

Gas Prices by Wade Wingler

Isn't it ironic how people now talk about gas prices like they used to talk about the weather? "If you don't like the gas prices in Indiana, stick around for ten minutes and they'll change!" Like the weather, gas prices is a topic that requires daily monitoring and everybody agrees--they're too high.

In preparing for this column, I decided to turn to a local panel of experts for their insight.

Meet our panelists: Katie is ten years old and about to be a 5th grader at Danville South Elementary. She enjoys playing outdoors, riding her bicycle, and playing Disney tunes on the piano.

Natalie is six and just finished up Kindergarten at Danville North Elementary. She's a great singer, a talented artist, and just learned to do a flip off the monkey bars.

Makenna, who refers to me as "Gunka", says she's 2 + 1 because she absolutely refused to turn three earlier this year. She likes Popsicles, her dog Tia, and she recently learned to use the big girl potty almost every single time the occasion arises.

I asked the following questions of each of our panelists and I think you'll find that their responses closely mirror the feelings of most of my readers.

1. What do you think about gas prices?

Katie: "They're too high. My parents have to spend money on gas instead of other things, like food."

Natalie. "I don't like them. They're high. My parents have to spend more money on gas, instead of things like Popsicles and credit cards."

Makenna. "Well, I can't reach 'em. That means too high."

We all seem to have limited information and options in how we react to gas prices. For example, our family is considering a vacation closer to home, but we're not about to quit the jobs that would eliminate our daily commute. Although gas prices are higher than we'd like, few of us are missing meals or drastically changing our lifestyles solely in response to gas prices. Although it's inconvenient, so far, it doesn't seem to be hurting us too much.

2. What should we do about the gas prices?

Katie: "Ask them to lower them." [Who?] "The people who make up the prices. The ones who work at the gas stations."

Natalie: "They should lower them, you know, the people at the gas stations."

Makenna: [Enfuriated] "Gunka, Tia just licked my watermelon!"

There is an endless supply of problems with pipelines and refineries that seem to be conveniently catastrophe-prone during peak travel seasons. While it's pretty clear that the local filling station owners aren't getting too rich, someone must be.

3. What would we do if there were no more gas?

Katie: "Just ride our bikes."

Natalie: "Just walk around, I guess."

Makenna: [shrugs and runs to see if there's more watermelon]

I enjoy riding a bicycle. It's healthy and good for the environment. I'm not advocating that everyone become full time bike commuters, but there are definitely benefits to using other, more efficient, modes of transportation.

4. Where does gas come from?

Katie: "Under the ground. Way under the ground in other countries. Like Australia, I think."

Natalie: "Deep in the ground. It's everywhere; all you have to do is just dig for it."

Makenna: "You make gas, Gunka."

Many argue that the war is all about oil. We all hope for technologies that will put an end to our reliance on foreign oil like hydrogen, ethanol, electric cars and that futuristic De Lorean from the *Back to the Future* movies that operates on something called a 'Mr. Fusion Home Energy Reactor'. I can't wait for the day when a few stalks of celery and a partially drained can of beer will power my car to work!

5. How much does gas cost?

Katie: "Like \$2.50 or so? The same as a pack of pencils."

Natalie: "\$9.99. There's only one other thing that costs that much and it's that razor thingy that daddy uses to get rid of his whiskers."

Makenna: [walking briskly away] "I a big girl. I go poo poo!"

There are studies that show that the price of gas today, when adjusted for inflation, doesn't cost the average American family much more than it did thirty years ago. For some reason, that doesn't seem to soothe the sting I feel when spending \$85 for a single tank of gas.

With that, I must close, because it turns out that Makenna, like Big Oil, has a stinky little problem that's going to require some grown up assistance.