

## University of Maryland Leads by Example!

**Gregory K Thompson, Asst. Director of Facilities & Maintenance - University of Maryland College Park**, wanted to use Somat's DH-100 Dehydrator to provide fuel for his rooftop garden program. He knew the dehydrator provided a better, more responsible solution to dealing with compostable waste, but he quickly learned that the unsorted "pulped" product coming from the cafeteria had too many foreign materials in it for his application. Although that product was being hauled to an appropriate facility for composting, Greg knew he needed a screened product to re-introduce the material as he desired.

*You could say that his thinking has turned some heads! Greg decided to collect only the waste from the salad prep room in the south campus cafeteria, which equates to approximately 400 lbs of waste per day. This waste does include a very limited amount of meat products that include the scraps from the slicers. He wanted to have control of the product so he could directly re-introduce it to his burgeoning rooftop garden program.*

The salad room provides a huge range of products that get dehydrated but are primarily fruits and vegetables. He tested whether this would work or not as a direct soil amendment by taking some struggling plants and placing them in 100% dehydrated material from his salad room. No one thought they would grow. Those plants quickly sprung to life and as Greg says, "After the test we quickly realized that the dehydration left us with some of the richest, most wonderful soil you could ever want to jumpstart your garden!"

The test turned out even better than he expected. According to Greg the plants that were once drab and dreary grew nicely and got healthier. They now use the dehydrated product exclusively to fuel the multibuilding rooftop garden program. As Greg continues to spearhead and initiate, he has also taken great satisfaction in the natural takeover by students. Those students are using the gardens to do amazing things. Herbs and vegetables have been re-introduced to the food chain at special events featuring the rooftop garden harvest. It appears certain that this program has taken on a life of its own. The students have even reduced another of typical large campus headaches. They are using the abundance of skids leftover from deliveries to build the planters.

The University's administration has noticed and shown their commitment with investments in building improvements to meet code and allow the proper access to the gardens. Plans are being made to expand the program to use more waste from the other two large campus cafeterias.



*Greg Thompson and his assistant Jason Millar*

Creative thinking has helped one positive initiative lead to another. The students use disassembled incoming crates to build the planter boxes. At least as the rooftop program continues to grow, or perhaps longer, the use of crates has alleviated another problem. The kids would eventually like to turn the south dining hall rooftop into an outdoor café or something along those lines. Greg is proud to tell anyone about this program and point out that it has taken many more than just him to build it.



We, at Somat Company, are proud to have a growing number of customers that are thinking outside the box and making positive things happen. According to Greg our equipment has helped inspire his programs. "We really could not be more pleased with the Somat equipment. We have a range of their products and are planning on purchasing more. In the end we plan to have all three of our campus salad rooms participating."



## A note from Lin:

### What do our clients need to know about compostable disposables?

As we continue to provide our customers with solutions that are proactive, in every regard, to conserving and protecting our environment, it is also our responsibility to understand and educate on the pitfalls and sales tactics companies are using to promote their disposable products. Many of these products are not in fact compostable and should not be used with the intent to compost.

As we've all seen in the "green" initiative, companies exploit hot button words to promote products and boost sales. By far the most exploited word used today in advertising is "biodegradable". Biodegradable does not mean compostable. When products "biodegrade", they break down naturally into smaller parts but do not necessarily break

down further or into a natural, organic material. I could easily write a long essay on the raging debate between the plastics industry and conservationists on what, if anything, will ever become a "best practice".

The American Society for Testing & Materials, or ASTM, issues ASTM D6400 compliance when something is capable of undergoing biological decomposition in a compost site. To be compostable, they must be able to biodegrade, disintegrate, and have NO eco-toxic by-product left after the process. Many, in fact most biodegradable plastics do not meet all three of the requirements.

We'll let the experts battle on the keywords like bioplastics, degradable, biodegradable, and compostable. The most important thing for us as a company, and as stewards of our

industry, is to make appropriate and knowledgeable recommendations. Many products being marketed one way are still better off being treated another.

With the March heat wave behind us I wish you all a wonderful springtime and look forward to continued success.

Talk to you soon

*Lin Sensewig*

General Manager



## Employee Spotlight:



### Mike Putt

Somat's featured employee is Mike Putt. Mike's going on his second year with the company. He started with Somat in the Dewatering Department but, like all employees, has worn many hats. Most recently Mike has been Somat's lead representative and technician when our consultants feel better about having a Somat tech on hand for a repair or problem. He's been a whole bunch of places and takes tremendous satisfaction in getting things back on track. Mike's married 9 years and lives with his wife in Robesonia, PA. It's safe to say his favorite hobby is restoring his old

classic cars. He's near completion on his 1967 Cougar that he's had since his junior year in high school. A close second, but no less noteworthy, Mike is very active with his church, Calvary Bible Fellowship.

With the transition of Stero equipment manufacturing to Lancaster, Somat has selected Mike to take on a new challenge and opportunity. He will be moving into a management position with the Foodservice Segment. Congratulations Mike!

## New Trailer Digs!

Recently Somat unveiled its new design for the demonstration and educational trailer. The new wrap was installed over the winter. According to Todd Heagy, "I'm definitely seeing some heads turn out on the road!"

