

Acme Paper Joins With Restaurant Associates to Help 'Green the Capitol'

by Michael Birchenall

In 2007, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi established the "Green the Capitol" program to make the U.S. House of Representatives a national leader in resource stewardship and sustainable business practices. Since then, the House has changed the way it does business.

When this writer wanted to learn more about the effort three years later, it didn't take long to find a local company founded in 1946 leading the way: Acme Paper & Supply Co. The Attman family's company is one of the Mid-Atlantic region's largest suppliers of disposable goods, janitorial products and retail and industrial packaging. Much more than



Executive chef Thomas Green shows off the pulper that reduces waste volume 10:1

paper, the business growth has come from utilizing expertise in each of these areas to branch out into six closely-related divisions: Foodservice Packaging, Industrial Packaging, Restaurant Equipment & Supply, Janitorial Equipment & Supply, Retail Packaging, and Alpha Products Custom Designs.

Acme's Green Partners

Their partners at the House of Representatives are Restaurant Associates who currently hold the foodservice contract and the catering arm of Ridgewells CapitolHost. Thomas Green is the executive chef for Restaurant Associates. They turned to Acme Paper for green solutions to be utilized throughout the House food operations. Acme Paper's lead green expert is Scott Attman whose mission it was to 'green' a House that serves 240,000 meals to its employees and guests every month.

sion of more than 75,000 pounds of waste from landfills and the cutting of more than 400,000 pounds of carbon emissions and more than 175,000 kWh of electricity.

As a result of aggressive implementation and extensive outreach and education, sustainability is becoming a routine part of life on Capitol Hill. Perceptions have adjusted and attitudes have shifted toward new business practices and workplace standards.

At the House, green has become the new normal. Acme Paper has been a leader in every step of the way.

Green Bottles

Innovative biodegradable bottles, as harmless as the water they contain, to replace conventional plastic containers. The House of Representatives no longer offers "traditional" bottled water in any of its dining facilities. Instead, Acme Paper sourced for Restaurant Associates water in biodegradable, corn-based bottles as part of the House's Green the Capitol Initiative.

The spring water comes from Virginia-based Grand Springs (www.grandsprings.com) and is sold in containers made by the Iowa-based company Naturally Iowa (www.naturallyiowa.com). The new product will replace water currently being offered by all other bottlers on the Capitol Campus. The product is part of the BioPreferred initiative from the USDA: www.biopreferred.gov BioPreferred is a

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CapitolHost provides a Green Ambassador to explain to House catering guests the green initiative.



Federal program that increases the purchase and use of biobased products made from biological or renewable agricultural materials.

The House sells over 100,000 bottles of water a year.

“While the AOC has done a solid job with its recycling efforts, studies have shown that eight out of 10 recyclable bottles wind up in landfills, where they sit for over a hundred years,” said Perry Plumart, Deputy Director of the House’s Green the Capitol Initiative. “These compostable bottles can be thrown into the compost stream with all of the House’s food waste and other biodegradable containers, ensuring that they will have no negative effect on the environment.”

The sweeping changes in the House cafeterias and take-out food venues didn’t cost the American taxpayers anything, based on financial information released by the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer.

As part of the plan, Attman told us about the banishment of all Styrofoam and environmentally destructive containers and utensils.

Acme’s Green Product Analysis

The all-feet-in approach by the House has allowed Acme to research and source cutting edge products – some like the water bottles are first times in this market and in some cases any mar-

ket. Attman said Acme can do a Green Product Analysis to help make it easy to go green. What started as an effort to accommodate foodservice operators, who chose to implement “green programs” within their operations, has turned into an effective tool for Acme Paper customers. Acme Paper can provide a full line of cost effective, eco-friendly disposable product alternatives. From chemical and equipment to foodservice packaging and catering operations each of the six Acme divisions can conduct the analysis.

GREEN TERMINOLOGY

Bagasse: An agricultural by-product from sugar mills used to make disposable paper-like products.

Biodegradable: materials that will degrade as a result of natural bacterial activity.

Cereplast: resin composed of renewable resources such as wheat, corn and potato starches to create plastic-like products.

PLA: polylactic acid; a biodegradable thermoplastic resin, derived from renewable resources such as corn.

Recycling: the reprocessing of materials into new products generally prevents the waste of potentially useful materials, reduces the consumption of raw materials and energy.

Green Seal: Independent 3rd party



Acme’s Scott Attman is a regular visitor to the House outlets checking on the latest additions to the compostable products.

organization that identifies and promotes products and services to cause less pollution and waste; sets environmental standards for product categories and certifies products that meet these standards. www.greenseal.com

LEED: a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council that promotes certification of high performance and sustainable buildings nationwide. www.usgbc.org/leed



The green water bottles are corn based compostable