

# GreenSheet



**RUPPERT**  
LANDSCAPE

*Employee Newsletter*

**4th Quarter 2013**

## A Reason for *Optimism*

By Chris Davitt



**A**s the first phase of my retirement approaches and I end my full time status and begin my part time advisory role, I find myself in that unique position that people sometimes do as they look back on their career. There is

a certain clarity that evolves as the day-to-day busy-ness falls away that enables you to weave together lessons learned with a clearer view for the future direction. So as I write my last *Greensheet* message, I thought I'd share a few reasons for optimism that I see in the company's future.

### Economic Cycle

As we slowly recover from a recession that began about six years ago, we watch the steady increase in construction spending and are encouraged about what that means. And while that is good news, it doesn't mean our work load decreases. It means that our challenges shift from seeking work to being more intensely focused on recruiting and retaining employees. This is a big component to success and from my perspective, our multifaceted approach of attracting and developing employees is one of Ruppert's many strengths. In short, the economy that's coming fits our strong suit rather than the economy of our recent past, and that is a reason for optimism.

### Growth in Employees and Promotions

Over the course of this past year, we've increased our employee numbers by over 10% and have had 127 promotions, which have ranged from field level promotions to promotions



at the executive level. Most of you have likely heard the long list of good news over this past year including the promotion of Phil Key to fill the role as company president, Doug Halsey and Fred Key to regional vice presidents, Bob Jones to president of the landscape construction division, Jack Jones to region manager, and most recently, Matt Davidson and Jack Ruppert to branch managers. These promotions were carefully considered and were made to best position us for the future, ensuring that our culture and values are disseminated within the company and that our customer service and employee development goals are achieved. With each promotion comes a new level of energy. These individuals bring a set of goals and skills with them that helps to take that position to the next level. It creates a real energy, and causes other team members to aim higher. This breeds vitality into the organization, which is another positive offshoot.

### Game Changing Choices

When I think back on the pivotal decisions that have shaped the company, one that comes to

mind is our decision to go with our branching structure. It decentralized the company and opened opportunities for many others to shape the company's direction. It worked, largely because of the caliber of the original three branch managers: Ken Thompson, Rich Schubach and Ken Hochkeppel. Although at the time, we didn't realize what impact it would have on shaping our company's future. Many more such examples exist, such as our decision to expand the scope of services we offered our customers in the landscape construction division. It opened up a lot more opportunity for us and allowed us to bring new and better services to our customers. To a large degree, this decision was shaped by Bob Jones and the landscape construction branch managers who picked up new experiences during their years immediately after the company sale, which they wanted to apply here at Ruppert. The lessons we learned in both of these examples is that a successful decision didn't come from one individual, it didn't come from the top of the company and the success was not immediately obvious. As we look forward, there are plenty of initiatives being undertaken right now—from our organic landscape management services we now offer to experiments we are doing with piecemeal plus many others—any of which may be the next big game changer. It's safe to say that whatever it is, it will be driven by the employees of our company and it could be inspired anytime and anywhere. I hope that this thought encourages both our customers, who will undoubtedly benefit, as well as all of our employees.

Over the years, we've been exposed to new ways to do things, learned lessons through acquisitions or by hiring talented people who played leadership roles in other great companies. But the more I witness, the more I realize there is something very unique and special in the Ruppert organization and from my vantage point, the future is very bright.

# The Organic Movement is Gaining Favor

By Fred Key



There is a shift occurring in the landscaping industry. That shift has been gradually evolving over the past few years, and it involves terms that you've heard like organic and sustainable. These terms both refer to an approach that is not harmful to the environment or deplete natural resources. Some of the shift is occurring due to legislation banning pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. Locally here in Maryland,

DC and Metro Virginia area, there is an increased sensitivity to the Chesapeake Bay and the damage caused by storm water runoff high in nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment. The state has recently enacted a "rain tax" that taxes properties with impervious surfaces that prevent rainwater from seeping into the earth. Another local municipality, the city of Tacoma Park, banned the use of the pesticides (effective March 1, 2014) Ortho Max, Ortho Ground Clear and Roundup. But this isn't just a local Maryland issue, with nearly 80% of Canada and many municipalities in the U.S. having banned the use of certain pesticides on publically managed spaces. So there is a groundswell happening on many fronts that is helping to increase the awareness of the organic movement and is changing the way that we do business.

