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MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2006

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HEALTH & FITNESS, B1

Turning grief into action

Bowen is trying to stop a killer — amyotrophic lateral sclerosis — better known as Lou Gehrig's disease or ALS. After his wife died of the disease, the former state police trooper is trying to raise money for ALS research. **Page A3**

Reflecting on a remarkable life

Anna Amalia Carnevale last week celebrated her 106th birthday. Hers has been a lifetime filled with stories. **Page A3**

M. Korea warned against nuclear test

A joint Japanese message that a nuclear test "cannot be tolerated," and Pyongyang appeared to be in a state of high alert. **Page A4**

Shooting kills 3 in Manalapan

A 4-year-old child left four children orphaned as a shooting in Manalapan may have led a man to kill his brother-in-law. **Page A4**



BY MARK JACOBSTEIN/THE TIMES

Employees at the ShopRite on Olden Avenue in Ewing discard produce in large quantities every day as it goes bad. The store now diverts nearly 80 percent of its garbage to cardboard and food waste recycling.

Keeping garbage from wasting away

BY RYAN TRACY
STAFF WRITER

At the vast composting fields of Eastern Organic Resources in Burlington County, discarded banana peels and rotting cucumbers are considered a valuable commodity.

Eight years ago, the Springfield facility was one of four places in New Jersey where food and organic waste could be recycled. In a state that produces more than 1.5 million tons of food waste each year, according to the

state Department of Environmental Protection, these businesses provided a sorely needed service.

Yet when Eastern Organic stopped accepting food waste in August, it became the last of the four recyclers to close its doors. The public complained about the smell of the open-air composting at Eastern Organic, and the business is in such a state of retreat that it may not even build an odor-containing indoor facility

See **GARBAGE**, Page A7

Yankees deny reports that Joe Torre will be fired
SPORTS, C1



Mostly sunny and

A8

Opinion

A2

Lottery

B5

Crossword

Classified

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Among the similarities are that Ficooco and Hector Campos Jr., the fictional student in Oates' story, were 19 years old, had their fathers' first names, disappeared in late March after a night of drinking at

The fictional Campos apparently plunged down a trash chute at a fraternity house, while authorless investigating the Ficooco case have theorized the TCNJ student may have plummeted down his

She said she doesn't recall saving the e-mail, which called having been written some emotion and I didn't think would be a good idea for her to be seen by other people.

elements of the Ficooco case, Oates said she didn't previously realize the degree of similarity.

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GARBAGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

on its Springfield property.

Clashes with DEP regulators and economic difficulties have hobbled the state's food waste recycling industry, but local recycling entrepreneurs and activists are working to reverse the trend.

They see the veritable mountains of garbage produced by the state's dense population as "New Jersey's natural resource," and they want to install cutting-edge facilities at locations in Trenton and Union County that would make the state's solid waste recycling system one of the most sophisticated on the planet.

Those who appreciate the energy and fertilizer potential in organic waste think that throwing it all into a landfill is a terrible waste, and Stephen Paul of the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory is one of a new breed of recyclers who may be part of the solution.

Paul has the technology to turn organic waste — grass clippings, paper, vegetables and anything else that comes from a plant — into components for P-Series fuel, an alternative fuel for automobiles that can be used in flexible fuel vehicles already manufactured by Ford, General Motors and other automakers.

Local officials have expressed support for Paul's proposal to modify an unused sludge treatment plant on Trenton's Duck Island that was constructed for \$80 million at taxpayer expense before the project was aborted. Once operational, the "Trenton Fuel Works" would be the first facility in the country to turn urban waste materials into fuel.

"I'm hoping Trenton is going to be the leader in this country," said Paul, who is in the process of securing the necessary permits and additional investment. It's time for the city to dust off its "Trenton makes, the world takes" slogan and "get back in the saddle," he said.

"It's hard to do anything small in the energy field, but if I can make enough of (the fuel) and it costs less than gasoline, there's a huge market for it," Paul said. He expects the facility to open by March 2007.

In Union County, Converted Organics Inc. is proposing another indoor facility that, if constructed, would be the first of its kind in the nation. The technology accelerates the composting process by adding oxygen and heat, converting the organic waste into a "soil amendment" that is cheaper and less environmentally adverse than chemical fertilizers, according to the company's Web site.

The company has already received approval from the county and is working to secure DEP permits and more capital investment, according to the Solid Waste Resource Renewal Group at Rutgers University.

