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'Green' Business Grows Out Of Class Project

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Butler University Students Devise Composting Service

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INDIANAPOLIS -- What started as a study in business for some Butler University students has grown into a full-fledged "green" company aimed at taking the stress out of composting.

Back to Earth Compost, the brainchild of junior Conner Burt, started as proposal for a class called Real Business Experience.

"It's very experiential learning. We use a small-business model that the students actually plan and define themselves," said program coordinator Dick Halstead. "Those who want to actually go out and run their businesses, which is funded by the university."

Burt and his partners proposed a central composting location on campus that would be fueled by kitchen scraps and other items picked up weekly from area subscribers.

He said he got the idea while waiting in line for a cup of coffee.

"I realized that in Starbucks they offer biodegradable cups, which is a good idea, but if they go to the same landfill as all of the rest of the trash, the problem really isn't mitigated," Burt said.

Back to Earth Compost now occupies space behind Butler's baseball fields, and is prepared to handle between 20 and 45 households, and possibly some Broad Ripple Restaurants as well.

For \$5 a week, customers within five to 10 miles of campus get a bucket to fill with compostable material, which is picked up weekly and its biodegradable liner replaced.

In the spring, the plan is to give those subscribers their contributions back in the form of nutrient-rich soil.

"We're done our research, and we've found that 30 percent of household waste is organic material that can be composted," Burt said. "We're trying to provide people who don't have the time or the space to compost; we're trying to make it easy for them."

The company will also be partnering with Butler's [Center for Urban Ecology](#) to work on a pilot study for a fraternity or sorority house composting effort. Ultimately, it could turn into a campus-wide effort.

"We're just going to take it this semester and see how it goes," Burt said. "If it goes well, we have some

options and maybe another class will take over."

Back to Earth Compost is expected to officially launch this week. Those in the Butler-Tarkington neighborhood interested in taking part are asked to contact Burt at btecompost@gmail.com or through the company's [Facebook.com fan page](#).

More Information:

- [Back To Earth Compost Facebook Fan Page](#)
- [Center for Urban Ecology](#)
- [Butler University's Real Business Experience](#)
- [Butler University](#)

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