A natural reaction is to worry about what may happen, or put energy towards resisting the change. We've spent a few years exploring alternatives and developing new approaches and our overall message is don't worry! We can manage landscapes with a partial or complete organic approach with no increase in cost and with virtually the same results. It will change some of the way we approach things, and in some cases will require an upfront investment, but we are confident you, our customers, will be happy with the results. We can provide a 100 percent organic approach or a phased approach that uses less nitrogen and pesticides and offers improvement from an environmental standpoint.

*Ruppert's organic approach...ask if you're interested in reading more!*

changes that are undoubtedly headed our way. If we are your landscape provider, please know that you are in good hands and we are thinking through some of the new choices and challenges on your behalf. Our goal is always to be a resource for you as you address the needs of your organization and property. Talk to your



Successful 100% organically cared for properties include Washington Canal Park, which is maintained by our Forestville Maintenance Branch.

site manager and ask for a brochure. This same advice holds true if you're a Ruppert team member. Familiarize yourself with the organic services we provide and I encourage you to help us discover new and innovative ways to operate that are focused on environmental stewardship and efficient use of resources.

## Career Opportunities

Looking to move up the ladder or know someone in the industry seeking a position? Ruppert Landscape has the following positions immediately available:

### Landscape Construction

**MDL** – Field Manager (2)

**VAL** – Field Manager (1), CDL Driver (1)

**GAL** – Project Manager (1), Asst. Project Manager (1), Crewmen

**NCL** – Crewmen

### Landscape Management

**LAM** – CDL Driver (1), Field Manager (1), Crewmen

**GVM** – Field Manager (1), Crewman (1)

**FOM** – Field Manager (1), Crewmen

**CHM** – Field Manager (1)

**BAM** – Field Manager (2), Part-time Mechanic (1)

**CHM** – Field Manager (1)

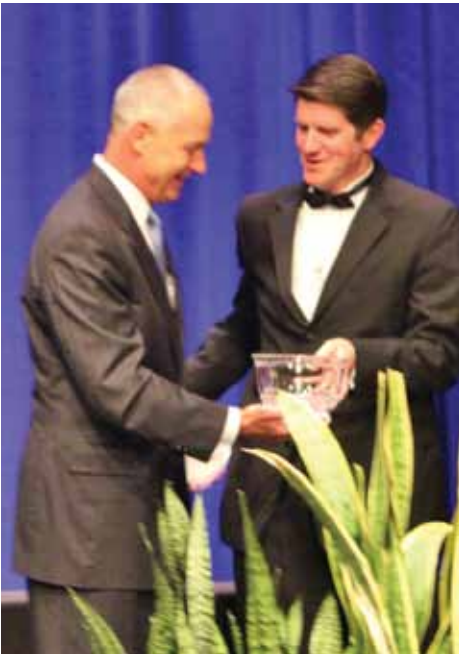
**RIM** – Area Manager (1), Field Manager (1), Shop Manager (1)

**LOM** – Enhancement Field Manager (1)

*For more information or to apply, please contact the department noted.*



# Catholic Business Network Honors Craig Ruppert



Craig Ruppert was honored by the Catholic Business Network of Montgomery County (CBN-MC) as the 2013 Catholic Business Person of the Year at its annual Gala on Friday, November 22, 2013 at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel & Conference Center.

"Craig Ruppert's professional and civic contributions reach deep into and far beyond the Montgomery County community and epitomize what it means to be the Business Person of the Year," said CBN-MC Board President, Gerard McLoughlin, in announcing the award. "We are excited to celebrate such a distinguished, accomplished professional, and a genuine good guy, at our annual gala."

"It is a privilege to be recognized with this award," said Craig Ruppert.

