



JOZEY MITCHAM

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FROM THE FRYER TO THE SALT FLATS:

Student Club Aims to Break Land Speed Record and Glass Ceiling with Vegetable Oil-Powered Truck

By Erin Ryan

In 1962, a New Zealand grandfather named Burt Munro made an offering to the “God of Speed.” Off the line at Utah’s Bonneville Salt Flats on a customized Indian Scout motorcycle, Munro set a world record. Until that moment, no one believed he could.

In 2011, a team of Boise State engineering students and recent graduates hope to stand on the same line, fueled by a similar dream and an everyday substance most people consider waste. They are “Greenspeed,” a new university club dedicated to designing, building and racing the world’s fastest vegetable oil-powered vehicle.

“Since the beginning we have been overcoming challenges and pushing the boundaries of what is possible for clubs at Boise State,” says Schenker, who hopes to repurpose used vegetable oil from University Dining Services. “While the thrill of doing something that has not been done is a huge incentive for us, Greenspeed’s purpose is to provide students the opportunity to gain real life experience working in an interdisciplinary environment while contributing to the global conversation about sustainability.”

The club spent the summer researching everything from the chemistry of burning biofuel to fabrication

foot on the salt,” says Mitcham, who will drive the Greenspeed truck. “It will be awesome to be the first group to bring vegetable oil as a fuel and help open the eyes of the public.”

Club adviser John Gardner, a mechanical engineering professor and sustainability expert, says projects like Greenspeed make education come alive.

“In the classroom, we teach the basics and give the students what they need to implement engineering solutions,” he says. “This project is giving them the opportunity to take that technical knowledge and combine it with leadership, management, presentation skills and just plain hard work to achieve a difficult task over a long period of time. I can’t imagine better preparation for the real world.”

Greenspeed also includes John Pasley (promotion), Adrian Rothenbühler (electronics), Adam Spiegelman (suspension), Jason Brotherton (planning), Brett Keys and Cory Sparks (biofuel).

“I’m here to undertake a project so large and complicated that the majority of people would find it infeasible,” Spiegelman says. “I believe with this team we’ll be able to do it.”

Learn more about Greenspeed and watch a video at <http://greenspeed.me>.

The Greenspeed team attended Bonneville’s Speed Week 2010 as rookies observing the action. In 2011, they hope to return as contenders.



SHAWN HOWELL

Founder Dave Schenker says the idea caught fire when he and Jozey Mitcham started talking cars. With his background in mechanics and her experience with Bonneville’s race culture, they laid the foundation for a groundbreaking adventure that is sending a message about the power of imagination and renewable resources.

costs and the physical demands of driving a race vehicle. They attended Bonneville’s Speed Week 2010 as “rookies” and plan to return next summer to take a shot at breaking the 215 mph record of a comparable rig in the Diesel Truck category.

“It has been my dream for 15 years to race at Bonneville, ever since I first set