Leaders of Tomorrow

When I opened up our company newsletter and saw an article with the headline “Leaders of Tomorrow,” I was intrigued. As the HR Manager for Vermont, it was curious to see what recruiting and/or development angle the article was focused towards. The article shared that our Leaders and Executive Board want to intensify dialogue with our younger generation of professionals. They were inviting employees to give their feedback. They want to hear from their employees! They want to know how to ensure that young professionals stay connected to their employer. How awesome is that?

Twenty employees from around the world and all regions of Omya were invited to attend a multi-day event visiting different plants, quarries and engineering facilities, including a day spent at Omya headquarters in Oltringen, Switzerland. This was a chance for these young professionals to not only expand their networking within Omya but to see how other plants and facilities operate in comparison to Verpol.

Ryan Faber, Project Engineer at the Vermont Verpol site, applied and was selected to attend the event in March 2016. Part of the application required Ryan to explain why he should be selected. “It was a great opportunity,” he told me. “I would have been pretty disappointing, knowing now the experience that I had, if I didn’t write the article.”

Ryan explained to me that before arriving each participant provided their resume. The Omya Executive Board (OEB) had done their homework and would address the individuals throughout their visit with something personal learned from the resume, reassuring that the visit was valued and they were being recognized individually as well as collaboratively.

The main workshop brought together 20 young professional employees from operations/roll of work at the mining facilities and administration. The purpose of having the employees come together as a group was to prepare a presentation to share their ideas. The employees were split into four groups with three sessions to focus on the theme of, “What makes a good employer.” Each of these four groups worked on their idea throughout the evening to then provide a presentation to the OEB the following day.

“Thinking of the article was an incredible feeling to be able to share ideas with such successful personnel within Omya,” said Ryan. “However, it was not just a one-way interaction of young professionals shooting out our wish lists for successful personnel within Omya,” said Ryan. “However, it was not just a one-way interaction of young professionals shooting out our wish lists for successful personnel within Omya, it was truly interesting and engaged in what everybody had to say, and I think that shows how open they truly are to ideas.”

Omya asked for feedback from their “Leaders of Tomorrow.” Thank you Ryan for taking the opportunity and sharing your ideas with our Leaders of Today!

September Sees Omya’s 14th Annual Open House

Omya is excited again this year to host our free Open House at the Middlebury Quarry on Saturday, September 10, 2016 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Never been? Whether you have attended one or all of our 13 Middlebury Quarry Open Houses, there is always something new to see! We welcome all ages for a behind-the-scenes look at what goes on at the open-pit quarry. Hop on one of four buses and take a ride into the quarry while expert guides share details and answer questions. Visitors will have an opportunity to get off the bus and take an up close look at geological formations and learn about the area for their own marble souvenirs. Are you interested in drilling equipment or blasting and quarrying processing? Omya geologists will be on-hand to provide an overview on the history and explain how natural resources are used and benefit the environment.

There is plenty to see above the quarry as well. Giant trucks, loaders and other quarry equipment will be on display and a marble sand pile complete with toy trucks and shovels is always a favorite spot for children. Use a microscope and learn about rocks and minerals from Omya mineralogists, geologists and chemists. View an exhibit showing how the extracted marble is crushed and milled at Omya’s Verpol facility in Florence, VT for use in thousands of diverse applications and products consumers use every day.

Omya employees from every facet of the mineral processing business, along with our contractors from Shelburne Limestone Corporation (SLC) and Casella Construction will be on hand to greet visitors – rain or shine.

Depending on the weather, the gravel covered quarry ground can rival mud-season like conditions so appropriate footwear is recommended. There will be a handicapped accessible tour bus and a complimentary lunch will be served.

For more information about the Quarry Open House contact Jill Blanchard at 802-770-7500 or jill.blanchard@omya.com.
Omya’s Hogback Quarry Applies for Permit

On April 13, 2016, Omya, Inc. conducted a test blast at its Hogback Quarry for the District #1 Environmental Commission and interested members of the public. The test blast was successful in demonstrating that, using new technology, large blasts can be conducted at the quarry while staying well within existing permit limits. It also gave observers an opportunity to “see and hear” how the new technology helps control blasts.

