

The Portland Observer Sustainability



Erin Stanforth (right), sustainable practices coordinator for Portland Community College, shows off the rocket composter to staff and faculty at its unveiling ceremony on the Rock Creek Campus in northwest Portland.

Rocket Composter Boosts Recycling

Device is the fourth of its kind in country

Portland Community College is proving that composting and creating an effective closed loop recycling system isn't rocket science.

Last week, the college's Rock Creek Campus joined a select few institutions of higher learning in the United States in improving its sustainability by unveiling its new rocket composter. The rocket, which will help recycle post-consumer waste, is the fourth of its kind in the U. S., the only one west of the Mississippi River and the lone rocket composter in the country being used for post-consumer waste like plastic and paper service ware.

"We really walk the talk," said Rock Creek President David Rule. "People talk about sustainability, but PCC, and Rock Creek in particu-

lar, are really doing it."

The composter was entirely a student-driven process.

"A lot of us have been looking forward to this day for quite awhile," said Jeff Christian, student sustainability volunteer. "It represents technology that is underrepresented and fairly new in the United States."

In essence, the rocket composter is a self-contained, continuous-cycle composting unit, Christian said. It allows daily feeding of service ware and the harvest of compost. To speed up the process, it regulates water, temperature and humidity to facilitate four stages of the breakdown of the compost.

The Rock Creek Campus already has an award-winning loop system featuring red worms that break down leftover food scraps. But as Christian said, the 40,000 worms in the campus composting bins have their limitation and cannot break down

plates. Before the rocket composter, the campus had to send all of its post consumer waste to the local landfill.

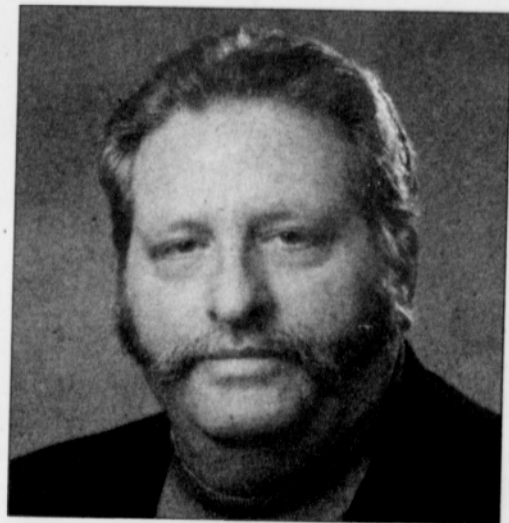
As a benefit to student learning, the rocket composter, which is a long metal cylinder, will have a data log computer on it to monitor real time sampling of conditions inside it for use in biology, environmental science, chemistry and landscape technology classes to further their research.

By creating four stages of microbial decomposition, the rocket is able to compost faster and in greater volume than other technologies. It will fit well into the Rock Creek Campus's loop system where students grow produce in the campus' learning garden for use in cafeteria and then recycling pre-consumer food waste using a composting worm bin. The loop is completed, or closed off, by using the compost produced by the worms to fertilize the garden.

Promoting Good Soil, Water

A north Portland resident who sees the promotion of good soil and water as major factors in the livability and stability of local neighborhoods is a candidate for the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District in the Nov. 2 vote-by-mail election.

Chris Jackson, has lived in the city since 1983. He has worked in the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services as an electronic system specialist for the past 15



Chris Jackson

years. His job duties include inspection work at soil and erosion prevention sites. He is continuing his professional education by enrolling in the Clean Water production program at Clackamas Community College.

Jackson said he would like to see more micro farmers and community gardens in the metro area. Another priority is encouraging the building of well-designed, soil erosion controls.

NO Limits

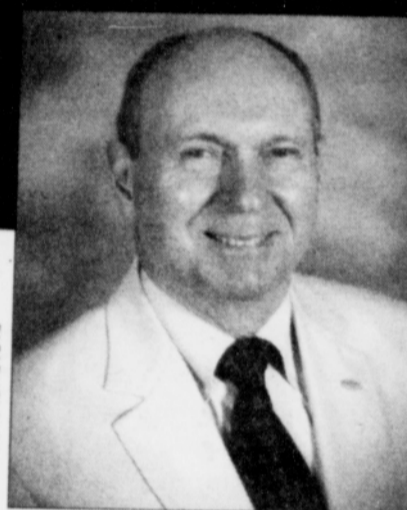
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