

2008 Fall Issue



Ashton Judiciary Square, Washington, D.C.

A Structurally Sound Decision

HILLIS-CARNES
ENGINEERING ASSOCIATES



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Newsletter

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Rise to the Top

Get a sneak preview of the Ashton Judiciary Square luxury apartment project presented during a recent topping out party in the District.



Making the Grade

Meet Jenna, the most recent cast member of Fox's hit TV show, "*Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader*" and daughter of HCEA's very own Jon Balk.



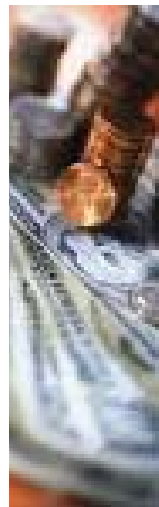
Worth Mentioning

Meet two top-notch members of HCEA's technical staff and find out where they are currently focusing their expertise.



Strategy: What to do Next

Join Vice President, David Buddemeyer, as he evaluates HCEA's strategy to survive the current and future economic climate.



Rise to the Top

Ashton Judiciary Square Tops Out

By: Nicole Andrews, Director of Marketing & Sales



Pictured L-R: Matt O'Brien of Hanover, David Buddemeyer of HCEA, Tarpan Parekh of Hanover, Tim Hill of HCEA, James Cofield of HCEA, and Steve Judd of Hanover

cast-in-place concrete, post-tensioned concrete, structural steel framing, masonry, and light gauge metal framing.

Both HCEA Project Manager Ed Czerwinski and Lead Engineering Technician James Cofield (pictured) were recognized by Hanover for their outstanding service and contributions toward the success of the project. \$



Pictured L-R: James Cofield and Ed Czerwinski of HCEA

Although the local economy continues to slow, Texas-based Hanover Companies is steadily on the rise - literally. On October 27th, Hillis-Carnes was among the members of the project team invited to the topping out celebration for the twelve story 49-unit luxury apartment building known as Ashton Judiciary Square in Washington, D.C.

Designed by DC-based WDG Architecture and constructed by Hanover, the new project is located next to the Mass Court Apartments, on the west side of I-395, three blocks north of the Judiciary Square Metro at 750 3rd Street, NW. In addition to other amenities, the project offers two levels of below grade parking.

Construction materials and inspection services provided by Hillis-Carnes include: foundations,



Office Locations

Our offices provide a full range of services including: exploratory drilling & geotechnical engineering, environmental assessment & precondition surveys, construction inspection & materials testing, structural & forensic engineering, and specialized construction services.

Corporate Headquarters

10975 Guilford Road, Suite A
Annapolis Junction, MD 20701
Phone 410.880.4788 Fax 410.880.4098

Maryland Offices

4959 New Design Road, Suite 107
Frederick, MD 21703
Phone 301.662.2522 Fax 301.662.5575

10228 Governor Lane Blvd., Suite 3007
Williamsport, MD 21795
Phone 301.582.4662 Fax 301.582.4614

421 Snow Hill Road
Salisbury, MD 21801
Phone 410.749.0940 Fax 410.749.2815

12200 Billingsley Road, Suite 200
Waldorf, MD 20602
Phone 301.638.1824 Fax 301.632.2086

43925 Commerce Avenue
Hollywood, MD 20636

10999 Red Run Boulevard, Suite 214
Owings Mills, MD 20601
Phone 410.902.0013

Delaware Offices

19 Ridgely Street
Dover, DE 19901
Phone 302.744.9855 Fax 302.744.9160

31 Blevins Drive, Suite C
New Castle, DE 19720
Phone 302.325.3160 Fax 302.325.3163

Virginia Office

14155 Sullyfield Circle, Suite A
Chantilly, VA 20151
Phone 703.817.1106 Fax 703.817.1170

Pennsylvania Office

25 Decibel Road, Suite 201
St. College, PA 16801
Phone 814.231.0552 Fax 814.231.0695

NEW! Caribbean Office

P.O. Box 169W, Bridgetown, Barbados

HILLIS-CARNES
ENGINEERING ASSOCIATES

Making the Grade

Are you smarter than this 5th grader?

