

## MESSAGE

FROM CHARLES SMITH,  
PRESIDENT & CEO

In 2015, we will expand our relationships with new customers, third-party distributors and dealers of building materials. It is a strategy that will accelerate our sales in a market that is steadily improving. Let me share the reasons for pursuing this strategy, which we are calling "Project Sunshine."

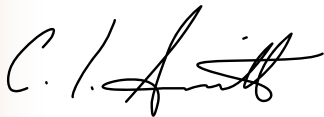
The growth in residential and commercial construction varies by market. While we have maintained retail locations in many parts of our country, we need a broader reach to our sales efforts, especially in parts of the country undergoing more rapid construction growth.

Instead of expanding the number of General Shale sales locations and the increased cost of supporting the jobs that strategy would require, we are turning to strong third-party distributors and dealers who can grow our sales. By building a strong sales network, we can more effectively reach new sales opportunities or fill gaps in our sales coverage that currently exist.

We intend to nurture our new sales partners and provide them with the tools to be successful, just as we have done for our own company-owned and -operated retail locations. Creating a new and vibrant dealer network is a great strategy to keep our costs low and the potential for new business at a higher level.

As we enter the warm months of the year, we are excited about our opportunities for growth during the building season. We trust that we will see the results of expanding our sales network this year and in the years ahead.

Sincerely,



Charles Smith



PRESENTED BY:  **General Shale**

# SOCON SPONSORSHIP A SOUND DECISION

General Shale was the presenting sponsor of the Southern Conference Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament this year, the first of a three-year deal for the company and the athletic conference. The Southern Conference is made up of Wofford, Chattanooga, Mercer, Western Carolina, East Tennessee State University, VMI, The Citadel, UNCG and Furman.

In the past, General Shale had been a sponsor of the smaller Atlantic Sun Conference of which ETSU had been a part. With the school moving to the larger conference, General Shale had a desire to continue to support the school, located in Johnson City, Tennessee, the site of the company's headquarters.

"At first we were concerned the price for the sponsorship would be too much," says Dawn Henning, Marketing Director for General Shale. "But these schools are all in locations where we have a General Shale presence, so we felt it was a good match with our customer base. We were very pleased when we realized we could do it."

The amount of mentions General Shale was given through the sponsorship was tremendous. Throughout the season a "General Shale SoCon Player of the Week" was announced through several media outlets. And for the men's and women's basketball tournament, held in Asheville, North Carolina, from March 5th to 9th, Henning says the General Shale name was everywhere.

"Each time they talked about the tournament it was 'Tournament presented by General Shale.' No matter where you looked, there was General Shale's name. The signage on the streets, the floors, downtown - everything had us on there. And the great thing is, Asheville is somewhat of a new market for us. So we took our GS2 show trailer, and parked it in the parking lot across from the arena entrance."

While the trailer didn't generate as much traffic as Henning would have liked, (she plans to tweak the location for next year) the outdoor living display on the inside of US Cellular Arena was a huge hit.

"We were able to place a General Shale display in the VIP area that highlighted new brick colors and a few outdoor living products. We strategically placed our display between the food and the bathrooms, so you had to pass by us for one reason or another," says Henning, laughing. "We were able to talk to many of the executives of the conference, college presidents, and large donors; it was great, it gave us a chance to educate them and start a conversation that in several cases led to a new lead for our sales team to follow up on after the Tournament."

Henning says they were even able to sell a Gathering Grill to one of the SoCon executives.

"I also want to thank our sales staff who came over that weekend to work," Henning adds.

"Kelly Keffer, Chip Black, Chip Bolton and Billy Alvis worked really hard. I also hope they had a little bit of fun though as we invited them to bring their spouses, hang out in Asheville and watch a little basketball as well."

Henning says it was a good investment for the amount of exposure General Shale received during this season, and the professionalism and expertise shown by Southern Conference representatives are right in line with the kind of partner General Shale desires to have.

The 2015 Southern Conference Men's Basketball Championship presented by General Shale was the 95th edition of the tournament, making it the oldest collegiate league basketball tournament in America.



General Shale put its mark on the 2015 International Builders Show, held at the Las Vegas Convention Center on Jan. 20-22.

General Shale showcased new colors of brick as well as a sampling of products including residential, commercial, thin veneers and outdoor living. This year, a Masonart project was the feature when visiting the General Shale booth.