"CBN-MC does a tremendous job of not only connecting local professionals, but their charitable work in helping to make Catholic education affordable and accessible is something to be celebrated, and a cause I believe in."

Craig credits his Ruppert team members with the hard work that enables the company growth and allows it to support the community in numerous ways. "As a leader in the company, it is often me who receives the accolades," he said. "But I want all of the employees to know how much I appreciate and value what they do in this organization every day."

CBN-MC is a non-profit organization that supports Catholic schools and the proceeds raised from the gala will support scholarships for students in need.

## Attracting Young Talent To Our Ranks

This year, Ruppert's summer intern program was the largest in the company's history, with approximately 17 interns assigned to various branches. With a strong desire to attract the industry's best and brightest into our ranks, we actively recruit students from a variety of universities including University of Maryland, Penn State, Mississippi State, Ohio State, University of Delaware, Auburn, University of Georgia, SUNY Cobleskill, Hinds Community College and Columbus State...to name a few. Throughout the 8-12 weeks internship program, participants receive an orientation and exposure to a variety of operational and management responsibilities. They have an opportunity to interact with senior leadership, participate in skills training, branch appreciation initiatives and trade association meetings, and work with other interns and branch personnel. At the end of the summer, interns take part in Intern Day, and are required to prepare a presentation about their summer work experience, detailing what he/she learned and how that knowledge will be applied



**Back Row L-R:** Jay Long (Director of Organizational and People Services), Brianna Altavilla (Old Dominion University), Preston Denny (SUNY Cobleskill), Hunter Thompson (McDaniel College), John Davis (High Point University), John Foster (University of Georgia), Jeff Frank, Jake Heuple (Virginia Tech), Jeffrey Patch (Virginia Tech), Gregory Hamisevicz (Notre Dame), Andy Korman (Penn State). **Front Row L-R:** Joey Busche (West Virginia University), John Deckelbaum (Towson University), Roger Preuss III (SUNY Cobleskill), Joseph Kulesza (James Madison University), Chris Davitt (President), Tyrone Bentley (Penn State), Jesse Ware (University of Delaware).

at school or in future work experiences. More than half of the interns who complete Ruppert's internship program are offered full-time employment after graduation. This is a win-win for both parties, as the student

is familiar with Ruppert's environment, culture and expectations, and as a result of their training, and the company has had an opportunity to see a student's work ethic and aptitude.

# Movin' OnUp

*Each employee should know that we are committed to his or her growth and development." ~ Ruppert Values, p. 2*

## Phil Key Promoted to President



**Phil Key** was promoted to president, replacing Chris Davitt as he retires. "Appointing Phil to the position of president was the right move for our organization," said Craig Ruppert. He has been integrally involved with the planning, execution and success of the business over the past five years in his role as vice president of the landscape management division. He is widely respected within the industry and within our organization at all levels, where

he's demonstrated a strong ability to listen, motivate and build consensus. His business acumen, strategic thinking ability and strong leadership will help guide our organization to the next level of its development. I'm confident Phil has a firm grasp of our culture and values and will capably impart and strengthen those values as our company continues to evolve."

Phil holds a bachelor's degree in business from Western Maryland (now McDaniel) College and recently completed the first of three Harvard Business School Owners Presidents Management Program (OPM). He has been with the company for over 15 years and began his career as an intern in 1991 and worked his way through the ranks serving in virtually every position within the landscape management division up to and including branch manager and division vice president.



**Bob Jones** was recently named president of the landscape construction division. In this role, he directs the division's day-to-day operations, providing strategic planning and guidance and managing four branch offices with over 200 employees. "This promotion was made both in recognition of what Bob has done in the past and also in anticipation of the role he will continue to play going forward,"

said company president Phil Key. "With anticipated company growth we have an increased need for additional leadership within our organization. Bob is well respected both within our company and within our industry and has been at the helm of landscape construction division for over 12 years. Bob's new title is commensurate with the role he has been playing and I feel it will enhance his ability to act effectively as a leader within our industry." Bob is the 2014 chairman elect of the board of directors for Associated Builders and Contractors Metro Washington Chapter and he has been with the company for 17 years.



