

Compost Crusader

Source: N/A

Published: May 25, 2016



Tashjian by one of Compost Crusader's dumpsters.

One waitress wants to 86 food waste.

Twice a week, Melissa Tashjian, 35, serves grub at a local pizza joint in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The rest of her time is devoted to her budding business, [Compost Crusader](#), which helps turn food scraps and organic waste into nutrient-rich soil.

“I’ve been in the restaurant industry since I was old enough to serve and I’m definitely conscious of the amount of food waste out there,” she told The Huffington Post.

Tashjian has two garbage trucks that service 55 local business — restaurants, breweries, elementary schools and a few plant shops — once or twice a week by picking up their food waste and dropping it off at the composting farm, [Blue Ribbon Organics](#).

Seven years ago, she started a local nonprofit, Kompost Kids, which had the humble goal of simply educating the folks of Milwaukee about composting.

“We just wanted to make people aware that composting was an option,” Tashjian told HuffPost. “Our goal at first was just to get gardeners to recycle their food scraps.”

It didn’t take long for local restaurants to catch wind of Tashjian’s efforts and soon she was invited to swing by their locations, pick up their waste and use it for composting.

So, for five years Tashjian and Kompost Kids would drop off five-gallon buckets to local restaurants, wait until they were full, pick up them up and compost their scraps in a secure area. Yet, as word continued to spread, it became clear the nonprofit needed a new game plan to keep up with the growing demand.

“I have a dog, and I would literally walk him twice a day to pick up five-gallon buckets in a little red wagon. Then I’d pull it blocks to where we established our first compost site,” she said.

She got a pickup truck, but even that wasn’t enough. However, Tashjian was determined not to give up.

“One day, I was talking about all this to my boyfriend who is a welder, truck driver and a master mechanic, and he said ‘Why don’t you just try to do it yourself?’ And I was like ‘Well, I don’t drive trucks, I don’t know how to build composting bins,’ and he was like ‘Well, duh, I can help you with that.’ And that’s pretty much how I started,” she said.



[COMPOST CRUSADER](#)
Tashjian with her first truck.

With the help of her boyfriend, Matthew Scannella, Tashjian bought “a slow-moving kind of Frankenstein truck” that she named “Torty.” She and Scannella retrofitted the vehicle to be able to pick up dumpsters and roll away totes, so it could service businesses just like a waste management truck would.

Six to eight months later, she got a loan, which enabled her to trade in her startup truck for two rear-loading garbage trucks. It’s been two years since Tashjian started Compost Crusader and just last month, the company picked up 115,000 pounds of organic material — more than four times the weight she was handling when she started in 2014, reports the Journal Sentinel.

Although Tashjian is trying to have a big impact on food waste, as a waitress, she does have a small tip for everyday diners who want to do their part.

“I often suggest that people split items when I think their eyes are bigger than their stomachs,” she said. “I mean, they could always order more later if they want. The kitchen’s not going anywhere.”

The source for this article is unknown by Matter of Trust. Though this archive of the article may be found in the Matteroftrust.org Resource Library, the content herein is not owned by Matter of Trust.