Specifically, Omya is requesting to increase the size of quarry blasts and to extend quarry operating hours from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. These changes, if granted, will allow Omya to operate more efficiently, produce a higher quality product and meet increasing customer demands. The changes will also allow Omya to meet the growing demand from local municipalities and other customers for construction aggregate and specialized products like winter sand.

Since last summer, Omya has been using a state-of-the-art electronic blasting technology to conduct our tests. The technology helps us to address concerns of some of our customers who have found tiny amounts of plastic blasting contaminants in the ground calcium carbonate produced at the Verpol Facility. Instead of plastic tubing that the old technology used to connect the individual detonators, the new technology uses metal wires, which can be removed with magnets at the front end of our processing operation, thereby improving the overall quality of our feed stone and, consequently, of our finished products.

Initially driven by the need to improve product quality, the use of state-of-the-art electronic blasting technology has other advantages as well. Within a single blast there typically are dozens of individual detonations, but because each goes off within milliseconds of each other, the blast is experienced as a single event. The new electronic detonators allow us to set the timing of each individual detonation with such precision that we can use the ground vibration waves from each detonation within a blast to partially cancel out the ground vibration waves from the combined detonations within the larger blast, thereby minimizing the blast’s overall vibration impact to our neighbors around the Quarry – much the same way that canceling headphones reduce noise by canceling sound waves. This means that we can conduct larger blasts when demand and circumstances warrant while still maintaining our historic, low levels of ground vibration and air overpressure.

The existing Act 250 permit limitations, however, are preventing us from taking full advantage of the new technology, as oftentimes ground vibrations can be further minimized by using higher explosive weights and/or more explosives per delay than are currently authorized. Although minimizing ground vibrations by increasing explosive weight may seem counterintuitive, research has collected considerable data from all blasts at the Quarry, including from larger blasts, using this new technology conducted at the Hogback Quarry for the District #1 Environmental Commission. The data, coupled with the data from the April test blast, confirm that this technology works to minimize ground vibrations for blasts of relatively high explosive weight.

Following the test blast, the Act 250 District Commission conducted a site visit and convened a public hearing on April 14, 2016. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commission recessed the proceeding pending submittal of additional information from the applicant and parties or interested persons.

All additional information requested and any associated rebuttal or responses were due by the end of May. Upon review, the Commission will issue a final decision including proposed findings and conclusions and/or permit conditions in June.

Omya’s Verpol Facility is located in Florence, Town of Pittsford, Vermont, on approximately 385 acres and employs 150 people. The Verpol Facility produces fine ground calcium carbonate from marble ore. The Hogback Quarry is located about 3 miles north of the Verpol Facility. In addition to producing feed stone to the Verpol Facility, the Hogback Quarry supplies a growing list of aggregate products to a variety of public and private customers. For more information, please contact Michael Laurent at (802) 770-7588.

The company provides a wide range of product solutions that contribute to its customers’ competitiveness and productivity in multiple industries such as Construction, Printing & Whiling, Technical Polymers, Packaging, Food, Personal & Home Care, Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture and Forestry, Water and Energy.

I have experienced three winters in Vermont since moving here from Arizona. I was told that the first two winters, 2013 and 2014, were very unusual for Vermont and pretty harsh in comparison with normal winters. Though I haven’t asked, I must surmise from all the comments I hear that the winter of 2016 was also pretty exceptional – but for a very different reason. The majority of these comments have concerned the lack of snow and very little is said about the subsequent challenges that come with lots of snow. We all know, however, that the lack of snow is also a lost opportunity for various businesses to capitalize on the many visitors and travelers we have in Vermont in a snowy, picturesque winter year.

For us at Omya this winter has been very good. The logistical challenges we faced during the winter of 2014 have all but been forgotten. Our customers are happy that their needs have been met with on-time shipments and deliveries. We have continued operating on a level that has kept us all productive and allowed us to concentrate on making our process more efficient. Omya continues to play an integral part in our community and our employees continue to participate in and represent various causes and organizations that are very important to the quality of life in our neck of the woods.

Omya is expecting 2016 to be very similar to 2015. We will continue to work on projects which maintain our competitiveness and support our community wherever possible. We are also looking at opportunities to improve our operations. We are especially sensitive to increases in costs of energy; we continue to review alternatives, including solar power energy, and as various programs offered by our electrical power partners to limit the pressure on energy costs.

