

IN THIS ISSUE



2 Coast Guard Career Takes Off for Daughter of Control Room Operator



3 Chief Chemist Raises Pancreatic Cancer Awareness



4 Runtime Record Helps Plant Stay Efficient and Competitive

NEIGHBORS

A SERVICE OF ASH GROVE CEMENT COMPANY — SEATTLE PLANT | FALL 2011

Ash Grove Hits \$20 Million Energy Reduction Goal

This August Ash Grove plants throughout the country achieved an ambitious goal to reduce energy costs by \$20 million – 15 months early, another Ash Grove energy management (AGem) success.

“Chuck Wiedenhoft always described the goal in terms of a three legged stool –reduce emissions, improve efficiency and reduce costs,” said Andy Lippert, Ash Grove corporate energy director, of the company’s then president and chief operating officer who died in 2010. “He got this started in 2007 and we set a five-year time horizon to make it happen.” *(continued on page 3)*



The flag on the preheater tower at Ash Grove Seattle

Coast Guard Career Takes Off for Daughter of Control Room Operator

Nicole Garrett loves flying, so it’s no surprise that the 2010 high school graduate and daughter of Mark Garrett,

A NOTE FROM TODD HINTON, PLANT MANAGER



Todd Hinton, plant manager

While the economy has yet to do its part to get things back on a healthy path, our employees are more than doing theirs.

It takes a bit of effort on everyone’s part to make a strong community and there are a lot of really great things going on in the Seattle area as you will read in other stories here on such activities as Romeo Semo’s work with our community’s youth and the Shore Run/Walk10k Run for pancreatic cancer awareness in which our own Ed Rafacz participated.

While good things are going on outside the plant, we are working hard to do well on the job, too.

Reaching more than 1,000 days without a lost time accident and achieving 100 percent uptime for the month of August may not seem thrilling to everybody, but it is to us. Safety is number one with our team, and it means we get to send our co-workers and your friends and neighbors home safe and well each day.

The uptime, well that means the people here are exceptional at their work, allowing Ash Grove Cement Seattle to survive and thrive in a challenging environment.

You may have heard that new federal regulations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) require cement plants to meet higher emissions and monitoring standards by September 2013. Ash Grove Cement Seattle continues to invest in its plant operations and will meet all the 2013 requirements. We all look forward to a long and bright future here in Seattle. ■

Safety is number one with our team and it means we get to send our co-workers and your friends and neighbors home safe and well each day.

Ash Grove Seattle control room operator, is training to become a Coast Guard rescue helicopter pilot.

Her enduring love of aviation positioned her well for her future career.

“Nicole has been a pretty exciting kid to raise,” said Garrett. His voice swells with

pride when he talks about her projected career path, which begins with the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn., continues into flight school in Pensacola, Fla., and results in an eventual position as a rescue pilot. “That’s a pretty good gig for anybody.”

(continued on page 2)

SEMO SEES CRICKET AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR SEATTLE YOUTH

Romeo Semo, a 19-year employee in the Ash Grove Seattle shipping department, knows his way around the cricket pitch, and he's happy to share his knowledge with Seattle youth through the Samoan Cricket League.

"Cricket is like baseball to the Samoan Islander community," Semo explains, "so it's a great way to bring the community together and involve kids in something positive."

Semo grew up playing Samoan cricket, which is a slight variation on the British game. Samoan cricket players wear the Samoan sarong called "lavalava" as part of their uniform, and the bats, known as "kirikiti" are larger and heavier than the British bats and are painted with colorful stripes.

Semo's father, high chief Ropi Sua Semo founded the cricket league with other Samoan elders in 1986, and Semo was part of it from the beginning. At its start, the league's four teams would gather at Genesee Field in Rainier Valley to compete. Today, 10 teams meet at the new cricket pitch at Jefferson Park every Saturday during the summer. The season starts in May and concludes in August, and everyone is welcome.

"Cricket is a sport that anyone can play," says Semo. He often plays with his two sons, age 16 and 22, and it's not unusual to be on a team with people much older or younger than you.

