

## Footloose and Car-free

By [Beth Potier](#), Media Relations  
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Media Relations' Beth Potier, her husband assistant professor Brent Bell and their son Holden Bell have pledged to go car-free for the month of May.

Tonight, I will park my car in the garage.

Hardly a radical act, but this time, it's there to stay – at least for a month. To honor National Bike Month, reduce our carbon footprint, get in shape and spark a challenge among ourselves and for others, my family of three has committed to

going car-free for the month of May.

This is not quite the act of sacrifice it might seem. My husband – assistant professor of outdoor education Brent Bell – and I live here in Durham, and our son goes to preschool at Growing Places at the Woodside apartments. We already function with just one family car, we're fairly serious recreational cyclists for whom a 50-mile ride poses only a moderate threat, and Wildcat Transit can take us to Portsmouth, Dover, or Newmarket.

On the other hand, like many families, the weekly grocery run fills the back of the station wagon. Saturday errands might involve 50-pound bags of dog food or trips to the dump. Socializing takes us down the street and around New Hampshire.

What impact will not using our car have on our lives? Will these car-dependent activities cease? Will we be forced to buy groceries at the convenience store and become anti-social hermits who don't leave home? Will our friends disown us? Will the dog starve? Or will we perhaps bike ourselves into such outstanding shape that we drop 15 pounds and buy sleek new cycling outfits with all the money we've saved on gas?

During the coming month, I'll be chronicling our car-free life in the Portsmouth Herald ([www.seacoastonline.com](http://www.seacoastonline.com)) and on UNH's Discover(ing) Sustainability blog (<http://discoversustainability.org>), trying to provide some tips for reducing a car-dependent lifestyle.

This year, New Hampshire Bike/Walk to Work Day is May 16 – a great day to try leaving the car at home. For more information about Bike/Walk to Work Day on the Seacoast, go to [www.seacoastbikes.org](http://www.seacoastbikes.org). Want to help UNH win the Bike/Walk to Work Day Commuter Challenge? E-mail me at [beth.potier@unh.edu](mailto:beth.potier@unh.edu) if you'd be willing to coordinate these efforts.

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