

# ARAMARK expands composting program to Octagon with help of Office of Sustainability

Caitlin O'Donnell  
News Editor

In a joint effort between ARAMARK and the Office of Sustainability to expand the existing composting program in Colonnades and Harden dining halls, a pilot-composting program was introduced in Octagon Café this month.

Composting, which reduces the amount of solid waste entering a landfill, has existed in the "back of the house," or essentially behind the scenes in the kitchen of the dining halls, since fall 2008, according to Elaine

Durr, sustainability coordinator for Elon. Conversations have been ongoing about increasing student involvement in the process.

"Elon's food waste is picked up three times a week by a third party who operates a commercial grade composting facility about an hour from campus," she said. "The pilot program taking place in Octagon is for front of the house compost."

Because the program already existed on campus, the

addition didn't require many extra resources. Ryan Moore, assistant food services director for ARAMARK, said the program was introduced during Winter Term because of the decrease in traffic at the dining halls.

Typically, ARAMARK staff members are responsible for sorting out compostable materials when students and faculty deliver their trays of leftovers to the kitchen. Under the new pilot program, students are responsible for sorting the material.

-ELAINE DURR,  
SUSTAINABILITY  
COORDINATOR

"We've taken out the safeguard of a trained staff," Moore said. "With more student involvement comes more risk for contamination."

To ensure students are knowledgeable about the process, ARAMARK and the Office of Sustainability created fliers, an informational page on their website and sponsored a booth in Moseley the week before the pilot launched, Moore said.

Students from the Green Team who expressed interest

in volunteering for the program are also available to answer questions.

"During high traffic times, student volunteers are educating Octagon patrons about composting and what materials can go in the compost or biodegradable container provided in Octagon," Durr said.

Senior Molly Strayer, who is passionate about making campus activities more environmentally friendly, currently serves as a compost bin volunteer, after manning the Moseley booth in early January.

"The composting program is extremely exciting because it is only really being started on college campuses," she said. "If Elon is successful with this program, that will be a really meaningful achievement and make us an example to other colleges."

Volunteer Sarah Gerald, a junior, who became involved through the Eco-Reps program out of the Office of Sustainability, said she was initially surprised by the lack of knowledge many students have about composting.

"It is hard to tell if some students just don't want to spend the time to sit down and think about what goes where and why, or if they just really haven't been educated about the



TRACY RAETZ | Staff Photographer

Students now have the option to compost materials in Octagon Café.

composting process," she said. "I think the average student knows the very basics of composting leaves and vegetables, the basic organic stuff."

Gerald, Strayer and other volunteers will be required to spend one hour per week at the bins through the remainder of

Winter Term and all of spring semester.

"It's not hard to figure out, once you have a little practice," Gerald said. "That's our goal."

According to Moore, there are currently no plans to expand the program to other dining halls.

## University award recipient under investigation for fraud

Caitlin O'Donnell  
News Editor

Bill Hillar, a 2010 recipient of the Hometown Hero award from Elon University for his work as an advocate against human trafficking, is currently being investigated for fraud by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security.

The investigation began with the Multnomah County Sheriff's Department in Portland, Ore. and has since moved to the federal level, according to Keith Bickford, director of the Oregon Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force.

Hillar was given the Hometown Hero award, along with Meaghan Murphy and Mark Watros, after being nominated by freshman Savannah Chaisson.

"I nominated Mr. Hillar to speak at Elon after he had spoken at a church in my town last year," she said. "I did not know about any of the accusations before nominating him or even before he came to Elon."

Chaisson said she submitted an essay and an application with his contact information, including e-mail, phone number and address, to nominate Hillar to speak.

Phil Smith, university chaplain, said freshmen nominate people for the award based on their interactions with them. Freshman class officers select the final three recipients.

"In this case, not as much was known personally, but it was still someone who had an impact," he said. "Anytime you don't know someone directly, there's just less you know about them, but his story was very impactful."

### Suspicious come to the surface

Concerns regarding Hillar's background were first raised a few hours before the Hometown Heroes ceremony took place on Nov. 8. Smith said the university received a vague e-mail with an anonymous tip. The tipster claimed military involvement and accused Hillar of misrepresenting his military record.

"I did consult around a little bit to find out what would be a good thing to do here," Smith said. "With some good advice, I went and met with him."

Smith said he explained to Hillar the university had received an e-mail questioning the validity of his military record.

Hillar said it had happened once before.

"At that point, you've got a person you're not sure about, and you question whether the accusing person just didn't like them," Smith said. "You can't just not give them the award because someone said that an hour before. And it had nothing to do with the award, which was for advocacy against human trafficking."

