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Willises "green up" best, by putting basics to work

By Tom Watson

Special to The Seattle Times

The hard part about being the judge for the "Green Me Up" reality TV show, which aired July 7, was that I had to pick a winner.

In their friendly competition on this one-hour special on the DIY Network, the Willis and Peterson families — neighbors on Seattle's Queen Anne hill — enthusiastically embraced the concept. Each family undertook more than 40 projects and activities to "go green."

In the end, I selected the Willis family as the greenest. They won a new Kurrent NV mini electric car valued at \$14,000, donated by the Green Car Co., of Kirkland.

I chose the Willises (parents Ray and Sarah and kids Tim, Max and Stephanie) because I felt that many of the changes they made — especially all the insulation, caulking and weather-sealing — best reflected the kind of mundane but significant changes most of us could make to reduce global warming. It also seemed that the Willises' projects took a bit more work than the Petersons' projects.

But the Petersons (parents Kris and Clara and kids Genna, Anna and Ian) also made such a strong showing that I was glad both families got so much out of the show: the free green products and services; a closer relationship with their neighbors; and the fun of accomplishing these projects as a family.

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BETTY UDESEN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

The little electric car that the Ray Willis family won is driven on errands in their Queen Anne neighborhood. It's not legal for freeway driving because it's not fast enough. Tim Willis, 18, says he has fun with the mini car.