"Johnny Hagerman attended the show with us and created a mural over the three-day event," explains Marketing Director Dawn



Henning. "I know he was approached by a couple of people for various projects, but most of all it was neat to have him there sculpting. It seems like someone was in his space at all times, watching. I think it was unusual and different for a show that has only static displays."

An unexpected interest from booth visitors was in the Thin Brick product line. Henning estimates nearly two-thirds of those coming to the booth requested more information on Thin Brick.

"Thin brick is really on-trend right now. I think we're doing a good job of showcasing homes using thin brick on the interior and exterior in literature and ads, but our social media presence is catching people's attention," says Henning. "This show is all about seeing what is the latest and greatest, and it was great that we have those popular products to show."

Another positive presentation at the booth was the simple act of bringing real brick samples. Henning says many of General Shale's competitors only brought photos of their products.

"People want to touch things," Henning explains. "One of our competitors came to our booth and admitted people were still wanting to touch their photos. While shipping brick may be more expensive, you may lose that customer because they want to feel the product."

Henning says the General Shale team, which consisted of herself and Luke Guinn, Rachael Vernon, Amy Norman, Barry Wanner, Jim Bryja, Jim Riccio, Mark Stutz, Richard Denny, Johnny Hagerman, Scott Clark and Rob Regan, came home with about 200 leads from the show.

“We know the sales cycle can be a long one,” says Henning. “Our sales team will follow up with these leads but it could be months

or even years before they come to fruition as a job; but follow-up is important.”

This year’s IBS exhibit floor featured nearly 1,200 exhibitors, accounting for 476,000 net square feet of exhibit space. Exhibitors represent the industry’s top manufacturers and suppliers showcasing the latest and most innovative products.



# TEAM KINSER WORKS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



General Shale was honored to have a team participate in the 2015 Mountain States Health Alliance Radiothon to raise money for Niswonger Children’s Hospital located in Johnson City, Tennessee, the site of the company’s headquarters. The hospital serves children in a four-state area of Northeast Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Western North Carolina and Southeastern Kentucky.

Team Kinser was made up of Mark Kinser, Angie Campbell, Scott Ledford, Brian Ogle, Sabra Carmody and Dawn Henning.

This year participants were raising funds to help provide world-class care for children with neurological disorders. Every pledge received brings the hospital one step closer to the goal of keeping all children close to home for their health care.

The two-day event was held in the lobby of Niswonger Children’s Hospital on March 2–3, but also included phone banks at two other area hospitals. Volunteers answered donor calls, as well as calls from family and friends. The event was broadcast on several radio outlets and covered by media around the region.

The total amount raised for the hospital was more than \$350,000. The General Shale team, who answered phones for one hour, raised about \$4,000.

# GENERAL SHALE DONATES BUILDING MATERIALS TO LOCAL ANIMAL SHELTER



General Shale's commitment to be a good community partner is evident in donations it makes to several nonprofits throughout the year. One of those recent donations was for a much-needed new animal shelter in Johnson City, Tennessee.

The current Washington County/Johnson City Animal Shelter was built in 1996, and although sufficient for the size of the community at the

time, the recent growth of the human population in the area has also led to a growth in the pet population.

At the current shelter, many healthy dogs and cats unfortunately must be euthanized every day due to a lack of space.

Debbie Dobbs, Director of Animal Control, says they've been trying to raise money for a new shelter for 14 years and hope the new shelter will allow them to be closer to a "no-kill" shelter.

"Our budget for building the new facility is very tight. With in-kind donations, such as from General Shale, the funds that are raised can go toward animal care and equipment for the new shelter," explains Dobbs. "We knew General Shale would be the right company to

ask for an in-kind donation. They do so much to help nonprofit organizations and better their community with their support. We are very grateful for the donation."

The new 18,460-square-foot facility will provide nearly twice the shelter's capacity for animals than is available at its current location. General Shale has contributed all of the masonry products that are being used to construct the larger facility that will have 148 dog kennels and 180 cat condos.

The donation includes 35,000 modular-size Old Tavern bricks, along with 6,200 square feet of ARRIS.stack Thin Stone Veneer. The brick product is manufactured at General Shale's Cleveland County, North Carolina, plant, while the stone product is manufactured at the company's Arriscraft location in Fort Valley, Georgia. General Shale also provided 28,000 6-inch blocks and mortar for the animal shelter.

