

**City and County Beat**

## **City starts composting pilot program**

**By Sarah Coppola | Tuesday, April 20, 2010, 10:57 AM**

The City of Austin wants more residents to try composting their food, and will offer incentives to make that happen.

Residents who take a free composting class offered by the city, start composting and use only 30-gallon garbage collection carts — the smallest of three sizes the city offers — will be rebated 75 percent of the cost of a composting system, up to \$75.

The Solid Waste Services Department has \$75,000 available for the rebates, which are part of a four-month pilot program. The first composting class will be held Saturday at 4 p.m. at the Sustainability Stage at the Green Living Expo at the Austin Convention Center, Solid Waste Services division manager Jessica King said. Residents don't need to sign up in advance, and other class dates will be posted soon at [www.austinrecycles.com](http://www.austinrecycles.com), she said.

The city also launched an Earth-Day-themed program today called One Green Step that asks residents to make simple changes to reduce their carbon footprint.

“All of us have a role to play” in environmental protection, Mayor Lee Leffingwell said at a morning announcement. He was joined by video game designer Richard Garriott, who spent time in space two years ago and said seeing Earth from that vantage point made him want to live a greener life. He said he has re-insulated and added photovoltaic panels to his home and replaced gas-guzzling vehicles with more efficient ones.

Garriott and the mayor will appear in print, radio and TV ads promoting the program, King said. Solid Waste Services is also holding a One Green Step event from 2 to 5 p.m. May 1 at the Pan Am Recreation Center where residents can learn more about the program. Solid Waste Services will spend \$60,000 on that event and the marketing efforts, King said.

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## Pilot program reduces trash in Austin schools

by AMY JOHNSTON / KVUE News

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Four Austin Independent School District schools are piloting a program to reduce trash. The focus is on compost materials.

The cafeteria at Menchaca Elementary School runs like a machine. Classes come and go at three-minute intervals. But there's a slight difference on the way out the door. "It's just a matter of putting something in a different trash can," said Principal John Rocha.



That different trash can is compost pile for food and some paper products. Each week, they collect about 1,000 pounds worth of waste that now goes into the compost pile.

"In the schools now, they don't have a lot of cans and bottles and normal recycling elements. So this gives the school a unique way to recycle and divert as much as possible from the landfill," said Rick Fraumann, of Texas Disposal Systems.



Since this pilot program started in February, the schools put about 40 percent less garbage in landfills. Texas Disposal Systems mixes the food with wood waste from local green builders and turns it into Garden-ville, chemical-free, organic compost.

"It smells kind of stinky," said 2nd grader Jillian Ybarbo.

But it is popular with Central Texas gardeners. At school on Monday, students helped plant a tree using the Garden-Ville compost.

"It has like a different color of dirt. Dirt is kind of brown and this one, the compost is black," said 2nd grader Joseph Jordan.

The compost pilot program is currently in four AISD elementary schools and may move into every AISD elementary school. The district and Texas Disposal say the cost for new compost system will be negated by the reduction in waste removal costs.

"I think the real beautiful thing that happens from this sort of program is that thinking becomes part of their everyday thinking for the rest of their lives," said Rocha.

And they are learning to be a part of a community.



## **AISD Starts Composting Pilot Program**

**Newsroom**  
**4/19/2010**

Austin schools throw away tons of food each week but a new pilot program underway could help make "lemons out of that lemonade". Four Austin schools are turning all of their leftover and discarded cafeteria food into compost. Texas Disposal System's Rick Fraumann says the food takes about 45 days to break-down, then the compost is sold to homeowners and gardeners in Central Texas. Fraumann says if the program is successful....he wants to expand it to other school districts in Central Texas.