

St. John's University is Making Environmental History by Launching an A500 Rocket® Model Food Composter, the First One in the US.



New York, New York. (May 12, 2009) - St. John's University is making environmental history by launching an A500 Rocket® model food composter, becoming the first U.S. university to use this technology. The Rocket®, an onsite in-vessel food composter, is used in approximately 16% of UK universities, with more than 260 Rocket® composters operating throughout the UK. This is a significant milestone for US higher education, where St. John's is taking the lead to implement this cutting edge technology and treat food waste in a sustainable way. Educational institutions using the Rocket® composter have cut waste collection costs, saved money on buying compost and pest control, helped divert food waste out of landfill sites, and educated students in sustainability.

The Rocket® composter is a safe solution and a sustainable and hygienic alternative to sending food waste to NYC landfills. The A500 Rocket® composter which is located at St. John's Marillac Loading Dock on the Queens campus treats up to 80 gallons of food waste per week. In just 14 days, the Rocket® composter transforms food waste into compost, which can be used for lawns and other green areas, thus closing the loop of recycling. It is a continuous process; once the 14 day loop is closed, you get compost every day!

St. John's student members of the Earth Club will play a key role on the solution by operating the Rocket® composter. Students volunteering to operate this food composter are expanding their sustainability educational experience, while also helping to "green" their campus. "The Earth Club is playing a critical role in the feasibility study that will enable St. John's to look at the

efficacy of food composting on campus,” explained Frank Cantelmo, Ph.D., the Club’s faculty advisor.

The catalyst for St. John’s University’s decision to identify a sustainable way to recycle food waste is a landmark Memo of Understanding (MOU) that the university signed with the EPA in 2008. With this agreement, St. John’s became a role model for how academic institutions can partner with governmental agencies to reduce carbon emissions. This specific initiative helps to reduce the amount of food waste that is sent to landfills every year. Food waste that goes to landfills produces methane which is 20 times more damaging to the environment than CO₂. Food waste is almost 70% water and leachates, contaminating nearby water streams.

The Rocket[®] composter is the ideal solution to manage organic waste in a sustainable way, including food waste, meat and fish, garden and horticultural waste. It is the perfect solution to solve the organic waste problem at universities, schools, corporate cafeterias, hotels, prisons, and nursing homes, among other users. Chartwells, Compass Group’s division of College and University Dining Service, manages Marillac Dining Hall. Chartwells already segregates the food waste from non organic waste as part of their Trim track program.

The Rocket[®] composter provides a clean and simple solution that allows food waste to be treated after its disposal, within a reasonably small area and minimal operator interaction. The Rocket[®] composter eliminates the need for transportation of organic wastes while reducing CO₂ emissions.

Accelerated Compost Ltd, the Rocket[®] composter manufacturer has been creating significant success stories with this innovative product in the UK. Their customers through the use of the Rocket[®] composter during 2008 have been able to divert almost 4,000 tons of food waste from landfills. North American Trading House, LLC (NATH), which distributes the Rocket[®] composter, has been working closely with Thomas Goldsmith, St. John’s Director of Energy and Environmental Conservation to have the Rocket[®] composter at Marillac Dining Hall.

Gerardo Soto, Managing Director of NATH, said, “The Rocket[®] is the last piece of the recycling puzzle, once you are able to recycle food waste you can achieve Zero waste. We know that the Rocket[®] composter will revolutionize US organic waste treatment initiatives while contributing to the environment.”

Thomas Goldsmith and Dr. Cantelmo worked together in the selection process leading the University to select the A500 Rocket[®]. “What sealed it for me,” said Goldsmith, “was that it passed U.K. health safety standards for food composting. This is critical since we want our students to be able to handle the food compost. In choosing the Rocket, we balanced technology, cost effectiveness, simplicity of operation and safety.”

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