Dobbs says brick was the perfect building material for the new shelter.

"We knew that getting the best quality and long-life material for the new shelter was a must. The brick will stand up to bad weather and to the rigorous cleaning that we do each day." She adds, "The beauty and durability of the brick and block will make our new shelter very inviting to the public who are looking to adopt a new family member or just to visit."

The new shelter is expected to open in the spring of 2015.





# SAVING LIVES THROUGH BLOOD DONATIONS

Since 2012 General Shale's corporate headquarters, as well as the Piney Flats location in Tennessee, have been participating in biannual blood drives. Most recently the company has been partnering with Blood Assurance and its bloodmobile. Blood Assurance is a nonprofit, full-service regional blood center serving 51 counties and more than 70 healthcare facilities in Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia.

Scott Ledford, General Shale's Manager of Recruitment and Training, says the company averages about 40 donors each time between the two locations.

"It's just one of those things that we decided to do because it helps our community," says Ledford. "We understand not everyone can donate because of health reasons, or certain medications they take, but for those who do they seem to have a sense of responsibility about helping others that we appreciate."

In order to give blood, you must be in good general health. Donors must also weigh a minimum of 110 lbs. You will be asked a series of questions to determine if you are eligible to donate.

Consider these facts about blood donation from the Red Cross:

- Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.
- More than 41,000 blood donations are needed every day.
- A total of 30 million blood components are transfused each year in the U.S.
- The average red blood cell transfusion is approximately 3 pints.
- The blood type most often requested by hospitals is Type O.
- The blood used in an emergency is already on the shelves before the event occurs.
- Sickle cell disease affects more than 70,000 people in the U.S. About 1,000 babies are born with the disease each year. Sickle cell patients can require frequent blood transfusions throughout their lives.
- More than 1.6 million people were diagnosed with cancer last year. Many of them will need blood, sometimes daily, during their chemotherapy treatment.
- A single car accident victim can require as many as 100 pints of blood.

# SUCCESS PROFILE

## UPDATE



Since implementing the Success Profile initiatives company-wide there have been many great and helpful suggestions made. Many have been implemented, while others are still being considered.

Last year, the seven teams received new steering committee members and leaders in hopes of keeping ideas fresh and achieving continued improvement in the company.

In the last few newsletters, we have been highlighting each of the Success Profile categories and the new leader. This quarter, we'll review updates from the last three teams: Technological Leader, Energy Efficient Construction and Expert for Building Professionals.

### TECHNOLOGICAL LEADER

Mike Hopper, Operations Manager in Corbin, Ky, says his team has several goals moving forward and met to discuss those in early April.

One thing the team would like to do is come up with a kiln control platform. Right now Hopper says they depend on the system created by the kiln's manufacturer, but he feels it would be beneficial to have more control over everything themselves.

Also, the team has been looking into better ways for data acquisition.

"We've had some 'homemade' capabilities that we've used in the past," says Hopper. "We feel gathering objective data can take the guesswork out of many things. It'll let us know things like how long a machine was down, etc. It would be helpful to have a spreadsheet that links to the PLC."

The team is never short on suggestions, although some can't be implemented because of cost or logistics.

Some of the recent suggestions that may be implemented include the following:

Josh Sowell from Memphis suggested providing Wi-Fi in all showroom locations to benefit both the customer and sales team.

Elizabeth Edmiston from Knoxville suggested providing employees with a simple pocket guideline for products on a square-foot scale.

Alice Mobley from Fort Valley, Ga., suggested installing a Steam Curing Room, which she feels is the technological way cast-stone companies ensure hard, crisp edges and corners.

### ENERGY EFFICIENT CONSTRUCTION

Team Leader Jonathan Livingston says this team needs more suggestions and wants to encourage everyone to think about ways the company could be more efficient and relay those ideas to him and his team.

Livingston says much of his team's work is surrounding the new IECC code and ways they can help builders comply with the code using General Shale products with other building materials.

"We've evaluated products that can work with ours and Jim Bryja, who is on our team, has developed a few tech codes for builders to help them meet the new requirements," Livingston says.