We also continue to work on developing a market for our flotation product, called SPS. Great successes have been seen in capping landfills, supporting farmers with material for adjusting the quality of the soil in their fields. We continue to work with several partners to develop viable end uses that will benefit our environment and add value to our operation.

At Omya we have been able to maintain our good safety record and are constantly evolving a culture of safety to meet the higher goal of looking out for and caring about each other. We do not want to see anybody get hurt at work and we continue to strive for zero injuries each year. For 2016 this will be no different.

I look forward to seeing what 2016 will bring. I thank you for all the feedback we get after these newsletters are circulated – we value your opinion and encourage you to let us know if there was something you feel we need to include in these bi-annual newsletters. Our goal is to let you know what we are doing and keep our newsletters relevant and interesting at the same time.

Thank you for all the support and we all wish you a very pleasant and productive summer.

Best Regards,
Wayne Wilmans
wayne.wilmans@omya.com
Veterans Monument

Marble Blocks Donated for Monument

Pelkey (Chair), Tom Hooker (Vice Chair), Dave Trombley, and the monument will be placed outside the Pittsford Town office, with a monument celebration planned for Veteran’s Day on Friday, November 11, 2016.

To transport the sizable blocks to Gawet Marble, where the marble finishing mill is located, Omya has already begun. Excavating donated its time and equipment to move the blocks from the Blue Quarry to the marble finishing mill and at the Arlington Cemetery.

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After discussions with community members, Hank spoke with Omya’s Danby plant manager Jim Stewart and permission to move the blocks to Gawet Marble, where the work will begin to transform the marble blocks into Veterans Monument.

Bristol Landfill Capped and Closed

“Bravo is truly beautiful, undulating rolling hills. If you’d told me before, that this is what it was going to look like, I never would have believed you.”

— Town Administrator Therese Kirby

By GAEN MURPHY

BRISTOL— “It was a dump and now it’s beautiful,” said Bristol Town Administrator Therese Kirby last week, looking across the site of the former Bristol landfill.

And indeed it is.

What last July was truly mountains of trash is now covered in layers of dirt, sculpted to fit seamlessly into the surrounding landscape and capped with acres of marble dust, an Omya byproduct that’s often marketed as Agrocarb and used as a soil enhancer. On top of that chalky substance, which doubles as both cap and topsoil, grasses have grown and anchored in acres of jute matting.

Standing at the top of the southernmost slope and looking across the site to where the Hogback Mountains rise gently on the horizon, it’s easy to imagine that once the grass grows and things go a bit wild, the only visible sign that this was once a landfill will be the four ventilation pipes placed and the six-acre site.

Work to close the Bristol landfill at the west end of Pine Street has been carried out by Green Mountain Engineering and by Casella Construction for the past three months.

Back in July, Casella began trucking the 36,000 tons of the Omya capping material from Florence to Bristol to get the project jump-started. Since the landfill closed for good in early August, four to five workers has been at the site full-time, working bulldozers, excavators and loaders and trucks to change trash mountains, week by week, into what looks just like a typical Vermont hillside.

Green Mountain Engineering’s role has been to visit the site weekly and make sure that work progresses according to state specs.

Kirby repeatedly emphasized how instrumental both Green Mountain Engineering and Casella Construction have been to the project’s success — both in terms of final results and in coming in far under budget.

Original cost estimates had put closing the landfill at $1.5 million. But working with Omya and Casella, the town was able to cut project costs by close to half. Bristol resident and Omya employee Michael Laurent told the town about the quarrying byproduct, which had already been used successfully to cap landfills, and Casella agreed to provide the $400,000 worth of material for free. Casella offered additional savings because it was already trucking for Omya.

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On March 23, 2016, Omya donated the Beaver Pond and its surrounding 38 acres of land and 11 acres of water to the Town of Proctor, as the Town had expressed an interest in the property with hopes of bringing it back to its historical use as a recreational area for residents of Proctor. Although Beaver Pond has been undeveloped, there is a small dam and beach with public access for swimming and boating and the area is a popular fishing spot for locals.

As the property was not actively used by Omya, we thought it was best to gift the property to the Town of Proctor along with funding for property improvements and enhancements. With the town taking over ownership of Beaver Pond and the surrounding land, it will ensure the friends and families of the community will be able to enjoy this recreational resource for years to come.

