

Green Bike Tour brings renewable energy message here

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By Dolly A. Butz, Journal staff writer

"Global warming is real. Renewable energy can reduce global warming." That was the message David Osterberg, of the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project, and Tom Cook, a University of Iowa professor, hoped to impress upon students Monday at a rally on the Briar Cliff University campus.

Osterberg and Cook are peddling bicycles equipped with solar panels on the Green Bike Tour for renewable energy, an eight-day, 1,200 mile trip through 5 Midwestern states to demonstrate that renewable energy is being used effectively and has the potential to make an impact.

As the bicyclists ride, the panels gather solar energy for a small motor they use to go up hills. The bike doesn't go any faster with solar power, but it helps extend the range the bicyclists can peddle.

"The bikes are a wonderful way of demonstrating another technology," Osterberg said. "It demonstrates first of all that you can use this in a commuting way to reduce your fossil fuel output. The second thing it tries to demonstrate is that there are lots of ways in which renewable energy works."

Community and campus leaders joined Osterberg and Cook in the discussion about renewable energy outside the Briar Cliff University library.

Aaron Kraft, environmental services manager, talked about the strides Sioux City is making to become more energy efficient.

Kraft said the city is renovating the waste water treatment plant. The project will decommission the sludge-storage lagoons and create a park and wetlands. Gill's landfill near Jackson, Neb. will soon be closed and used as a bioreactor. Biowaste will be buried in order to produce methane gas. The methane gas produced by the decaying garbage can be captured and sold to an ethanol plant that is being constructed



David Osterberg, right, a professor at the University of Iowa's Department of Occupational and Environmental Health and a member of the Iowa Policy Project, plans his biking route with Briar Cliff University professor Jim Redmond as U of I professor Thomas Cook, left, talks with Briar Cliff professor Brian Hazlett about Osterberg's solar power-assisted bicycle Monday at Briar Cliff University. (Staff photo by [Tim Hynds](#))

and used as a power source.

Kraft said the city has converted its traffic lights to high sodium lamps, which save the city several thousand dollars annually, and is also cutting down on energy costs by mowing parks only twice a year.

"There are many things we can do to make a difference," Kraft said. "We hope to have an impact on the community as well as the environment."

While Iowa ranks No. 1 in the country for the production of ethanol and No. 3 in the development of wind energy, State Sen. Warnstadt, D--Sioux City, said there are still more things the state can do to develop alternative energy sources.

"It's not just a pipe dream," he said. "There are quality jobs being created. There is far more potential that is yet to be tapped."

Cook said students can do simple things, such as turning off their computer monitors at night and turning off lights when they are not in their rooms to conserve energy.

"They don't have to go buy a thousand-dollar bike and do something dramatic," he said. "They can make a lot of choices, to car pool, to do simple things."