Munchinator reduces trash to compost-like product

By Kathryn Reed

The contraption looks a bit like a sophisticated high school science project as it rocks back and forth, with steam escaping and a slight rumble reverberating in the large room. The Munchinator is at work.

A team of representatives from Carson City-based Ecologico Logic Inc. brought a prototype of their machine from their Southern California offices to South Tahoe Refuse this week to demonstrate how organic waste can be turned into compost in a matter of hours.



Mohammed Memon tells a crowd Nov. 3 about his company's device to breakdown organics. Photos/Kathryn Reed

More than two dozen cans of pine needles and wood products were dumped into a funnel of sorts to enter the presoaking stage before going to the digester.

It took the firm’s research team 10 years to develop the patented naturally occurring microorganisms that breakdown the waste.

Water is added at the start, then it is re-circulated to continue working on fresh waste. The amount of water needed depends on what is being processed. The 2-ton system on display used 300 gallons of water.

It costs about $20 in energy (it runs on electricity) per ton of waste, officials said.

The end product is 20 percent solids, with the rest being water and carbon dioxide. The solid looks like wet pulverized wood chips – with little aroma.

Using this aerobic method to breakdown the waste is cleaner compared to anaerobic organisms that produce toxic gases like methane, hydrogen sulfide and sulfur dioxide.

“The solid is like an organic fertilizer, but it’s not rated as a fertilizer,” explained Mohammed Memon, chief operations officer of Ecologico. “But it’s super nutrient rich. It’s sellable as a growth enhancer.”

He brags of his avocado crop since using the compost in his yard – four harvests a year instead of one.

Ron Cline, director of marketing, said the Munchinator is all about helping the environment. It means less waste going to landfills, which in turn means fewer trucks on the road and byproducts that can be reusable.

Cline said the goal is not to compete with entities like South Tahoe Refuse, but to be a partner. He said his firm has buyers lined up for the solid that the Munchinator produces.

John Marchini, who runs South Tahoe Refuse, isn’t sure his company needs a machine like this because of the chipper they use at the Resource Recovery Center and the ability to sell

the end product to users in the Carson Valley.

He said he would be more interested in grinding everyday trash. The state would have to make a ruling if reducing a pile of trash by 25 percent counts the same as diverting it from a landfill.

Marchini's other concern would be the wastewater if household trash is involved, especially plastics.

The company is giving demos of the system in various cities, but is not limiting the technology to just municipalities.

"We want to take smaller systems to hotels," Cline said. "We could take this size into cruise ships."

Although Ecologico is promoting this to get rid of organic waste, it could be used to reduce trash as well as biohazards.

Cline, who lives near the old Meyers Landfill on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe, said the Munchinator could "process landfill dirt and it would come out clean so you don't have to truck contaminated dirt."

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

Dennis J. Oliver – 1963-2010

Dennis Oliver of Incline Village passed away Nov. 3 following a serious, monthlong illness. He was 47.

Dennis was born May 20, 1963.

Dennis was the public information officer for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and an extremely valued employee of the agency over the last three and a half years, according to

TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta.



Dennis Oliver

“Dennis’s love for Lake Tahoe combined with his superlative writing skills made him an exceptional spokesperson for our agency and we are deeply saddened over his loss,” Marchetta said.

Dennis moved to Lake Tahoe from the Bay Area in 2007 and immediately became an active part of the community and passionate advocate for Lake Tahoe. He was a key team member on the successful campaign for a ballot initiative to raise funds for fuel reduction work in the Douglas County portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin and was a board member of the Sustainable Tahoe Congress.

Dennis never hesitated to be involved in civic affairs and was a candidate for the Incline Village General Improvement District board earlier this year.

“Dennis made a major impact on Lake Tahoe during his time here,” said Julie Regan, external affairs director and Dennis’ supervisor and colleague. “We will remember his laughter, his extraordinary talents and especially his unwavering commitment to Lake Tahoe’s restoration.”

Dennis spent more than 27 years as a reporter, editor, writer, instructor and communications professional, including three years covering environmental policy, investigative news and special projects for the Oakland Tribune and six years as director of communications for California Alliance for Jobs

where Dennis focused on promoting important public infrastructure projects.

