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and Kevin were strongly committed.

"We used a variety of sources that made for big cost savings," Megan said. "We found the kitchen cabinets at our local Habitat for Humanity Store. We bought a lot of our RV appliances and electrical system components at overstock auctions. We borrowed any tools we didn't already have, and we researched tons of vendors looking for sales before we made any purchases."

"The electrical system was another big challenge," Megan added. "We knew we wanted the capability to camp off the grid without needing plug-in/shore power. So, Kevin had to navigate integration of the 12V system (solar panels and batteries) and the 120V system (shore power or our generator), along with the inverter which converts power from one voltage to another and also charges our batteries."

The transformation from bus to Jolene was complete just eight months later in April of 2020. The skoolie has just over 200 square feet of living space with room to sleep six to seven people.

"There's a full-size bed in the back, two twin-size bunks, the couch pulls out to a full-size bed, and the dinette table can be lowered to make another twin-size bed," Megan said.

The renovated bus also has an RV refrigerator, RV air conditioner, apartment-sized gas stove range and oven, a full bathroom with shower, and a rooftop deck. Including the purchase of the bus, Jolene was completed in under \$10,000.

"Kevin and I were recently talking about what the best part of this whole process had been," Megan said. "First, it was a really daunting goal we were able to work through and accomplish together. So, there's a lot of satisfaction in that. But even better is what we've ended up with.

We have a one-of-a-kind RV built and laid out exactly how we want, based on our preferences and our needs as a family, and now we get to take it out and enjoy it."

Recently, the Cummins family traveled with Jolene to Lillydale Campground in Tennessee for a four-day getaway of fishing, kayaking, and s'mores.

"Although some folks in the school bus conversion, or skoolie community, actually live in their buses full-time while they travel and work, we plan to use ours primarily for short-term camping for now," Megan said.

As for advice to others who are looking to renovate a school bus, Megan said research and budget are key.

"There are more and more people every day converting school buses into RVs and documenting the process online," Megan said. "Once you purchase a bus, immediately set a budget and graph out a floor plan. Always reach out to friends and family for help. There are always people willing to assist in the areas you're not confident in, whether that be design, electrical, plumbing, or construction. And most of all, have fun! It will be a grueling, sometimes incredibly frustrating process, but it will be worth it in the end."

For more photos and information of their renovation process and traveling adventures with Jolene, visit the Cummins family Instagram page, The Southern Skoolie, at @thesouthernskoolie or www.instagram.com/thesouthernskoolie.



A bedroom area on the former bus.

PHOTO/Submitted



A bedroom area on the former bus.

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