

Accent a contractor with a conscience

Jim Eichel's interest in sustainability and green building has preceded the recent trends now evident within the building and contracting industry. His main influence was not a politician or scientist discussing the demise of the environment. Having a longstanding love for nature himself, it came from a much closer source than the media.

"My daughter, Amanda, was the type of child who made us carry a sack to pick up trash whenever we went on a family hike," says Eichel, president of Accent Construction LLC, Chapel Hill.

"In 1999, while she was working at Accent, she brought some shocking statistics to my attention about the impact of construction waste."

Although she since has moved on from Accent to pursue a graduate degree in environmental science, the impact of Amanda's vision has remained.

Accent Construction is a commercial general contractor that offers pre-construction consulting and tenant finish construction for the office building and medical office industries. Referred to as the "contractor with a conscience," the company incorporates re-use and recycling efforts in all projects to benefit

its tenants and the environment.

It has been involved with clients such as the Durham Centre and Smith Barney. Accent's current projects include Campus North in Raleigh and Chapel Hill Ophthalmology.

Ahead of the game

Accent Construction is an EPA Waste Wise Partner and member of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). It is the only builder in North Carolina with this status, and the only commercial general contractor focused on recycling and re-use.

Eichel realizes that the construction industry is a major cause of pollution across the country. Upon reading statistics of the impact of construction waste, Accent adopted a practice that has become a basis of

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its company mentality, committing to keep its waste away from landfills. In 2000, Accent was awarded an EPA-sponsored grant to re-use and recycle salvaged building materials



Jim Eichel

ABOUT THE COMPANY

- **Name:** Accent Construction LLC
- **Location:** Chapel Hill
- **Leadership:** Jim Eichel, president
- **Number of employees:** Six full-time; one part-time; several subcontractors
- **Services:** Pre-construction consulting, construction management, occupant readiness
- **Web site:** www.accentllc.com

from construction projects.

"We use the funds to purchase recycling containers and equipment, as well as to train our field personnel in our commitment to recycling and re-use," he explains.

"We kept a low profile about our com-

mitment and just quietly went about making internal changes in our work process," Eichel adds. "We were determined to separate building materials for recycling and re-use without passing on any increased costs to our customers."

The new red, white and blue

With the rest of the country beginning to see green as well, Accent decided that it was time to let the building industry in on its practices. Eichel hopes it will encourage other like-minded contractors to join Accent in its commitment to recycling and re-use. It is a trend he has noticed in the local market, with the rapid development of environmentally focused organizations such as the N.C. Sustainable Business Council.

"I think it's true that green is the new red, white and blue," Eichel says. "Concern for the environment is crossing over political party lines as more and more people realize that we all have a responsibility to save the planet for future generations." ▲TRE

Photo courtesy Accent Construction LLC



Accent Construction LLC uses environmentally friendly processes for all of its projects, including Northwestern Mutual's local office.