

Conservation Days Inspire Conservation Action

Ada teenagers at Latta High School came up with a most inspiring response.

As part of our commitment to sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – the call to action comes in many forms: employee bulletins, eco-reminders in e-Voice, and at the recent Conservation Days in Artesia, MS and Ada, OK. The Ada events inspired the launch of www.freewebs.com/opt4green, the website of the Holcim Youth Conservation Board. This group of Ada high school students works to raise awareness on conservation topics like e-waste and recycling.

For Erika Guerra, sustainability program manager at Holcim (US), regional manager for alternative fuels and raw materials, and a coordinator of the company's Conservation Days, the commitment to sustainability resonates with the next generation.

“Conservation and sustainability concepts are becoming one of the main attractions for recruiting the younger generation, who want to be associated with companies that act responsibly,” she says.

Crafting the conservation message
Erika notes that “Conservation Days started as a way to educate our folks about taking a personal as well as professional responsibility for protecting the environment.” The first Conservation Days were held at the Ada and Artesia plants with festive picnics on Saturdays so employees

could bring their families. In this way employees and their families can learn about conserving natural resources and pledge to make a difference.

Participants at the events answered the question, “What is your carbon footprint?” (Find yours at the Nature Conservancy website www.nature.org.) The average American puts 27 tons of carbon into the air through choices they make in daily living. Lowering that amount can be as simple as swapping compact fluorescent light bulbs for incandescent ones, keeping tires properly inflated to improve gas mileage, car-pooling, and recycling grocery bags.

Many employees took a “conservation pledge” to reduce carbon emissions at home. Holcim pledged to match their green enthusiasm with its own green: A Conservation Fund. Successful conservationists are eligible for incentives such as rebates on energy-efficient major appliances and fuel-economy or hybrid cars.

Inspiring responses for efficiency
Newly motivated to conserve, employees sent Erika suggestions for shrinking their carbon footprints at work, such as being more vigilant about turning off lights and equipment, and recycling more actively.

Ada teenagers at Latta High School came up with a most inspiring response. The Youth Conservation Board became partners with the Ada plant and incorporated ideas for improving the environment into a marketing project for DECA (Delta Epsilon Chi), an association of high school and college students studying marketing, management and entrepreneurship. By taking their conservation message from Ada to Atlanta for DECA's international competition, the teens also showed that the next generation has incorporated Holcim's values as their own and accepts responsibility for building a sustainable future.

Conservation Days are scheduled in Mason City for September 6, in Devil's Slide on September 13, and in Midlothian on October 11. Conservation Days at other facilities are being planned and will be announced.