20 Years and Still Going Strong

Omya is a proud supporter of United Way, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping those in our community by providing funding for 32 health and human service organizations which serve over 25,000 people throughout the local region. For the past 20 years Omya has shown its dedication in supporting United Way by raising over $680,000 through employee and company contributions. Each year Omya employees organize a campaign which promotes United Way and educates employees to what the organization is all about. Omya was excited to receive the 2016 Business of the Year award recognizing Omya’s support throughout the years.

Omya employees also celebrated 20 years of Green Up - an annual tradition at the Verpol plant taking place one day prior to the statewide event. Omya takes pride in giving back to its community in a variety of ways and one way is by helping to keep our roadsides clean and trash free. Each year employees team up in groups to cover the surrounding roads which leads into the plant. Omya provides employees with safety gear and plenty of drinks for hydration and the event concludes with a lunch for all the employees to enjoy. Omya also supported the statewide event and teamed up with the Town of Pittsford for the town-wide Green Up day that took place on May 7. Omya was happy to provide an extra dumpster along with a light lunch.

The winning Omya Green Up slogan this year is... “Keep it GREEN with Omya’s Team 2016.” Thank you Jack Czarnecki! Every year Omya employees are given the opportunity to submit Green Up slogans and employees vote for their favorite. We were excited to have 31 entries this year! The winner’s name and slogan are printed on t-shirts that all employees get on Green Up day and the winner also receives a $25 gift card and - of course - bragging rights! Thank you to all who entered a slogan and took the time to vote.

LNG Conversion: Changing the Landscape for Omya and the Environment

As you may be aware by now, Omya has completed the conversion from fuel oil to natural gas, stored on site in the form of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Omya is now utilizing natural gas as the primary fuel source for its Florence plant as well as for hauling ore between the Middlebury quarry and the plant.

The operation has been primarily using natural gas since early 2014, while the LNG-fueled ore haul trucks came online in October, 2014. Last year (2015) marked the 1st full calendar year of utilizing natural gas and, looking back over the year, the natural gas has provided not only financial benefits but environmental benefits as well. These environmental benefits have already begun to be seen in major ways, as operation of the Casella Construction LNG haul trucks has resulted in a 15% reduction in CO2 emissions over their previous diesel counterparts. Within the plant itself, a 27% reduction in CO2 emissions was realized in 2015 alone.

The plant production and maintenance areas have begun to reap these benefits as well. The installation of the natural gas facility provided the opportunity to upgrade equipment and control systems and adopt the latest combustion technology. These improvements have complemented the new fuel source. Retaining the ability to operate on either natural gas or fuel oil has provided the plant the desired reliability and production uptime while allowing flexibility to utilize either gas or oil based on pricing. Due to the cleanliness of the natural gas combustion, maintenance activities have also been reduced as the equipment is undergoing less wear and tear.

Overall, the natural gas conversion project with its accompanying plant upgrades have provided a more reliable and cost effective system. It’s a shining example of how good business can go hand in hand with good environmental and safety stewardship.

Omaya Health & Wellness Program Repeats an Award-Winning Year

Omaya’s Health & Wellness program was once again recognized by the Vermont Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. On March 30, 2016, Omya received the 2015 Governor’s Excellence in Worksite Wellness Award. The award is traditionally given to Vermont companies which have implemented wellness programs within their organizations that promote healthy lifestyles and work to improve overall health.

Omaya’s wellness program offers employees a series of informational sessions on health topics such as disease awareness, preventative care, retirement planning and much more. Throughout the year employees get involved in physical activity challenges, get flu vaccinations, enjoy vegetables from the employee garden and take part in on-site biometric screenings.

Interested in a Tour?

You and your organization are cordially invited to visit our facility and see what we do. Schedule a private tour or come as a group (school groups fourth grade and higher are welcome). See how much we produce, take a tour of our plant, ask questions and learn about the fascinating processes to produce high-quality calcium carbonate products which are used in thousands of consumer applications including diapers, paper, paint, plastics, duct tape, vinyl siding, carpet, PVC pipe and more!

The Verpol plant is the largest of the Omya operations in the United States and is the third largest Omya plant in the world. Here, Omya quarries marble which then is ground, milled and purified to produce a finely ground calcium carbonate.

For further information, please contact Jill Blanchard