Impassioned for nature and the outdoors, Dennis also authored two regional travel, nature and outdoor guides, “Inside Out Northern California” (1999) and “Camping! Northern California” (2001). Dennis also supported the arts and enjoyed painting in his spare time. He was an avid poker player and supported many charitable poker tournaments at local casinos.

Above all, Dennis was a consummate journalist. His writing was inspiring and poignant and he used his skills to educate local residents and visitors about how to Keep Tahoe Clear.

Services are pending.

Staff members at TRPA are initiating an arts and environmental education fund in his memory. For additional information, contact Jeff Cowen, TRPA community liaison, at (775) 589.5278 or email to jcowen@trpa.org.

Toccata sets Winter MusicFest schedule

Toccata – Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – kicks off its 2010-11 Winter MusicFest with a program featuring selections from Handel’s Messiah along with many holiday favorites.

Performance dates:

Dec. 15, 7:30pm, Trinity Episcopal Church in Reno.

Dec. 17, 7:30pm, St. Theresa Catholic Church in South Lake Tahoe.

Dec 18, 2pm, St. Francis of Assisi Church on Mt. Rose Highway and Highway 28, Incline Village.

Dec. 19, 3 pm, Squaw Creek Resort in Olympic Valley.

Dec. 26, 3 pm, Christ the King Lutheran in Tahoe City.

The Truckee Tahoe Community Chorus will collaborate with Toccata on the Dec. 15 and 19 performances and the Sierra Nevada College Choir will collaborate on the Dec. 17 and 18 concerts.

Tickets are $35 preferred, $20 adults, $15 seniors, $5 students with children under 12 free. Tickets may be purchased at the door or online. Call (775) 313.9697 for more information.

LTCC fire cadet joins Tahoe Douglas department

Jenny Alustiza, a 2008 graduate of the Lake Tahoe Community College Fire Academy, has been hired on with the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District after graduating from their academy last month.

Alustiza had to go through the Tahoe Douglas Fire Academy to obtain the Nevada certifications the college doesn’t offer. She is the first woman to graduate from that academy. She will also be the only female firefighter for the department, though not the only one ever hired.



Jenny Alustiza practices ventilation training during the Lake Tahoe Basin Fire Academy. Photo/Leona Allen

"I am so proud of Jenny and her accomplishment. This is our first full-time hire from Tahoe Douglas – a collaborating academy agency – and Jenny represents the strength of our program very well," said Leona Allen, with the LTCC academy.

– Kathryn Reed

Flu clinics in South Lake Tahoe

El Dorado County has added two community flu shot clinics in South Lake Tahoe.

The vaccine will be offered free of charge to children age 6 months through 18 years of age, and Medicare Part B will be billed for people age 65 and older. There is an administration

fee of $15 for people age 19 through 64, but no one will be turned away due to inability to pay. The flu shot and nasal flu mist will be available. Flu mist is recommended for healthy people ages 2 to 49.

Upcoming Community Flu Shot clinics in Tahoe include:

* Nov. 17 from 9am-noon at the Senior Center located at 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd. in South Lake Tahoe.

* Dec. 1 from 9am-noon at the Senior Center located at 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd. in South Lake Tahoe.

In addition to the seasonal flu vaccine, the whooping cough booster vaccine (Tdap) for adolescents and adults, as well as the pneumococcal vaccine will be available at the clinics. Tdap vaccine (which protects against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) will be a required vaccine for school children in grades seven and up beginning next July.

For questions about the flu clinics in Tahoe, call (530) 573.3155.

People who are severely allergic to eggs or egg products, and infants younger than 6 months of age should not get the flu vaccine. Individuals should check with their healthcare provider if they are unsure whether they should receive influenza or other vaccines.

AAUW to host women’s movement program

South Lake Tahoe AAUW welcomes members, guests and the public on Nov. 13 at 10a, at the Aspen Room at Lake Tahoe Community

College library to learn about the women who contributed to the passage of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote.

Storyteller and AAUW member Sherna Kopple Svensson will share a brief history of the suffragettes and the almost forgotten women who filled in for men fighting World War I.

Following her presentation, a multi-generational panel of women will discuss the changes brought about in their lifetime as women took a greater role in determining the course of their own lives.

The event is free and the public is welcome.

At this meeting, a $4 brunch will be available as well as complimentary beverages.