**Fred Key** and **Doug Halsey** were promoted to the position of regional vice president. In this role, both Key and Halsey will lead the landscape management division, providing strategic vision and operational insight, and acting as a resource for their branch managers in the areas of people development, training, customer service and

profitability. Doug will be responsible for the northern region, which includes the company's branches in Washington, DC, Maryland and Pennsylvania and Fred will be responsible for the southern region, which includes the company's branches in Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia.



**Jack Jones** has been promoted to the position of region manager where he will oversee branches in Raleigh, NC, Charlotte, NC and Atlanta, GA. Jack has been with the Ruppert organization for eight years, where he served as both an area manager and branch manager.

"Jack is an innovator in his role as branch manager and has created many initiatives that have been adopted division-wide," said Phil Key. "We are excited about giving him the opportunity to play an even bigger role here at Ruppert."



**Matt Davidson** and **Jack Ruppert**

have been promoted to branch manager. Matt has been with the Ruppert organization for three years, brings over 20 years of industry experience including positions as an area manager and branch manager. He will be managing the Forestville Maintenance branch. Jack is a graduate of Penn State University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in Landscape Construction Management. He became a full time employee at Ruppert in November of 2010 and has worked as an area manager. Jack will be managing the Lorton Maintenance branch (effective January 6, 2014).





# More Movin' OnUp

**Kenny Safrit (PAM)** was promoted from Field Manager to Area Manager for the Laytonsville Maintenance branch while

**David Webb (PAM)** was promoted from Asst. Field Manager to Field Manager.

**Juan Perez (CHM)** was promoted from Asst. Field Manager to Field Manager.

**Casey Coleman** and **Trevor Mann** of Maryland Landscape branch were both promoted from Crewman to Field Manager.



Kenny Safrit



David Webb



Juan Perez



Casey Coleman



Trevor Mann

## Employee Appreciation



**R**uppert hosted its annual company picnic on Saturday, October 5th. Hundreds of employees and their families from Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania came out for the event held at the company's Fall Creek Farm location. Thanks to everyone who attended and congratulations to the **Forestville Maintenance (FOM)** branch for winning the raft race and tug-or-war contests.

**Maryland Landscape (MDL)** hosted their annual Thanksgiving Feast for all their employees on November 22nd. Each employee was recognized with their years of service letter and coin and given a turkey for their families to enjoy on Thanksgiving.

**Bobby Burbank (MDL)** basting one of the three turkeys that were served as part of the feast.





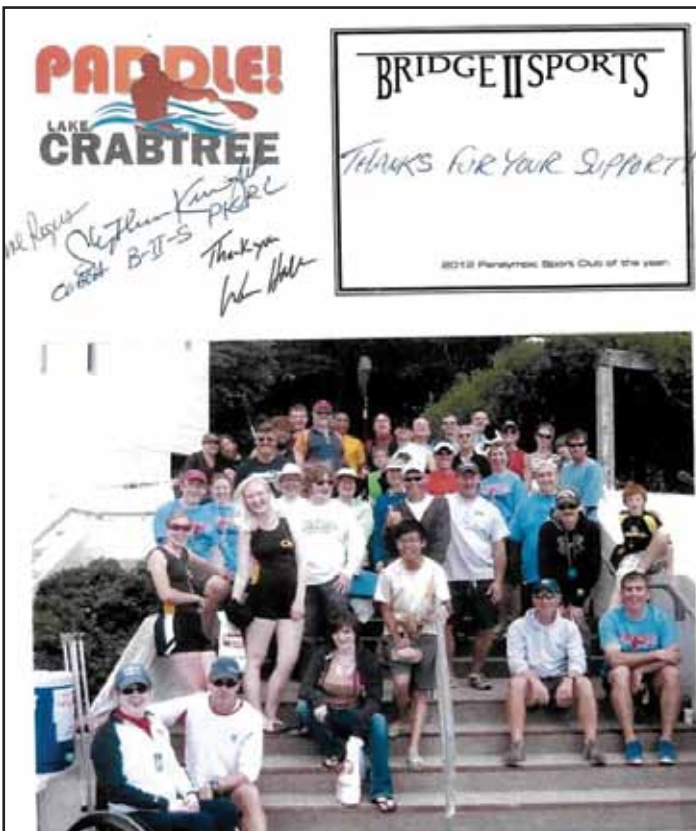
# Community Service

*"A man wrapped up in himself  
makes a very small bundle."  
~ Benjamin Franklin*