The league's teams include players of a variety of ages and races, and this year there were six men's teams and four women's teams. "It's a great way to bring people together," he says. As a key leader in the league, Semo spends his volunteer hours introducing kids to the sport and refereeing the Saturday games. He sees the sport as a way for Seattle teens to experience a part of Samoan culture — and as a positive alternative to the gang life that the teens see in many of their neighborhoods.

"Kids from different areas of Seattle — south, west — come together to play cricket, and at the end of the season, they have gained a knowledge of those other kids that helps squash that gang

mentality," says Semo. Often Seattle gang violence is fueled by a combination of turf wars, neighborhood boundaries and kids with too much spare time on their hands.

But kids who get involved in the cricket league spend upwards of eight hours each Saturday in the summer on the pitch — time that they might have otherwise spent getting into trouble. They also spend time learning the game and practicing their skills, which gives them something to focus on besides gang life. Semo has seen gang activity in Seattle decline since the 1980s when the league was formed, and he'd like to think that cricket has something to do with that. "Cricket provides positive relationships," he says. And those

"My main thing is keeping this going. It's an opportunity to really reach the kids when they don't have something else to focus on," he says. "If we can reach just one kid, then we've made a difference."

relationships may begin with the game, but they become safe places for kids to open up and talk about their lives.

Semo really values the time he spends with the cricket league. "My main thing is keeping this going. It's an opportunity to really reach the kids when they don't have something else to focus on," he says. "If we can reach just one kid, then we've made a difference."

Semo enjoys continuing his father's passion and legacy and thinks it's great that the community has really embraced the sport. He loves the new pitch at Jefferson Park — he thinks the view of the city and the sound are spectacular — and thinks it's great that so many from the community come by on Saturdays to see what's going on. And he's always happy to show them how to play. ■

Coast Guard Career Takes Off for Daughter of Control Room Operator

(continued from front cover)

Nicole reported to the Coast Guard Academy on June 27, 2011, and has completed her "Swab Summer," which is the Coast Guard's basic training program. She also spent a week training aboard the Coast Guard Cutter *Eagle*, a tall ship that was built in Germany in 1936 that provides Coast Guard cadets with the opportunity to practice navigation, engineering and other practical seafaring skills. ■

"Nicole has been a pretty exciting kid to raise," said Garrett. His voice swells with pride when he talks about her projected career path which results in an eventual position as a rescue pilot.

Nicole Garrett is third from left



CHIEF CHEMIST RAISES PANCREATIC CANCER AWARENESS



Ed Rafacz

On June 11, Ed Rafacz, chief chemist at Ash Grove Seattle, completed the Shore Run/Walk 10k Run, which took him along the scenic shores of Lake Washington. Proceeds

from the run benefit immunotherapy research at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Rafacz enjoys running and participates in several runs and marathons a year, "I run all the time," said Rafacz. He particularly enjoys the Shore Run/Walk because it offers him the added benefit of supporting cancer research, something he has a personal passion for. A member of his family battled pancreatic cancer 10 years ago.

Earlier in the spring, Rafacz also showed his support for cancer research

Rafacz enjoys running and participates in several runs and marathons a year.

by attending the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network's Celebration of Hope Gala.

The beautiful evening featured a dinner and live and silent auctions that raised funds for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, a small national nonprofit dedicated to advancing research, supporting patients and creating hope for those faced with pancreatic cancer.

Rafacz has been a member of the Ash Grove Seattle staff for seven years. In his role as chief chemist, he manages the quality of everything from incoming raw materials through to the final finished product to ensure that the plant makes a good product for Ash Grove and its customers. ■

Seattle Plant Reaches Safety Milestone

This fall Ash Grove Seattle marked more than 1000 days of safe operations. That means that for almost three years running the plant has not reported a work-related personal injury that resulted in more than one day off work.

That's a great testament to the overall focus on safety and collaboration that permeates the culture at Ash Grove Seattle — and in every facility in the Ash Grove system.