Call (530) 542.8748 or emailaspens11@att.net by Nov. 11.

Find out where crime is happening in El Dorado County

Have you ever seen flashing blue lights in your neighborhood and wanted to know what was going on? Do you want to find out how safe your neighborhood really is? Now you can, through a new partnership between the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office and CrimeReports, creators of the National Crime Map, at www.CrimeReports.com.

"Providing reliable, timely information to our citizens is one of our top priorities," Sheriff Fred Kollar said in a press release. "And partnering with CrimeReports gives us the ability to keep the public informed

on a regular basis as to what is going on in the community."

The map is also available through the CrimeReports iPhone app.

The service lets local citizens sign up for free customized email alerts to stay on top of crime in their neighborhood. Putting in your city let's you see where registered sex offenders are.

"Information is power," Kollar added. "And we hope that giving the community this information will help them prevent crime in their neighborhoods."

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office is joining more than a thousand other law enforcement agencies of all sizes across North America that are sharing their crime information with the public through the map, like Baltimore, Boston, San Jose, San Francisco, Portland, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles County, and more.

You can access your local crime map and sign up for daily, weekly, or monthly email crime alerts at www.CrimeReports.com.

Harpist's CD release party

Harpist Anne Roos is having CD release party on Nov. 20 from 6:30-8:30pm at Harrah's Tahoe in Stateline.

Entertainment will be provided by Screenbooth Lake Tahoe and JJ Entertainment, who will be playing tracks from Roos' new recordings.

Roos is teaming up with Bread & Broth, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to feed the hungry in South Lake Tahoe. Gift baskets will be raffled off, with the proceeds

going to help Bread & Broth provide Thanksgiving meals to those in need.

The event is free, but RSVP necessary by emailing anne@celticharpmusic.com.

North Shore meeting geared toward frontline staff

The North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual Winter Recreation Luncheon on Nov. 10 at noon, with an 11:30am registration check-in, at the Olympic Village Lodge (formerly Olympic Village Inn), 1909 Chamonix Place in Olympic Valley.

This event is geared to provide insight about winter happenings, including events, festivals and activities, to frontline, front desk and concierge employees, along with business owners and managers. Attendees can give a brief presentation at the luncheon, as well as provide 80 brochures or other pieces of collateral to be distributed during the event.

This luncheon sells out, so early sign ups are recommended. Deadline to register is Nov. 5. Cost is $28/person for chamber members and $35/person for non-members and includes lunch.

For more information about the event, to register or provide collateral, call Kym Fabel, North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce manager at (530) 581.8764 or kym@puretahoenorth.com. Download a registration form, then go to Programs and Documents.

Bookstore generates cash for Tahoe’s Family Resource Center

By Virginia Matus-Glenn

South Lake Tahoe has many hidden treasures and I’d like to take this opportunity to tell you about one of my favorites. I’m an avid reader and at first glance it appears that if you live here and want a book without going to Carson City or Reno, you’re limited to the local libraries. And for our many visitors, even this isn’t really an option.

But that’s where our “treasure” comes to the rescue. The Bookworks is located 3330 Lake Tahoe Blvd., No. 9, in the mall next to Freshies restaurant. It’s the collection of shops next to the Bank of America on the corner of Fremont Street and Highway 50.



Bookworks offers deals on books, while helping families. Photo/Virginia Matus-Glenn

The signage is limited so you really have to look for it. (There are some other interesting shops and offices there, so take time to explore.)

The Bookworks is a tiny store packed with a wonderful collection of newer books, old books, hardbacks and paperbacks. The books are well organized and the all-volunteer staff can help you find whatever you're looking for.

Amazingly, it's the only bookstore in South Lake Tahoe.

The prices are great – averaging $3. The selection is varied and changes regularly.

If you read for pleasure, come see what they have to offer. If your teen is taking a sophomore English lit class at South Tahoe High School, come check to see if last year's sophomores donated their books and you'll save a bundle. If you collect books on a certain topic, they just might have exactly the book you want.

All Bookworks sales directly support the South Lake Tahoe Family Resource Center, which provides free services and programs for local children and families. The store relies on donations from the community and many readers bring in as many books as they purchase. Because the Family Resource Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit donations are tax deductible.

As a member of the board of the Family Resource Center, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to discover my favorite South Lake Tahoe "hidden secret".