Both these projects provide a clear alternative to the large outdoor composting yards of Eastern Organic: they use technology that stays indoors and is odor-free.



Jay Ward, an assistant manager at ShopRite, dumps rotten produce into bins outside the Ewing store. Clashes with DEP regulators and economic difficulties have hobbled the state's food waste recycling industry, but local recycling entrepreneurs and activists are working to reverse the trend.

FRANK JACOBS
THE TIMES

Resident complaints about odors and groundwater pollution brought stringent enforcement action against Eastern Organic from DEP officials, who believe "an outdoor food waste composting facility (is not) a viable option, given the density of people here in New Jersey," said Wolf Skaeol, DEP assistant commissioner for compliance and enforcement. "An indoor facility is a whole different issue," he added.

Eastern Organic had plans for an indoor facility on its Burlington County site, but relations among residents and local officials in Springfield Township, the DEP, and the composter have soured to the point that company president David Goodemote believes moving to another state might be the only option for his business.

"The township wants us out," said Goodemote, who added that discussions with DEP about the enclosed facility "have gotten nowhere" in three years. The proposal would have allowed the company to accept 200,000 tons of food waste per year for processing indoors.

"That would only put a dent in the amount of food waste per year that is available for recycling in the state," Goodemote said. "It's a very sad situation."

As other entrepreneurs try to get operations online, local advocates are asking the state to help speed the process to ensure that the solid waste recycling industry continues to grow.

"New Jersey can be a leader in developing reusable organic waste as a valuable, commercial product," said Priscilla Hayes, who works with the waste renewal group at Rutgers as well as the Sustainable Business Network in Princeton to try to maintain a growing network of waste generators that can supply these new recyclers.

"It's not about recycling so much as using resources," she added. "We are keeping New Jersey's garbage from going to waste."

One way to boost the industry, Hayes says, is to ban organic waste from landfills, something Massachusetts will do starting in 2010.

"To me, that's a responsible approach," said Mike Manna, a food waste diversion expert who often works with waste haulers in Central New Jersey. "(The state) said, 'Here's the date, get ready, be prepared.' They're helping facilities get permitted to get food waste."

New Jersey has set a goal of recycling 50 percent of its solid waste, according to the 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan. The number stood at 32.7 percent as of 2003, according to DEP statistics. Improvement in food waste recycling, which is recommended by the waste management plan, could be important to achieving that goal.

"Unless we get another facility permitted relatively quick, there's going to be no growth," Manna said. Without growth in food waste recycling the state will not reach its 50-percent goal, Manna predicted.

DEP currently does have a permit coordination program that could be used to speed up the opening of food waste recycling facilities in light of the scaling back of operations at Eastern Organic.

"Permit coordinating is a great process," Hayes said, but "it's just not being used at this point in time."

But even if the permitting process takes time, advocates still believe that New Jersey has the population and infrastructure that will continue to attract the highest order of recyclers.

"With any kind of recyclable, the biggest logistical headache is transportation," said Manna. "As far as I know, there's no large-scale commercial food waste collection in the country the way we do it in New Jersey."

Large generators like Foodarama Supermarkets Inc., which owns 26 ShopRite stores in Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean counties, already divert much of their food waste to the recycling stream.

"On a given month in the summertime, just in our blue bins (that contain organic waste from the prepared foods, deli, bakery, and produce aisles), we are talking about 400 tons per month at our stores," said Rick Felton, a vice president of Foodarama.

"All this stuff would have gone right into the garbage compacter," said Bill Carrey, manager of the World Class ShopRite on Olden Avenue in Ewing. The store now diverts nearly 80 percent of its garbage to cardboard and food waste recycling, Carrey said.

Since the shutdown of Eastern Organic, hauling companies have been scrambling to find a new destination for all that garbage.

"We found a composter in Pennsylvania who can take a limited amount" as well as "various farms in New Jersey," Manna said. "We have accommodated the majority of the material."

Without a food waste recycling system in place, all of the waste would be hauled to a landfill, where it would rot away with other less useful garbage and "go to waste," as advocates put it.

But recycling companies want to compete with landfills by charging lower "tipping fees" to obtain the waste (and saving local businesses money in the process), then converting it into a marketable product.

"When you really think about it, there's a heck of a lot of energy that's tucked away in all this stuff, and it's pretty darn stupid to throw it all out," Paul said.

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