

THE BRICK COMPANIES

CONSERVING NATURE, CREATING COMMUNITIES

By Erica Rascón on Aug 2, 2013 in People

The Brick Companies (TBC) upholds a longstanding history in the DC area. What began as a brick and terra cotta pipe manufacturer has turned into a staple in commercial, residential and recreational real estate management. As the company continues to grow, responsible development and community involvement serve as pillars for a promising future.



Promoting Healthy Communities

Shelly Ford is the Head People Person and Chief Responsibility Officer of The Brick Companies, a Yardi client. “We are passionate about our Good Works,” Ford says. “We’re committed to giving back to the communities in which our businesses operate.”

There are many ways that TBC reaches out to its communities. In addition to providing grants to like-minded charitable organizations, the company also provides a matching gift program for its employees. Employees’ cash donations and volunteer hours are able to make a larger impact.

The Brick Companies continually develops sustainable practices as a way of protecting and supporting local communities. As of July 2013, TBC’s Maryland properties, including six commercial office buildings, two golf clubs and two marinas are powered 100% by “Clean Steps” WindPower from Washington Gas and Energy Services. The purchase of approximately 11.5 million kWh of wind power will help reduce greenhouse gases and is equivalent to taking more than 1568 cars off the road for one full year.

The offsets helped the company reach its 12×12 goal. “Last year we finished up our 12×12 program where we were committed to reducing our energy usage across our entire portfolio by 12 percent by 2012—that was accomplished,” cheers Ford.

Alternative energy also powers the company’s unique property, Queenstown Harbor Golf Course. “We’ve installed a solar electric system at Queenstown Harbor Golf Course that

produces 70 percent of the electric usage at our clubhouse and cart barn. 800 ground-mount panels generate 230 megawatt hours of electricity annually. That's the equivalent of 159 metric tons of carbon dioxide a year avoided," says Ford.

Green efforts at Queenstown Harbor have not gone unnoticed. The golf course received the *Environmental Leadership in Golf Award* this year. Both Atlantic Marinas have also been recognized by the Maryland Clean Marina program.



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TBC also focuses on waste reduction, minimizing the amount of trash that fills local landfills. "We're encouraging ourselves, our tenants, and our employees to participate in the 50/50 program in which we will aspire to have over 50 percent of our trash recycled," Ford says. Ford wants to look at the dumpster outside of the headquarters building and see that more than half of the office waste is in the recycle bin. The idea spread beyond the headquarters, appealing to employees who want to do their part for the environment outside of the office.

Integrating sustainable practices into the office culture has proved easy enough for the company. Many employees participate because the environmental challenges are fun and rewarding. The headquarter's green roof, for example, is a spot that encourages spirited competition. Many contests are lighthearted; "Some of the events are strictly for fun like our bubble blowing contest or the putting competitions on the miniature green," says Ford. Other competitions serve a broader purpose. "We have a competition going right now where we have earth boxes on our patio. Employees have planted their own vegetables. At the end of the season, everyone who grew vegetables will cook a dish for the rest of the employees using the vegetables that they've grown in the earth boxes. Then we choose a winner. It gets pretty competitive," says Ford.

In addition to fostering a community atmosphere within the office, the cook-off serves to remind employees of the possibilities of urban gardening and the pride that can come from supporting local markets. No one is complaining about the home-cooked lunches, either. "Last year's tomato growing contest was a lot of fun," says Ford. Tomatoes were judged based on size, sweetness, and overall taste. All tomato growers then prepared a tomato-based recipe and entered their dish into a competition.

Bragging rights for the best vegetables are only part of TBC's efforts in encouraging sustainable practices among employees. Employees are rewarded for their wholehearted efforts in environmental awareness at home. The Brick Companies established an Environment Steward program in which employees are honored for exemplifying sustainable living inside and outside of the office. The honor is awarded annually based on nominations.

Preserving Nature

While many companies adapt practices towards energy efficiency and waste reduction, The Brick Companies stands apart in its dedication to preserving and conserving unique natural spaces. Currently the company is partnering with The Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center

and The National Wildlife Federation. “Both organizations are in direct alignment with our desire to reconnect people with the land and inspire others to do the same,” says Ford. “It’s in our culture, engrained in our entire business philosophy. We work towards it every day. Our tagline is, ‘We exist to create exceptional places for current and future generations through social responsibility and environmental stewardship.’ ”

Environmental stewardship initiatives are among Ford’s favorite outreach efforts. “My personal favorite has been our partnership with the National Wildlife Federation and their ‘Be out There’ campaign. I appreciate their desire to encourage families to trade screen-time for green-time and get outside enjoying nature. Because, if you don’t develop a love for something, you aren’t going to protect it,” says Ford.



The Brick Companies hosts the annual **TBC Classic** charity golf tournament. This year proceeds will benefit The Natural Wildlife Federation and The Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center. The 2013 tournament takes place on October 1st at Queenstown Harbor Golf Course.

On October 26, TBC will be the regional sponsor of National Wildlife Federation’s Hike & Seek[™]. Hike & Seek is a cross between a nature hike and a scavenger hunt that brings families and friends together in the great outdoors for fresh air and fun.

Families with children ages 2-10 are encouraged to participate in a one mile hike through Druid Hill Park. There will be learning stations that educate attendees on local vegetation, local wildlife and its habitats.

Learn more about the TBC Classic, Hike & Seek, and other community events via The Brick Companies’ Good Works website.