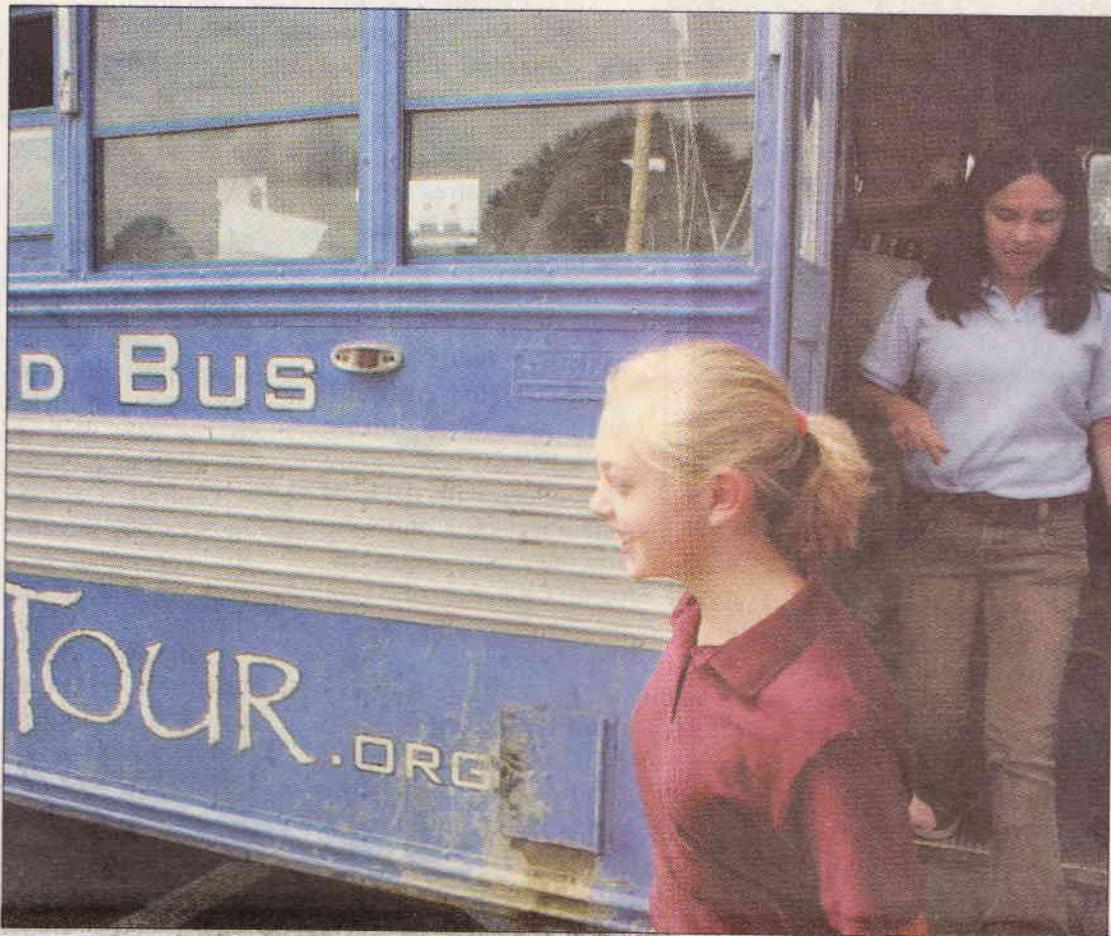


EARTH-DRIVEN



Cyrena Ridgeway, Rebecca Trujillo and fellow eighth-graders at Memorial Middle School had an up-close look at a bus powered by waste vegetable oil. The BioTour has been traveling the country promoting sustainable solutions to the world's energy woes.

Don Pace/Optic photo

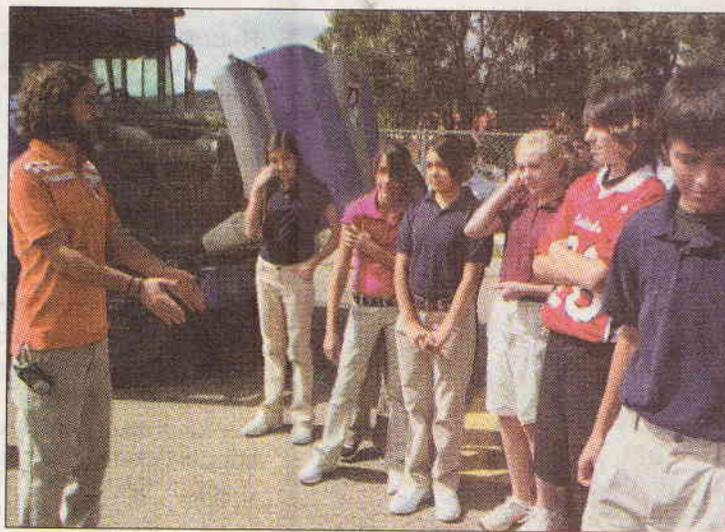
Vehicle uses restaurant grease

By Don Pace
Las Vegas Optic

For the last several years, students at Memorial Middle School have become tuned in to a variety of earth-friendly ways of growing food and harnessing energy.

