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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Center for EcoTechnology Wins 2017 Rathmann Challenge for Pioneering and Expanding Commercial Composting in the Northeast**

CET Receives the Top Honor and \$300,000 Funding Opportunity

November 1, 2017 – Northampton, MA. The Center for EcoTechnology (CET), a local non-profit organization, has been awarded Top Honor in the North American 2017 Rathmann Challenge, *Mitigating Climate Change: Expanding the Use of Compost*, for its pioneering work over the past 20 years to expand the use of composting to reduce wasted food, which in turn reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

The announcement of the award was made on Wednesday, November 1, by the Rathmann Family Foundation. The Rathmann Challenge, which was launched in 2014, seeks to advance organizations possessing the creativity, entrepreneurial ethos, and innovative spirit to make a positive difference in the world. CET receives \$100,000 for its past work and the exclusive invitation from the Rathmann Family Foundation to apply for an Even Bigger Idea® grant of \$200,000.

Approximately 40% of all food produced in the U.S. is never eaten, at great cost to communities, the economy and the environment. Every year, American consumers, businesses, and farms spend \$218 billion a year, growing, processing, transporting, and disposing of food that is never eaten. About 52 million tons of food is sent to landfill annually; another 10 million tons is discarded or left unharvested on farms. When disposed of, wasted food creates greenhouse gas emissions and is a significant contributor to climate change. Meanwhile, one in seven Americans is food insecure.

"We are honored to be recognized by the Rathmann Family Foundation for our leadership in tackling climate change by keeping wasted food out of landfills," said John Majercak, President of CET. "And we plan to expand our impact in this area, working alongside our many industry and government partners throughout the region."

"As the recipient of the Top Honor, the Rathmann Family Foundation recognizes the Center for EcoTechnology both for its remarkable past accomplishments as well as the ability to make an even bigger impact beyond Massachusetts to the entire northeast and the rest of the United States," said Rick Rathmann, Executive Director of the Foundation. "The Rathmann Challenge engages organizations with a proven track record, forward thinking ideas and a willingness to challenge themselves and their professional colleagues to come up with a better solution."

In 2011, CET worked with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to establish the Massachusetts RecyclingWorks program. RecyclingWorks provides businesses and institutions in Massachusetts with free consultation and expert technical assistance to put into place cost-effective waste management programs, including composting. In 2014, Massachusetts implemented one of the first statewide food waste bans in the United States, banning landfill disposal of organic waste by large scale producers such as supermarkets and colleges. To date, CET has helped spur an expansion of compost production in Massachusetts by approximately 25,000 tons annually.

CET is embarking on a new, long-term effort to increase its impact by sharing its expertise in wasted food reduction across the Northeast and beyond. CET has begun performing food waste diversion work in Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island, in addition to Massachusetts. CET is also collaborating with the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic to produce a white paper that will share food waste diversion information and advice nationally, and developing other national partnerships as well.

"There is a growing awareness of the incredible opportunity that reducing wasted food presents our society," said Lorenzo Macaluso, Director of Client Services at CET. "We've learned a lot over the past few decades of doing this work, and we're getting requests for assistance to replicate what we and our partners have been able to accomplish in Massachusetts. This award will be instrumental in helping us plan and implement similar efforts across the region and nationally."

For Businesses: Learn more at the Symposium on Food Recovery on Nov. 9

Area businesses that would like to learn from CET experts and others about reducing wasted food have a perfect opportunity next week:

Food Sustainability Symposium

November 9, from 3-6pm, at Mill 180 Park in Easthampton, MA.

Organized by RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts, Associated Industries of Massachusetts, and the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts

Businesses will learn about food recovery options across the EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy such as: source reduction, food donation, animal feed, anaerobic digestion, and composting. Attendees will hear success stories from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Stop & Shop, Log Cabin Restaurant, River Valley Market, and Brew Practitioners about diverting food scraps and surplus prepared food from disposal.

According to Lorenzo Macaluso, Director of Client Services at the Center for EcoTechnology, there are now more opportunities to cost effectively reduce food waste at businesses in Massachusetts than ever before. "Reducing food waste is great for the environment and often helps boost the bottom line. We have helped facilitate great results from food establishments of all types and events like these are a great way to learn how to plug into the range of available options."

Registration is now open. Tickets are \$25.00 and may be purchased in advance through [Eventbrite](#).

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About the Center for EcoTechnology

The Center for EcoTechnology (www.cetonline.org) helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste.

- For 40 years CET has offered proven advice and resources that helps people and businesses save money and reduce environmental impact. Each year CET helps approximately 30,000 people and businesses with energy efficiency, renewable energy, and waste reduction services.

CET offers:

- Business and institution recycling technical assistance
- Residential and commercial energy efficiency and renewable energy assistance
- High performance building expertise to help architects and contractors boost the energy efficiency performance of new homes
- EcoBuilding Bargains, the largest reused building materials retail store in New England
- The EcoFellowship program, which recruits and prepares college graduates to be the next generation of environmental professionals

About the Rathmann Challenge

The program engages organizations with a proven track record, forward thinking ideas and a willingness to challenge themselves and their professional colleagues to come up with a better solution. The Rathmann Challenge seeks applicants possessing the creativity, entrepreneurial ethos, and innovative spirit to make a positive difference in the world through their directed passion, new ideas, and energy. The Rathmann Challenge Top Honoree receives \$100,000 for its past outstanding work and the exclusive invitation to apply for an Even Bigger Idea® grant of \$200,000.

The 2019 Rathmann Challenge funding focus is currently under development. The Rathmann Challenge, www.RathmannChallenge.org, is a program of the Rathmann Innovation Center, www.RathmannInnovation.org, which is administered by the Rathmann Family Foundation.

Receiving honorable mentions in the 2017 Rathmann Challenge were:

- Huerta del Valle, a community garden and social justice organization in Ontario, CA, which uses compost as a central principle in its work to bring healthy food sources to low income and food insecure communities.
- Spotsylvania County in Virginia, for the construction of a large-scale composting operation that converts the bio solids produced by a wastewater treatment plant to high quality compost.
- University of Arizona Compost Cats, a student-run organization that elevated organic waste diversion and composting into a city-wide project in Tucson.
- University of Wisconsin Stevens-Point's College of Natural Resources and the activities of the Soil and Waste Resources Discipline and the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Technology.

About the Rathmann Family Foundation

Since its inception in 1991, the Rathmann Family Foundation has had the great privilege of providing grants to several hundred qualified organizations with programs in the United States and on occasion in other parts of the world. The Rathmann Family Foundation, www.RathmannFamilyFoundation.org, seeks to leverage the talents, experience, and passion of its members and the communities in which they live by funding those displaying the desire, skill, and energy to make a difference in the world around them.