest changes in lifestyle can make a difference.

More than 150,000 digital gauges were given away in 85 communities across Ontario during the 14-week campaign.

"We discovered it's not about handing out free stuff," said Stuart Hickox, founder and president of Onechange. "It's about stimulating conversation about important things. It was an excuse to tell people about the importance of maintaining and regulating proper tire pressure."



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A Onechange volunteer fulfills the mantra of the organization by explaining the importance of maintaining proper tire pressure in terms of costs and energy consumption. Ottawa-based Onechange gave away 150,000 gauges during their 14-week educational campaign.

The campaign was supported by Canadian Tire and Ontario's Ministry of the Environment. If everyone who received one of the 150,000 gauges checks and maintain their tire pressure, it's estimated the project would save more than \$8.5 million in fuel and repair costs and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 21,000 tonnes. That is the equivalent of removing 3,766 cars from the road.

"Those are numbers provided to us by Natural Resources Canada, or CAA or other organizations that study the energy effects of under inflated tires," said Hickox. "We take those statistics and apply them to the size of the programs we run and then estimate the number of people participating in the program to come up with those numbers."

"The average citizen will save \$60 a year on gas if they check and regulate their tire pressure once a month," he added. "Most people are driving with underinflated tires. These things are designed to operate optimally at a certain amount of inflation. Underinflated tires don't perform. It takes more gas to move them, there's more resistance on the road, which is where fuel economy comes in. Underinflated tires wear down faster and can rupture on the highway. Your steering and braking can be affected."

Hickox said most of the people Onechange volunteers spoke to were very receptive, and the project was generally very successful.

"(The reception) was universally positive," said Hickox. "We've turned door-to-door on its head. We're not asking for anything in return and we're using volunteers and community groups in their own neighbourhoods to promote simple steps that are hard to argue with. We're not asking for money. When someone from your own neighbourhood shows up and gives you something for free with no strings attached, they take it from you. What you get in exchange is a minute or two of their time. Then you can explain the benefits and it really sticks with people. It's a very effective way to promote change, to harness community networks and provide a simple action."

Onchange was founded in 2005, and since then has expanded to communities throughout Canada and the United States. Onechange operates in 900 communities with more than 12,000 volunteers. Their first project was to provide free compact fluorescent light bulbs to neighbours in their community, which are far more energy efficient and long lasting than a standard incandescent bulb.

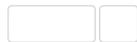
"It's an Ottawa success story," said Hickox. "My wife and I were looking for a new fridge on the Internet and I found a statistic that if everyone changes one light bulb, it's like taking 66,000 cars off the road in Canada. I turned to her and said, 'this is 2004, how hard could it be to get everyone to do just that?' So we decide to raise some money, buy some light bulbs, and hand them out to our niehgbours. That's when hydro Ottawa came on board."

With their light bulb and tire pressure gauge campaigns complete in Ontario, Onechange will now change their focus over to retrofitting homes for efficient energy consumption.

"We're going to be training groups of people to go into the home and explain to people the benefits of making simple changes in their house and to tell people how important it is to consider upgrading things like attic insulation and sealing up cracks," said Hickox.

Onechange is always looking for volunteers for their projects. Those interested in volunteering with Onechange can sign up at www.onechange.org.

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