Using the Agricultural Science Center as a learning tool, kids have built wind turbines, studied solar power and methods of composting, and used their greenhouse for experiments.

Last week, students got a close-up look at an old school bus that had been converted to run on vegetable oil and has been making stops at schools across the country. Dubbed the Bio-



Fernando Austin, strategic outreach coordinator for the Bio-Tour, explains to Memorial Middle School students how an old school bus was converted to run on vegetable oil. A solar panel sits atop the bus generating electricity for things like lighting and cooking.

addressing issues of climate change and the environ-

nonprofit educational Bio-Tour receives an incredible

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Vocation
meet with

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Gilbert Loera vocational class at Luna Community College. He's not taking them to start a new career; he just wants to pick up new skills.

"I've been taking classes over and over. I'm not here to profit. I'm doing it for myself."

He was one of the take carpentry, automotive classes. Luna's president last week.

They were considered would make the college's vocational that would no longer participate.

Loera said he took classes during the the students were degree-seeking.

"I felt out of place. So, like other people, I chose to take classes."

Campos admitted rumors have circulated school would drop trades or that "enthusiasts," preferred to call them, no longer be able to repeatedly.

He said such a move from the truth. Luna will strive to find resources for the programs.

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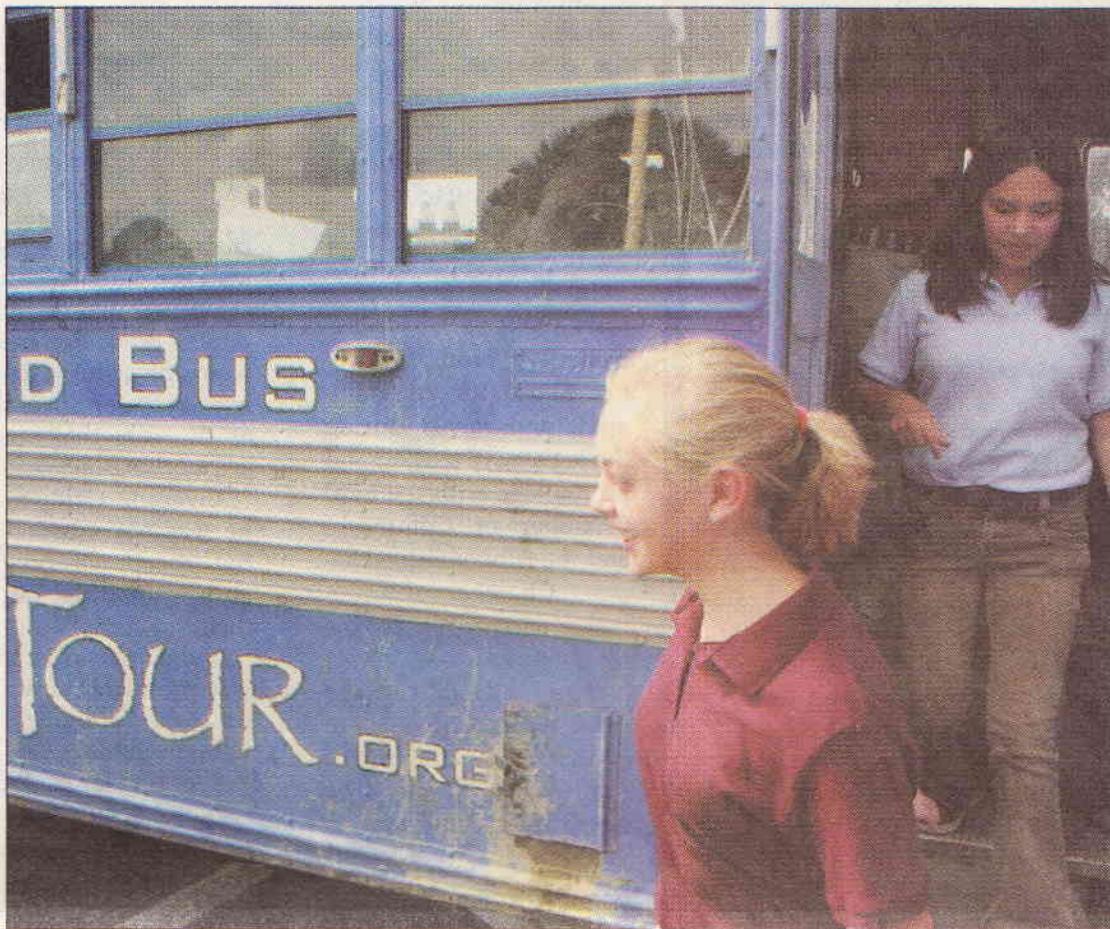
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Don Pace/Optic photo