Livingston also says that General Shale is working with the National Brick Research Center at Clemson University. Researchers there are engaging in "hot box" testing - trying to evaluate the R Value of different wall systems in helping to determine their thermal mass properties.

"There's never been a way to quantify it," says Livingston. "So this will have data that shows the thermal mass index of brick. It's a long-term project but when we get that info we can use that to show how we compete against other materials."

### EXPERT FOR BUILDING PROFESSIONALS

Jim Ricco, team leader for the Expert for Building Professionals team, says he has a two-fold goal for his group:

First, he'd like to internally ensure all inside and outside sales people are able to deliver expert knowledge to building professionals so that they are perceived as building experts.

Ricco says that goal is being accomplished with recent sales training classes that have been offered by General Shale (see training article).

Secondly, he'd like to position General Shale as the "go-to" source for technical information in the building industry.

"I think we are accomplishing this goal with the new website," he says. "My understanding is there is going to be an updated technical section on the website



HIGH TOUCH



EXPERT FOR BUILDING PROFESSIONALS



VALUE PRICING



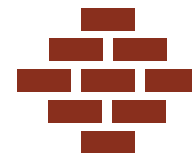
MODERN & FUTURE-ORIENTED



LEADER IN ENERGY EFFICIENT CONSTRUCTION



TECHNOLOGICAL LEADER



BUILDING WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

that the customer can access when they have questions.”

One suggestion that has come to the team has been put into practice recently – and that’s the technical Sales Sheets.

“We have come up with technical sales sheets for each product that we can give to the customer,” explains Ricco. “It helps the sales people have a quick guide and it’s perfect to give to customers for a brief technical explanation of a product.”

Another suggestion that Ricco would like to see implemented is a better grouping of Thin Brick products on the website. Currently all Thin Brick products are listed together. Ricco says the suggestion would be to group them according to the plant at which they were made, similar to how other brick products are grouped.

And as usual, Ricco reminds employees to keep those improvement ideas coming for the Expert for Building Professionals team.

# PLANT SPOTLIGHT

# DENVER

“Go west, young man” may have been on the mind of General Shale executives when the decision was made nearly a decade ago to purchase a well-known and respected brick plant in Denver, Colorado. The purchase strategically expanded the General Shale name to its most western location in North America, securing a footprint in a new geographic market.

Plant Manager Mark Stutz says Colorado’s soil offers unique clay colors. There are actually 14 different clay mines within a 100-mile radius of the plant that General Shale uses. This allows for a diverse product line at the plant.

“The abundance of different raw material gives us a large assortment of products... it’s both fascinating and challenging at the same time,” Stutz explains. “And because we produce materials for both the commercial and residential markets, our products are distributed all around the country. It’s a very dynamic type of product line.”

The Denver plant produces full brick products and is the primary location for General Shale’s thin brick product to be made.

“We sometimes say we’re more in the fashion business than building business because the colors and textures really drive the demand and production from this plant,” Stutz says.

“Our colors range from almost white to almost black and everywhere in-between.”

The plant employs more than 100 people from the main plant about 10 miles from downtown Denver to the showrooms in Grand Junction and Fort Collins to the Colorado Springs concrete plant.

Stutz says that while many in the General Shale family are used to the Appalachian Mountain range in the East, he enjoys the relatively flat mile-high city of Denver with the backdrop of the majestic Rocky Mountains.

And while the plant is separated by a large distance from General Shale’s headquarters in Tennessee, Stutz says the company leaders do an excellent job of bridging the gap with frequent communication and efforts to maintain the “family feel” of the company even being located so far away.