Since the **Richmond Maintenance (RAM)** branch first opened two years ago it has been actively participating in the Backpack Program through Richmond's Feed More Organization. The program was started as a resource to provide meals over the weekend for school aged children that would otherwise go without, due to family financial hardships. This program is one of FeedMore's major initiatives to ensure that children receive a bag of food that is child-friendly, nutritious, nonperishable, and easy to prepare or eat. A team of employees from RIM volunteered to help assemble hundreds of backpacks, and helped deliver them to community schools.



**Raleigh Maintenance** participated in a Canoe & Kayak race on Lake Crabtree on September 28th with Bridge II Sports, a non-profit organization that creates opportunities for physically challenged children and adults to play team and individual sports. They provide special equipment, develop team activities, and provide coaching to help them build confidence and self esteem.



**Baltimore Maintenance (BAM)** participated for its second year in the BOMA 6th Annual "Moveable Feast" event on Thursday, November 21. **Ryan Schupp, Scott Distasio and Patty Pescrille-Brockmeyer**



participated with current property managers to sort and pack canned goods donated by various members and groups of BOMA. The branch collected over \$70.00 in canned goods as well as a sponsorship check in the amount of \$350.00 donated by Joe Brockmeyer PFG Foods. Last year the charity event delivered a two month supply of food for over 150 families in need. BOMA suspected that the donations this year will top last year's event.

On Friday November 15th, a members of the **BAM** landscape enhancement team donated time and plant material to an organization called Pigtown Main Street, a nonprofit organization founded to help revitalize Baltimore's Pigtown neighborhood. The project is less than a mile from the Baltimore branch office, truly making it a community service project. In all, the Baltimore team planted 13 street trees, replanted 25 planter pots, and designed/planted a corner planting bed.



On Thanksgiving Day, **Dennis Goodman (BAM)** and his son volunteered their time at the Patterson Park community center to serve a thanksgiving meal to those in need. Dennis and his son packaged food, served meals, and joined many others that were giving out new coats, healthcare screenings, and haircuts.

Also in November, **Baltimore Maintenance** orchestrated a Day of Caring to help out various areas of the community. Their customer, University of Maryland, asked for help in a clean-up effort at the Old St. Paul Cemetery, which is bordered by the UMD campus.

*Continued on page 7*



## More Community Service

The historically significant cemetery is maintained by an elderly parishioner, who isn't able to complete some of the work needing to be done. The branch spent a half day clearing overgrown vines from perimeter walls and headstones, pruning trees, mowing the turf, and picking up fallen branches, which will now allow the grounds maintenance to be more manageable.



**Maryland Landscape (MDL)** partnered up with Mahan Rykiel Associates for their third annual PARK(ing) Day for suburban awareness. There were two events; one of them at University of Maryland where U of MD's student chapter of ASLA helped install decorative stones, pavers and shrubs, and one in The Avenue neighborhood of Baltimore. This involved the installation of a new park that would create more "green" space and outdoor seating along The Avenue. The park was designed with a beach-like theme with sand, oversized lounge chairs made out of pallets and even a fishing pond. Along with donating labor, the branch contributed



*The Avenue Neighborhood event*

ornamental grasses and sand to help create an inviting beach environment. Both events were designed to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining open green spaces in urban areas.



*University of MD event*

Several people from **Georgia Maintenance (GAM)** attended the Elaine Clark Center Hustle for Hope 5k run. **Steve Faber, Jimmy Watson** and **Eddie Barron** each participated in the event and Ruppert Landscape was a sponsor. The branch has been affiliated with the center for several years to support them in their efforts of enriching the lives of children and adults with special needs.