By: Nicole Andrews, Director of Marketing & Sales

She's bubbly, outgoing and smart. So smart that the producers of Fox recently cast Jenna Balk, the daughter of Hillis-Carnes' very own Jonathan Balk, on the current season of the game show hit, "Are You Smarter Than A Fifth-Grader."

Jenna, who entered fifth grade this fall, was one of the five students on the show, which was taped in Los Angeles and currently airs Friday evenings on the Fox Network.

Initially, Jenna's mom saw a promotion to audition at the Columbia Mall and thought her daughter had a legitimate shot at being selected. The evening before the audition, they decided to give it a go and audition for the show. Following the audition, the family received a phone call and learned Jenna was heading for California, bypassing a regional competition in New York.

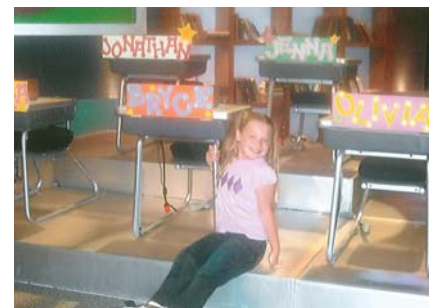
After spending several exciting days in L.A. where Jenna endured multiple auditions, the family headed back to Baltimore, knowing Jenna was one

of the final eight. The other finalists included a Ralph Lauren model and an actor on the television show "ER."

After a few more phone calls, the family was notified that Jenna had been selected. Upon receiving the news, Jenna had to pack her bag and head west the following morning. "I'm so flabbergasted," said Jon. "And I'm so proud of my daughter."

Jonathan Balk has been with Hillis-Carnes since October of 2007 and is a great addition to our Drilling Operations team. Jenna & Jon were nice enough to bring back a signed photo of the show's host and comedian, Jeff Foxworthy, signed "To the Employees of Hillis-Carnes, keep laughing!"

What's next for our local celebrity? Keep an eye out for her and the other four students on the "Bonnie Hunt Show" which tapes between November 19 and the 21st. Thanks Jenna and Jon for sharing your celebrity status with us. §



More Celebrity Photos



Worth Mentioning

Personnel Picks for Fall



The Hagerstown Branch is recognizing Robert Specht, Senior Engineering Technician and valued member of the HCEA team since September 2000 for his efforts and dedication. During his eight year career, Robert has worked on a variety of projects, tackled a range of issues and has become a role model for others. His comprehensive knowledge of concrete and soils in a geologically diverse region of the east coast is of tremendous benefit to clients and contractors. Recently, Robert was assigned to supervise a five man construction materials testing and inspection team for the one billion dollar ESSROC-Martinsburg New Line project. Specific services being provided by HCEA for the ESSROC job include; test probe monitoring and the inspection of micro-piles, soils, reinforcing steel, concrete and structural steel. In addition to his technical responsibilities as a Senior Engineering Technician at ESSROC, Robert is responsible for keeping accurate daily records of technician time and mileage, holding weekly safety meetings and handling day-to-day on-site personnel management. Thanks Robert for your great work and continued dedication.

The State College Branch is pleased to welcome back Robert P. Etters, P.E. Prior to returning to HCEA, Rob was a Senior Manager for R.C. Bowman, Inc. (RCB), an excavation and construction company located in Mill Hall, Pennsylvania. His responsibilities at RCB included: engineering consultation, the preparation of competitive bids, project management and business development. Rob rejoins HCEA as a Senior Project Manager/Engineer to manage contracted work for a number of clients in central Pennsylvania. Rob graduated from Bucknell University in 1999 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering. Since graduating, Rob's work experience has included bridge and roadway design, construction inspection, roadway rehabilitation and geotechnical engineering. Both the State College Pennsylvania and Hagerstown branch offices are benefiting from Rob's technical background and practical experience in construction methods and engineering. Welcome back Rob!