# BRICK VIDEO WINS ADVERTISING AWARD

## AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS

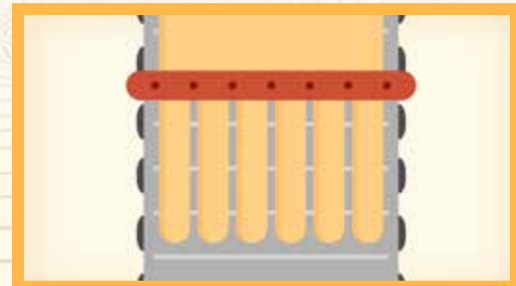
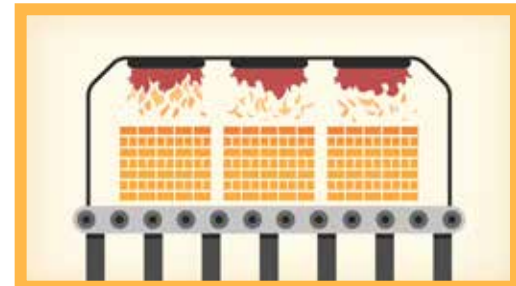
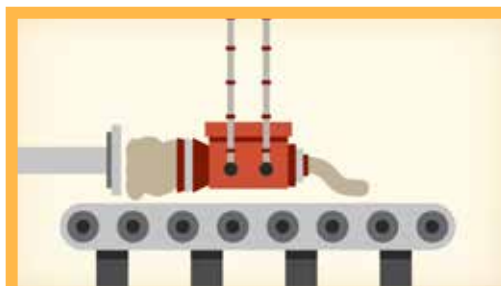
General Shale recently received recognition at the prestigious American Advertising Federation's Awards for the promotional video "How Brick is Made." The video won a Silver ADDY in the Northeast Tennessee Ad Club awards held on Saturday, February 21st in Johnson City, Tennessee.

The video was created to be an educational tool that was fun, enlightening and simple... explaining how brick is made with playful and colorful animation and even a child's voice reading the script.

The video was a Success Profile suggestion that was submitted from a past employee. The idea was to show just how "Green" brick truly is based on where it starts and how it is made.

General Shale's Director of Marketing and Retail Sales Dawn Henning partnered with full-service marketing agency Creative Energy to develop the video. It won in the Animation or Special Effects category.

The ADDY awards are the nation's oldest creative competition, sponsored by the American Advertising Federation.





# THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEDICATION!



General Shale is blessed to have so many hardworking, dedicated employees. Those long-term employees will be given special recognition in our newsletter celebrating an employment milestone of 5 years or more.

Beginning 2nd quarter 2015, award packets for employees celebrating 25 years of service or more will be mailed to the appropriate vice president so he or she can present the award in person.

Also, the Marketing Department plans to implement a “40 Year Club” to highlight those who are celebrating 40 years (or more) of service.

Here are this quarter’s employees celebrating milestone anniversaries:

LOCATION	NAME	YRS SVC
Marion, VA	HANCOCK, LARRY G	35
Piney Flats, TN	STEVENS, BOBBIE	35
Knoxville, TN	CHAMBERS, SAMMY R	30
Marion, VA	PICKLE, RICHARD R	30
Marion, VA	ELLISON, ALFRED L	30
Moncure, NC	RICHARDSON, OLIVER E	30

LOCATION	NAME	YRS SVC
Piney Flats, TN	ROPER, ARTHUR D	30
Spring City, TN	CARR, CLIFFORD G	30
Spring City, TN	DAVIS, DARRELL H	30
Cheyenne, WY	ERICKSON, GLEN R	25
Corporate Office, Johnson City, TN	HOILMAN, BRYAN G	25
Cambridge, ON	MILLER, NANCY	20
Cambridge, ON	BECKER, EDWARD	20
Cambridge, ON	YETMAN, SHAWN	20
Cambridge, ON	BRANCO, RICARDO	15
Cambridge, ON	MELO, STEVEN	15
Corporate Office, Johnson City, TN	VANSLAGER, FELICIA M	15
Corporate Office, Johnson City, TN	CATRON, RITA T	15
Grover, NC	CLARK, DANNY S	15
Roanoke, VA	SPRY, JAMES G	15
Roanoke, VA	NUNN, ARNOLD M	15
Corporate Office, Johnson City, TN	RUSH, BAMBI M	10
Corporate Office, Johnson City, TN	WANNER, BARNEY	10
Humboldt, TN	TAYLOR, JAMES L	10
Moncure, NC	BARRETT, IVAN J	10
Roanoke, VA	COLLINS, ANTHONY D	10
Rome, GA	MCDOWELL, MATTHEW C	10
Rome, GA	HICKS, CHRISTOPHER L	10
Rome, GA	REDDEN, CHRISTOPHER R	10
Denver, CO	VIANA MELENDEZ, SANTOS A	5
Rome, GA	FORD, SANDRA F	5
Rome, GA	HUGHES, RYAN D	5
Rome, GA	MADRID, RAUL E	5
Rome, GA	HUGHES, GREGORY P	5
Spring City, TN	GREEN JR, DAVID D	5
Spring City, TN	WOOD, JEFFERSON D	5
Spring City, TN	FORBES, LAWRENCE E	5
Spring City, TN	SIMMONS, ANTHONY E	5