**GAM** also lent a helping hand to the Chosen for Life Ministries, based in Watkinsville, GA. A grieving widow, Tina Guthrie, needed help with repairs and landscaping around her home. While Ruppert donated plant material to aid the project, Field Manager **Josh Mickey** donated his time and services to finish the job.



**Laytonsville Maintenance (LAM)** donated a tree to the Alzheimer's Association as part of a contribution towards several fundraising events they recently hosted. The tree, which was located in their lobby, serves as a place where names of those contributing towards the cause could be displayed. Eventually, the tree will be planted as a memorial for those with Alzheimer's.

**Paulina Cook, Paul Brooks, Mary Angebranntt** and **Will Saxby** of **Georgia Landscape (GAL)** recently participated in the Dunn Run 5k. JE Dunn was the general contractor hosting the event, which raised money for Kids2Leaders, a program dedicated to changing the lives of prisoners' children that focuses on teaching



them to become leaders; and Camp Hope which is a one week overnight camp for the children in the Kids2Leaders program.



# NewFaces

WE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING  
NEW LEADERS TO RUPPERT'S  
GROWING RANKS:



**Mike Adamson  
(BAM)**  
Asst. Field Manager



**Brooke Bayliss  
(LOM)**  
Branch Administrator



**Kenneth Gens  
(NCL)**  
Field Manager



**Kyle Hockaday  
(RIM)**  
Asst. Field Manager



**Carlos Juarez  
(LOM)**  
Branch Administrator



**Brett Lineberry  
(RAM)**  
Field Manager



**Heather Lowe  
(CORP)**  
Payroll Specialist



**Ken Bailey  
(CORP)**  
Dir. of Fleet Operations



**Dan Townsend  
(RIM)**  
Field Manager



**Jonathan Zauner  
(BAM)**  
Field Manager

# MajorMilestones

A HEARTY  
CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES:

## JUST MARRIED



**Mike Fleming  
(BAM)** and his wife, Chrissy, were married on November 2, 2013.

## PROUD PARENTS



*Chase Jones*

**Jack Jones  
(CORP)** and his wife, Allie, welcomed their second son, Chase Frederick on November 22, 2013.

**DJ Lloyd (FOM)** and his wife, Marie, welcomed their second son, Cody James, on November 13, 2013.



*Cody Lloyd*



*Kaelyn Kliever*

**Andrew Kliever  
(GVM)** and his wife, Faith, welcomed their third daughter, Kaelyn, on November 4, 2013.

**Russell Skipper  
(GAM)** and his wife, Amber, welcomed their first child Kaylee Brooke on October 11, 2013.



*Kaylee Skipper*



*Juan Daniel Perez*

**Juan Perez  
(CHM)** and his wife, Ruth, welcomed Juan Daniel on November 8, 2013.

## OVERACHIEVERS

**Russell Henderson (CHM)** did a 650 mile mountain bike ride where he climbed 12,000 feet each day for a six day period. The ride started in Calgary and ended in Montana.



## US CITIZENSHIP



**Juan Perez (CHM)** earned his U.S. Citizenship on September 24, 2013.

On Wednesday, September 20th the Landscape Contractors Association (LCA) hosted their annual Excellence in Landscape awards banquet. Several Ruppert branches were recognized with Grand awards for their job sites. They included **Maryland Landscape** for Westchester Rockville Station, **Virginia Landscape** for the Waterfront Park at the Yards; **Forestville Maintenance** for the Georgetown Flower Program and **Laytonsville Maintenance** for United Therapeutics and Rockville Town Square. Several employees were also recognized for completing their Certified Landscape Technician (CLT) tests, among them were **Wes Fouse (BAM)**, **Ryan Rote (LAM)**, **John Gregory (LAM)**, **Patrick Hand (LAM)** and **Kyle Ayres (BAM)**.



*Wes Fouse, Ryan Rote, Pat Hand, John Gregory and Kyle Ayres*