Strategy: What to do Next

The Basics May Provide the Answer

By: David Buddemeyer, Vice President Business Development

Like me, many of you have likely spent countless hours over the past several weeks absorbing the constant bombardment of news stories and reports about the election, the financial "crisis", foreign affairs, employment, the stock market and business economics. The so-called experts and prognosticators offer theories and conditional predictions that gain headlines but provide little or no guidance on what we should do in our personal and business lives to survive the current and future economic climate. In considering what we can do as an organization, I reflected on what Hillis-Carnes has achieved over its 19 year life, the lessons learned and what we have to do to continue to sustain a very successful business. My conclusion: ***stick to your core business fundamentals.***

The company was founded in 1989 (the beginning of a severe real estate turndown that lasted into the early 90's) on the basic principal that our lot in life is to assist, educate and navigate our clients through a host of technical and regulatory issues so that projects can be built with minimal risk and within realistic construction budgets. Recently one of our Principals, Richard M. Hillis was quoted as saying "The role of the Engineer is provide a design using sound engineering principals that makes economic sense and one which is consistent with the expectations of the Owner". This client-centered approach represents the company's primary mission and has been the driving force that has enabled the business to grow and prosper over the past two decades.

In looking ahead I have evaluated what got us to this point and believe that the basic fundamentals that we informally adhere to on a daily basis are critical to sustaining our business as we forge into 2009. At the same time there are critical elements of our business that have worked well and can be improved upon which are itemized herein.

Over-serve your customers. React quickly to inquiries and issues; don't leave your client hanging. Answer phone calls as they come in rather than letting them go into voice mail. Return phone calls and emails on the day they are received. Keep your customer informed as to the progress of the project – good or bad. Get your work done ahead of established deadlines.

Continue to improve your product or service. Take a hard look at your reports, documents and output and find ways to improve quality and content. Is your text a bit tired and worn out? In a rush to get things out the door do you find yourself "cutting and pasting" from old documents? Take some time to put yourself in your client's shoes and make sure that you are providing a good value for their money.

Ask your customers how you are doing. We often work with clients over extended periods and don't take the time to ask if we are meeting their expectations. We churn the work out, send people to job sites and assume everything is OK. We tend to operate under the premise that "no bad news is good news". Take some time and ask: How are we doing on your project? Is there anything we can do to improve? Are our reports understandable? Is the team meeting your expectations?

Do things you in which you don't get paid. As consultants we are often asked questions or for advice about things outside of our areas of expertise. You may find yourself in a position to recommend another firm or related industry that your customer can contact to resolve an issue. They will appreciate and remember you for helping them out.

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Own up to your mistakes and take action. In spite of our best efforts we have all made mistakes or have contributed to an unfavorable outcome in a given situation. If you find yourself in a situation where you or your firm is at fault, take ownership of the issue, contact your client and take responsibility for the mistake. Be prepared with an action plan to resolve the issue and stay in communication with your client until the problem is resolved. If handled correctly, your relationship will likely improve as people generally appreciate honesty and those who take action.

Tell your employees what is going on with the business. Talk to your employees on a regular basis. Share successes and concerns with them and elicit their feedback. Your employees are the ambassadors of your company and represent what your firm is all about. Keep the lines of communication open and provide them with the resources and tools needed to do their jobs at the highest levels.

Continue to develop employees. Continue with training and mentoring programs. This will help with retention, build unity and also create another channel in which ideas can be communicated.

Get feedback from your employees. All of your employees are working with a range of your clients and each other on a daily basis. Take the time to ask them how things are going. Ask for their opinions and act on good ideas. The more involved your employees feel in the business, the stronger your organization will become.

Say "Thank You." This is a common courtesy that we were all taught at a young age. I coach sports teams and often have kids that come up to me and say "Thanks for coaching" after a game or a practice. It is great feeling. So thank your customers for their business and your colleagues and employees for their efforts. Be sincere: face to face is the best, phone calls, cards and emails are also effective.