# SPOTLIGHT ON LONGTIME EMPLOYEES

As General Shale celebrates more than 86 years of providing quality masonry brick products to North America, it's not hard to find many longtime employees who have dedicated their entire working careers to the brick industry. At the Moncure, North Carolina, plant there are five employees who were hired in the 1960s and continue to work for General Shale today. Three of those employees tell us their stories:

Sixty-four-year-old George Battle is the third generation in his family to work

in the brick industry, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. He worked at the Sanford plant for 40 years and transferred to Moncure seven years ago.

He started working for the brick plant in 1968, his first day after finishing high school. Initially, his position was yard cleanup, and since that time he's held several jobs including packaging brick in jigs and monorail operator. He is currently groundskeeper.

When he was growing up, George lived in a house supplied by the brick company, and his family shopped at the "company store." During that time frame, Sanford Brick was in a very rural setting and the company store

was close enough to supply the family's needs.

As to why he's remained at the brick plant for so long, George states, "I found a home and made it my home."

One of the youngest to start working at the brick plant is the now 62-year-old Charles Cross, who started work on April 29, 1969, at 16 years of age. Charles was still in high school and actually rode the school bus to the brick plant in the afternoons to work alongside his father, uncle and brothers.



**GEORGE BATTLE**

His first job was hacking brick. Soon his job was replaced by a machine and that's when he went to technical school to learn about industrial maintenance. The maintenance department is where he's been ever since.

"My brothers eventually left, but this was close to my parents' home and I enjoyed the work so I just stayed on," Charles says. "Each year I think of trying something different but I just stay on."

Charles has seen many manual jobs be replaced by machines or robots, but amazingly in his 46 years of employment in the brick industry he's never been laid off. "I feel pretty fortunate for a number of reasons," Charles reflects. "Not only for the steady job, but because back then it was dangerous work; but the good Lord kept me here."

Charles is married with two grown sons, and although his wife recently retired, Charles has no immediate plans to do so. "Oh, retiring has crossed my mind but nothing is set in stone," he says. "I enjoy coming to work too much."

Another longtime employee at the Moncure plant is Frank Williams, Jr. Just days after his 19th birthday in February 1967, Frank went to work in the brick industry – the plant was Sanford Brick and Tile at the time.

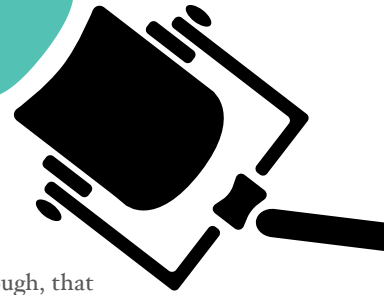
His first job was labor-intensive – loading bricks on a truck to then be unloaded and loaded again on a train. Frank says he's had four different jobs over the years, including lift truck operator, which he says was significantly easier on his back.



**CHARLIE CROSS**



**FRANK WILLIAMS**



Frank admits, though, that he never thought he'd be such a long time at one job.

"I was intending to leave because loading brick was a hard job," he recalls. "But then I got married and had seven children so I just kept working at it. They haven't talked me into quitting yet."

Frank agrees there have been many changes in technology at the brick plant and some of his prior jobs have even been eliminated by mechanical advances. He currently works in maintenance.

Through his 48 years at the plant, he's raised his children, and now has 13 grandchildren and what he calls a good life. "I thank the Lord for what he's blessed us with," Frank says.

Plant Manager Larry Cockerill says employees like Frank, Charles and George are inspirations to him and especially the younger employees. "I think it's impressive, and the younger guys that come in see that it must be a positive work environment and realize it is a good place to work for these guys to have been here so long."

# EMPLOYEES FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION



General Shale would like to recognize two employees who have recently earned degrees of higher education while employed full time with the company.

The first is Arkadiusz “Arek” Klosowski, an hourly foreman who has worked in the Moncure, North Carolina, plant since January 2007.