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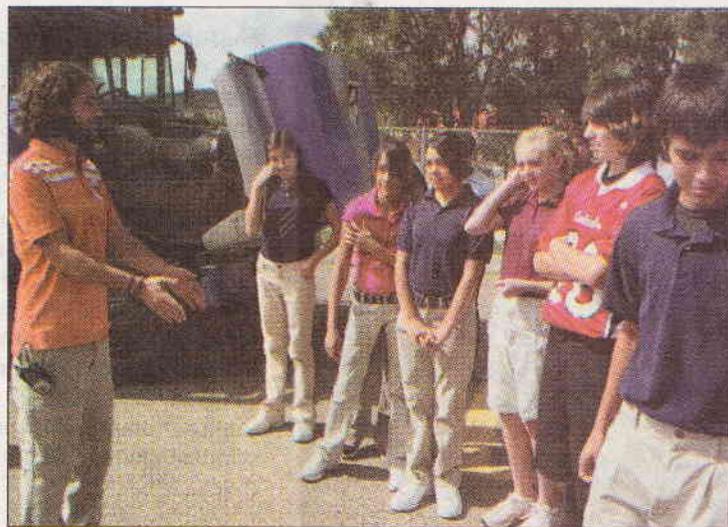
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Using the Agricultural Science Center as a learning tool, kids have built wind turbines, studied solar power and methods of composting, and used their greenhouse for experiments.

Last week, students got a close-up look at an old school bus that had been converted to run on vegetable oil and has been making stops at schools across the country. Dubbed the BioTour, four young environmentalists have hit the road



Fernando Austin, strategic outreach coordinator for the BioTour, explains to Memorial Middle School students how an old school bus was converted to run on vegetable oil. A solar panel sits atop the bus generating electricity for things like lighting and cooking.

addressing issues of climate change and the environment.

Adam Greenberg said the

nonprofit educational BioTour receives an incredible reaction wherever it goes.

See Grease, Page 2

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Grease

From Page 1

"The bus runs on waste vegetable oil, which is recycled from restaurants, and we travel the country advocating for renewable energy, sustainable living and more so opening up the discussion for the importance of thinking where our energy comes from," said Greenberg, a BioTour representative. "People are so excited about this idea — they're excited because they're actually seeing people getting out there and doing something that isn't that hard to do. It's not that difficult to convert a diesel engine to run on waste vegetable oil. It's pretty straight forward."

Greenberg said restaurants typically have to pay to have their vegetable oil removed, so they are thrilled to give it to Bio-

Tour. However, he said restaurants are now realizing that there's a lot of power one can actually generate from vegetable oil.

"More and more frequently, restaurants have contracts and are getting paid, which is good in the long term because it means people are recognizing the benefits of using alternative sources of energy. In the short term, it makes it harder for us to find fuel, but generally it's a good thing," Greenberg said.

Agricultural Science Center director Peter Skelton said, "It fits really well with our programming because our overarching theme is to teach about sustainability. We want the kids to understand the concepts of maintaining ecosystems, agricultural systems and learning about renewable systems. The students are getting a

great opportunity to learn about biofuels, and that's part of our curriculum."

New Mexico State University 4-H STEM specialist Shirley Marlow has been developing the renewable energy curriculum to introduce to the students and discussing alternative energies. She heard about the tour and was able to bring the bio-bus to Las Vegas.

"This group of kids that are traveling all over seemed to fit right in, and they are a little bit closer in age to the students, so perhaps they will make a bigger impact than just adults talking to them," Marlow said.

Eighth-graders Vic Newman and Justin Valdez were impressed at the simplicity of converting the bus engine to run on alternative fuels and help the environment at the same time.

"It's cool," Valdez said.

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