On Oct. 28, a week before the Hometown Hero ceremony, Jeff Hinton, a retired Special Forces Master Sergeant involved with the association of Professional Soldiers, published findings questioning Hillar's military experience.

Professional Soldiers is an online forum for members of the Special Forces. According to Hinton, Special Forces alludes to only one unit, the Green Berets, of which Hillar claimed to have been a part, specifically a retired colonel of the United States Army Special Forces.

"Over a year ago, we got an e-mail asking who Bill Hillar was," Hinton said in an interview. "That e-mail, once it hit Special Forces command, went out to the 'who's who' of Green Berets."

The small unit, which has existed for 54 years, has around 2,000 members around the country at any given time, he said.

"It would have been very hard for this guy to not have been known, and it went out and no one knew who he was," Hinton said. "I made it my goal to expose this guy. Nobody wants to question someone's credentials when they are viewed as a hero, but someone has to do it and not let them continue to scam (people)."

### Probing for truth

Hinton began by sending for Hillar's records at the National Personnel Records Center. All members of the United States military have a record known as a DD214, which is part of any member of the military's resume when he or she applies for a job. The record also includes when the person left the service and how he or she was discharged, whether dishonorably or honorably, and what medals the person was awarded.

"You can get any person's DD214, the records are not classified," Hinton said. "Even after finding his date of birth and social security number, I couldn't get anything."

Hinton next enlisted the help of Mary and Chuck Schantag, who also work to expose

Green Beret frauds across the country, and discovered Hillar served eight years in the Coast Guard and was never a member of the Special Forces.

After more research, Hinton said he discovered Hillar had misled multiple law enforcement agencies, including the FBI and Department of Homeland Security.

"I asked the FBI how he pulled this off, and they never thought to question his credentials," Hinton said. "The thing is, we get involved because no one else is going to question this guy."

Within two to three weeks of Hinton's published accusations, Hillar's website, citing his credentials and advertising his training workshops, was removed from the Internet and Hillar had essentially gone into hiding, according to Hinton. Around that time, he confirmed with the FBI that they were on his case.

"This is not the first time we've done this," he said. "We don't go after the guy who claims it sitting at the bar. We go after the guys that make themselves public figures and say they can offer training. We don't take lightly to people using the title to scam innocent people, especially for money."

### Ending the 'scam'

Claiming to have qualifications as an elite member of the military, Hinton said Hillar charged individuals and organizations for military training.

This included the Monterey Institute of International Studies in Monterey, Calif. Hillar was contracted to lead a 15-hour, three-day workshop, worth one academic credit in 2005. Since then, he has led one workshop per semester, most recently on human trafficking in October of last year, according to Jason Warburg, executive director of communications at the Institute.

In early November, a student from the workshop came to the administration, expressing concern over whether Hillar's claims about his background were true. Besides claiming involvement with Special Forces, Hillar also asserted in a resume that he held a Ph.D. from the University of Oregon. Around the same time, postings from Professional Soldiers came to the attention of the Institute, which triggered an investigation, Warburg said.

"We reviewed the information, communicated to him that we needed documentation, and there was no response," he said. "We confirmed with the University

of Oregon that he did not have a Ph.D. We concluded he has misrepresented his academic credentials and issued a statement of findings."

In the statement, Monterey Institute President Sunder Ramaswamy apologized for the incident and placed responsibility on the Institute for failing to uphold the quality and integrity of the instruction received there.

According to the statement, the Institute will offer students who attended Hillar's workshops the option of either keeping the credit on their academic records or removing it and enrolling in a comparable workshop at no cost.

Though Hillar, as a workshop instructor, was not subject to the pre-employment background check typical for all employees, the Institute has since changed its policy.

"Workshop instructors ... typically come to the attention of the academic administration through recommendations and a resume, proposed syllabus and list of references would generally be considered sufficient," the statement read. "However, as a result of this incident, the institute has extended the requirement for a full pre-engagement background check to any person who provides classroom instruction for academic credit."

Attempts to contact Hillar have been unsuccessful.

### Precedent for the future

According to Smith, Elon's experience with Hillar will likely have little bearing on the future of the Hometown Hero award.

"If someone has misrepresented themselves, I'd hate for that to mean we have to scrutinize everyone who's nominated," he said. "We're not going to do the same level of checking you would do if you were having someone come and teach or someone offering credit."

Smith said there has never been a situation presented in which a recipient of the award would have the recognition retracted. If the officers and nominator choose to do that, Smith said it could be a potential discussion.

"I don't feel like I'm giving the award as an individual, I feel like our office is sponsoring the award and it raises the question of whose award it is to rescind," Smith said. "This is an institution of higher education and we learn something every day. I imagine we'll learn something from all of this."