Recently Arek received two degrees and a certificate from Central Carolina Community College:

- Degree in Mechanical Engineering
- Associate in Applied Science, Mechanical Engineering Technology
- Certificate in Computer Aided Drafting

“He just came to us and let us know he had a desire to further his education,” explains Larry Cockerill, Moncure Plant Manager. “He already had a degree from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Poland, where he was born.”

Cockerill says Arek told him he grew up under communist rule in Poland, and although the country is no longer communist, his family came to the United States for better work opportunities.

Cockerill says Arek’s degrees will help him advance at General Shale. The company worked with Arek to arrange his work schedule so he could attend classes.

“Fortunately he had a job that allowed us to rearrange his schedule. He would work four 10-hour days and then go to school three days a week,” Cockerill says. “My hat’s off to him. He was determined. Even being married with a wife and child he worked full time, finished his degree in two years and stayed on both the Dean’s List and President’s List and graduated with a 4.0.”

Another employee, Mario Escamilla, an hourly foreman in Colorado Springs, earned an Associate Degree in Business Management and Accounting from CollegeAmerica in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Tony Fabrizio, Regional Production Manager over the Colorado Springs Block plant, where Mario works, says, “Mario’s education gives him a solid foundation and insight to how a business works, and reasoning behind budgeting, planning and execution of manufacturing activities.”

Mario also juggled work, family and education while attending classes. He is married with three children and enjoys working out and has even trained in the past in Mixed Martial Arts. Although he has only been to three states in his life, earning a degree is only the first step of future items to mark off his bucket list that includes more travel and even a vacation to China.

Mario has worked for General Shale since May 28, 2006.



• • • **ARKADIUSZ KLOSOWKI**



• • • **MARIO ESCAMILLA**

# EMPHASIS ON FACE-TO-FACE TRAINING



For a company that's been around for more than 85 years, General Shale has seen its share of technological advances in everything from production to communication and all aspects of business in-between. But the company has also learned that just because technology is more advanced doesn't necessarily mean it's best for business. Case in point – training for employees.

General Shale's Human Resources Director, Scott Ledford, says that in an effort to deliver training more economically, the company had offered a lot of online courses – particularly for the sales force. But now, General Shale is returning to the traditional way of training - face-to-face.

"We just feel the opportunity to be in a room together to ask questions and seek clarification is more valuable," Ledford says. "It also creates more camaraderie among attendees. And, General Shale has always had a culture focused on relationships and a sense of family, and we want to promote that."

The various training opportunities have been a chance for employees around the country to come together for training at the company headquarters and have led to strengthening relationships and improving communication among employees from different locations.

Technical Manufacturing ("Lab School") was facilitated by General Shale's Director of Research, Jonathan Livingston, and included a variety of speakers from the company's engineering, manufacturing and safety departments. Technical topics included raw materials, manufacturing processes, environment, OSHA/MSHA, maintenance and more. Attendees were newly hired supervisors and recently promoted assistant plant managers.

In conjunction with Lab School, General Shale also offered a Financial Fundamentals course, facilitated by in-house finance,

treasury and procurement experts, who introduced attendees to a variety of manufacturing-relevant accounting, credit and purchasing functions.

In opportunity for learning, The Dale Carnegie organization developed a customized training program, World Class Customer Service (WCCS), designed specifically for General Shale's sales team and business model. This course covers topics from creating positive first impressions to effective phone skills to creating a WOW experience for customers. The material was designed to better equip sales, yard and delivery staff with the skills and techniques to differentiate General Shale from competitors by ensuring a consumer-focused attitude.

In order to deliver this training throughout all of General Shale's location, Dale Carnegie trainers provided a WCCS Train the Coach program to a select group of General Shale employees who have been disseminating the material throughout the organization.

Earlier this year, General Shale Brick School was held for outside and inside sales staff. Like previous generations of the course, this version of Brick School was a multi-day session facilitated by Engineering Services Manager Jim Bryja, but updated to address current product lines. Topics included ASTM standards, building codes, construction/workmanship problems and solutions, customer service, etc.

In conjunction with Brick School, a Financial Fundamentals course was also offered, introducing attendees to a variety of sales-related accounting, tax and credit functions. A brief overview of the General Shale sales app was also provided.

