



# Small Business Spotlight

## Local Couple Turns Trash into Compost

By Jessica MacLean for the City of Sedona



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SEDONA, Ariz. -- “Not everybody can put solar panels on their house, but we can all drop a banana peel in a bucket,” says entrepreneur Kathleen Ventura.

Sedona residents Brock Delinski and Kathleen Ventura are co-founders and owners of **Compost Crowd**, formerly known as *Sedona Compost*. Prior to launching in January 2018, the husband and wife team were both operating their own businesses. Once they got to know the market, established proof of concept, and began growing organically, Ventura and Delinski made Compost Crowd their full-time focus.

“We see the tremendous potential in Sedona for innovation, sustainability, progress, and progressive ideas. I couldn’t believe in this place where everyone comes to enjoy the environment there were no composting options, knowing composting is one of the most impactful things a business or individual can do to reduce their carbon footprint,” Ventura recounts. “I realized I wasn’t doing anything about it. I had been familiar with community composters like ours across the country and felt very called to do something that mattered.”

Instead of their plant-based food scraps piling up in landfills, Compost Crowd customers return those beneficial nutrients to the soil. But Delinski and Ventura handle the dirty work.

“When food scraps end up in the landfill, they don’t decompose naturally because they’re under a mountain of plastic, which means they’re rotting or decomposing anaerobically without oxygen,” Ventura explains. “When that happens, they emit methane, which is up to 86 times more damaging to the warming of the atmosphere than CO<sub>2</sub> on a 20-year timeline.”

“If all methane emissions stopped, we would see the reverse impact of that change in one

or two decades. If we were to stop emitting all CO<sub>2</sub>, it would take over 100 years to see those impacts,” says Ventura. “There’s no reason for food scraps to go into the landfill, ultimately emitting this poisonous greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.”

Delinski and Ventura make rounds to pick up food scraps from each of their residential and business customers every week. They deliver completed compost—to customers who want it—at least once per year in the spring.

According to Ventura, “one study says we only have approximately 60 years of useable topsoil left on this planet. Using completed compost decreases the need for synthetic fertilizers, naturally. It decreases erosion and the need for water because it hangs onto the water just a little bit differently.”



*Serving business and residential customers in Sedona, Village of Oak Creek, and Flagstaff, Brock Delinski and Kathleen Ventura are co-founders and owners of Compost Crowd.*

“In Yavapai county, it was either dispose of your food scraps in the landfill or do it yourself compost,” says Ventura. “Some people either physically can’t because they’re in a condo, apartment, or homeowners’ association or they don’t know how.”

After starting in Sedona, Compost Crowd expanded to the Village of Oak Creek and then Flagstaff. The duo also services events and most recently acquired a trailer that enables them to pick up food waste from businesses in Flagstaff.

“We have a 100% retention rate with all of our commercial accounts,” Ventura says as she weighs over 100 pounds of orange rinds, evidence of weekend mimosas at L’Auberge de Sedona. “Restaurants, florists, resorts, schools, medical centers, offices, conventions,

conferences, festivals—pretty much anywhere food is prepared or eaten we can service.”

Ventura and Delinski weigh collected food scraps from businesses and then provide quarterly sustainability reports and social media graphics to illustrate the environmental impact of hiring Compost Crowd each month. In their first month alone, L’Auberge diverted about 4,795 pounds of food scraps from the landfill. They sequestered an estimated 3,452 pounds of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere, equivalent to not burning approximately 1,711 pounds of coal, not using 177 gallons of gasoline, or planting 40.28 new trees in a single month.

Compost Crowd accepts all plant-based food scraps, including melon rinds, peach pits, rice, bread, grains, pasta, beans, coffee grounds, and

programs. Giving young entrepreneurs access to advice from other business owners and professionals is one of her favorite aspects of the group.

“The Sedona Chamber of Commerce is one of our customers,” Ventura adds. “We worked with them on the Straw-Free Sedona initiative and we’ve been part of the Sustainable Tourism Initiative planning. They’ve been fantastic.”

Compost Crowd also helped Sedona VegFest and Sedona Yoga Festival run zero waste events. They even received the 2018 Keep Sedona Beautiful Award of Excellence for Environmental Stewardship.

“We love the city of Sedona. The city hired us to do collection at the Sedona Food Truck Festival this year. Next year, we’re partnering with them on four of their different annual events, including Breakfast with Santa and The Pumpkin Drop, A Composting Event,” says Ventura. “We have an ongoing dialogue with McKenzie Jones, the new sustainability coordinator; she’s been incredible with everything.”

Sedona Economic Development Director Molly Spangler says, “Compost Crowd is a great example of grass-roots entrepreneurs who saw a business opportunity while also offering a sustainable community solution. This is the exact type of entrepreneurs that can be successful in the city.”

The Sedona Economic Development Department helps businesses create and keep jobs and opportunities in our community. For information on revolving loans, business education, and other business support resources, contact Director Molly Spangler at [mbspangler@sedonaaz.gov](mailto:mbspangler@sedonaaz.gov).



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