Supported by programs like the Safety Training Observation Program (STOP), the employees at Ash Grove Seattle value and promote a safe work environment. And their safety-first orientation permeates work at every level, in every department and at every workstation.

"Our safety record can be explained by the overall attitude of the employees here," said Gerald Brown, safety/environmental manager at the plant. "They watch out for each other, and we have great training and programs from management."

Brown feels that safety not only informs the employees' lives at work; the community benefits as well. Employees take the thought processes they've learned and their overall regard for safety into their homes and neighborhoods. He said he wouldn't be surprised if an Ash Grove employee would loan a neighbor a pair of safety glasses if he or she saw them doing something like edging their lawn without wearing them. "We really watch out for one another," he said.

Brown believes this collaborative attitude towards safety — that a safe work environment takes more than just one person's actions, but everyone acting together — is the largest contributing factor to the plant's positive safety record. "The employees are always watching out for each other and pointing out possible problems before they happen. You'll hear them say to each other, 'Hey, let's stop and think about what we're doing.' It's not necessarily special, but it reflects an attitude that values safety and working together."

And it's obvious that attitude is yielding great results. ■



Seattle plant

Ash Grove Hits \$20 Million Energy Reduction Goal

(continued from front cover)

To prepare, Lippert said that a team went through all the plants, five years of operating data and did some benchmarking. Then he joined Chuck, Ash Grove Chairman Charlie Sunderland, Vice President of Manufacturing Services Fran Streitman in meeting with senior staff and plant managers to design the program. In early 2008, the team held meetings at every plant with supervisors and hourly staff to talk it through and roll out the program.

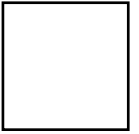
"Employee suggestions have been gratifying," Lippert said. "Everything from turning on a conveyor belt only when it is moving material to putting motion detectors on lighting to installing heat exchangers and reclaiming heat off the clinker cooling process. We still are receiving ideas good enough to implement companywide."

The company already has begun writing goals and procedures for 2013 and beyond to continue to conserve energy and natural resources by improving the efficiency and performance of the plants. ■



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RUNTIME RECORD HELPS PLANT STAY EFFICIENT AND COMPETITIVE

During the month of August, Ash Grove Seattle achieved 100 percent uptime, meaning there were no outages or downtime for the kiln during the entire month. In fact, as of this writing, the plant was on a 51-day (and counting) continuous run without an outage — which is a significant achievement for any cement plant because of the great deal of coordination required to make it happen.

- Field personnel have to keep raw materials and fuels flowing.
- Operators have to react quickly to adjust fan, fuel and feed rates.
- Process and quality personnel have to communicate a stream of data to ensure continuous improvements are made to keep things running smoothly.
- Maintenance and field personnel have to properly identify, plan, schedule and execute maintenance on equipment to ensure it keeps operating.

“It is a great pleasure to work in a team environment where a success like this is the result of so many hands combining to make something like this possible,” said Fred Blackham, production manager for Ash Grove Seattle. “To go a calendar month [without an outage] is very unusual, and when it does happen, it’s a big deal.”

When the plant operates continuously, it operates more efficiently, which helps achieve Ash Grove’s objective of being a low-cost producer.

During long runs, the equipment doesn’t have to stop and start, which causes wear and tear. Small adjustments are needed, rather than large ones. Fuel is consumed more efficiently, it’s easier to maintain heat requirements, and the motors that consume electricity run near their designed curves, so they do more work while using less power. “It’s like a car that gets better mileage when it’s tuned up and running well,” said Blackham. “A cement plant runs more efficiently when it is lined out.”

“Our goal [at Ash Grove] is to achieve production excellence,” said Blackham. And the more consecutive days the plant is able to run without the kiln going down, the more efficient it is, which serves many of components that help meet that goal, including efficiency, reliability, product quality and environmental stewardship. ■



Left to right: Plant managers and supervisors took turns cooking lunch for all Ash Grove plant employees.