In February, a training session on Arriscraft Products was held at the Spring City location for the sales force. Glen Frankling, Arriscraft VP of Sales and Distribution, and Marta Zonneveld, Marketing Manager, Commercial & Arriscraft Products, provided classroom instruction while Bryan Lloyd, Masonry Instructor, trained participants on practical product applications. Topics included product offerings, sales approaches that can be used when promoting and selling Arriscraft Accessory and Building Stone products, and hands-on building exercises.

General Shale feels these hands-on, face-to-face training sessions are the best way to not only learn about the products our company offers, but also to learn about your fellow employees. More learning opportunities will be forthcoming in 2015 and beyond. If anyone has an idea for a training course or feedback from one of the courses, please submit through Success Profile.



# STRATEGIES TO HELP PREVENT FALLS



Worldwide, falls are the second leading cause of accidental or unintentional injuries and deaths, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Each year an estimated 424,000 individuals die from falls globally, of which over 80% are in low- and middle-income countries.

While adults over 65 are at the greatest risk of fatal falls, they happen to younger generations as well.

Prevention strategies should emphasize education, training, creating safer environments, prioritizing fall-related research and establishing effective policies to reduce risk.

In North America it seems the number of slips, trips and falls is rivaled only by the number of low back injuries. While most people have an understanding of how to prevent such events, what else can be done to minimize the number of injuries in regard to slips, trips and falls?

Falls and accidents seldom “just happen.” Taking care of your health by exercising and getting regular eye exams and physicals may help reduce your chance of falling.

Here are some suggestions that may also help:

- Look at footwear, and make sure that shoes with good traction are being worn.
- Get rid of tripping hazards.

- Look at the entrance and exit areas; if rugs or mats are present, make sure they lay flat on the ground.
- Check all stairways for any debris on the stair treads. Keep your stairs clear of any stored items or obstructions.
- Look at the landing platforms of stairwells and ladders; make sure these areas are clear at all times.
- Any liquid on a concrete surface presents a slip, trip and fall hazard.
- Look for trip hazards such as extension cords. The use of extension cords should be minimized because cords lying in the floor not only present an electrical hazard – they present a tripping hazard, too.
- Try to avoid carrying items while using stairs so that one hand is always free to use the hand rail.
- Use two-wheeled dollies or other equipment to assist in moving materials around.
- Replace burned-out lights, as the ability to see always helps minimize tripping.

Taking these simple steps and keeping yourself in good shape with a strong core and improving your balance are all ways to prevent falls from happening at home and in the workplace.



# GS STRONG WELLNESS UPDATE

## HEALTHIER VENDING OPTIONS TO COME

General Shale implemented the wellness program, GS STRONG, to promote the health and well-being of our employees and their families. Research shows that promoting health and well-being at work improves employee morale, decreases stress, reduces absenteeism, reduces employee turnover and lowers healthcare costs.

As our healthcare costs continue to rise, it is imperative that we promote healthy lifestyles to our employees. One area where we are making some changes is in our company's break rooms. We have asked the managers who have vending machines to work with their local supplier to remove higher calorie foods and replace them with healthier snack options. This initiative has already been implemented at the Corporate Office, and we ask that all General Shale locations do the same.

The following are a few recommendations for our on-site vending machines:

- Add a "reduced fat" option in addition to regular peanut butter crackers.
- Add at least one to two "baked" chips options (i.e. Baked Lays, Baked Doritos, Baked Cheetos, etc.) in addition to the potato chip selections.
- Candy bar recommendations would be Snickers, 3 Musketeers, M&Ms and Reese's Cups.
- Add peanuts, low-fat snack bars (i.e. Fiber One), light or reduced-fat microwave popcorn.
- Remove pastry items (danish, donuts, Honey Buns).



As you can see, we are not suggesting the removal of all candy and chips from break rooms. However, it is important that our vending machines reflect the same message of wellness and healthy living promoted through GS STRONG. Vendors may be reluctant to stock healthier snack options and employees may be reluctant to try them, but through persistence we have an opportunity to positively impact our culture and the well-being of our employees.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this endeavor. Please contact one of the Wellness Committee Chairs, Angie Campbell or Brian Ogle, if you have any questions.

As a reminder, GS STRONG is a part of the Success Profile Initiative, and we encourage employees to submit ideas and suggestions via Success Profile to improve the wellness of employees and their families.





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