

GREEN THUMBS



Don Pace/Optic photo

Yvonne Diaz, a New Mexico State University agricultural student, and Memorial Middle School seventh-grader Michael Salas check out a project in the making on a recent day at the school's greenhouse.

NMSU students help local youths

By Don Pace
Las Vegas Optic

Through the years, the Memorial Middle School greenhouse has been a center of activity for students' agricultural and science projects.

It's also a place for aspiring

teachers to get hands-on experience in their craft.

Tom Dormody, a visiting professor of agriculture from New Mexico State University, and a number of his graduate and undergraduate students are learning ways to teach science using agriculture and natural

resource applications.

"They do a lot of hands-on lab work back at NMSU, but this year, I've decided to get them involved in doing some actual teaching. So we brought the students up here today to have a field day at Memorial

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Middle School and get a chance to teach," Dormody said.

The Memorial greenhouse is considered a model for other schools. Greenhouse director Peter Skelton said it is unique.

"This is only happening in Las Vegas, it's not happening anywhere else. We think we're on to something really special," he said.

Dormody agreed.

"This program is completely unique in the country as far as we can determine," he said.

Dormody said officials would like to add another dimension that includes a second day where students can be taken out in the field to work with technical experts.

Skelton said that would also bring career opportunities for students.

"It gives them the opportunity to interact with some of those resource professionals, and starts them thinking about what they might be interested in as far as a career goes," Skelton said.

Skelton said the objectives of the day were to teach about the principles of agricultural science. He said there were four stations — two bottle biology stations are inside the greenhouse, one looking at decomposition processes and the



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other at environmental factors and how they affect plant growth. The outdoor stations are looking at water quality and soil testing.

"We think this is a nice way to have our students interact with university students. Hopefully, it will excite the kids about thinking about going to college and have our university students hone their teaching skills as they work with young people," Skelton said.

Without hesitation, student Jose Maestas said what he had just learned.

"I learned how to adjust the soil PH, and the different textures of the quality, and how that pertains to planting. I also learned how to plant self-watering gardens. This is my favorite class."

Science teacher Roberta Montano has been teaching 29 years.

"We have short- and long-term projects, and it's all hands on. Having

these university students is wonderful for them and us. They get the opportunity to see what it's really like to teach," Montano said.

NMSU graduate student Yvonne Diaz said she wasn't fortunate enough to go to a high school with an ag program.

"I'm really excited about working in this kind of environment, I can't wait to become a teacher. I'm not only teaching, I am also definitely learning a lot. I don't come from a rural area, so I'm learning a lot from my classes, and especially from the kids," Diaz said.

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NEWS

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COLLEGE MENTORS



Don't Pace/Optic photos

Memorial Middle School students got a helping hand from New Mexico State University graduate students recently. College students helped middle school students on several biology projects. Left, NMSU student Yvonne Diaz gives eighth-grader Jamie Ferrandez some one-on-one attention in the school's greenhouse. Middle school students were learning about decomposition and bottle biology. Above, Kimberly Armijo and Estrella Martinez gather composting material for an experiment, as NMSU student Jessie Corrie looks on.

SF college hikes tuition

From The Associated Press

SANTA FE — Tuition is going up at Santa Fe Community College this summer. The college is raising tuition rates from the current \$34 per credit hour for in-district students to \$36.

Students who live out of the district will pay \$47 per credit hour, up from the current \$45.

The college's Governing Board approved the increases last week. College officials say the tuition hike was necessary to balance the budget after a reduction in state funding.

The 2010 Legislature cut Santa Fe Community College's funding by about \$950,000.

N.M. camping reservations system out

From The Associated Press

SANTA FE — The New Mexico State Parks campground reservation system is down until May 12. The division says the online and phone reservation system is unavailable while the agency moves to a new system.

No new reservations will be taken until May 12, but existing reservations will be honored. Acting State Parks Director Tommy Mutz says that while the system is down, visitors may camp in available state park sites without a reservation.