

The Hilton Arlington is successfully using the Earth Charter in everyday life and business

2010



The Hilton Arlington hotel, located in the Ballston neighborhood in Arlington, Virginia (USA), offering 210 deluxe guest rooms and employing 104 employees, is one of the companies that are pioneering the effort to integrate the Earth Charter into everyday life and business. Vickie Hann, Human Resources Director at the Hilton Arlington got interested in the Earth Charter in 2007, when she learned about it from her sister. Ms. Hann got inspired by the message of the EC because of its rich history and broad based values of sustainability. She started to brainstorm, how the EC could be used at the Hilton Arlington, involving not only the hotel but the surrounding community, too.

According to Ms. Hann, introducing the Earth Charter to the staff members was rather a challenging effort in the beginning, since there were no power point presentations available and the original EC document

seemed to be very long and somewhat difficult to adapt to.

Since then, the hotel started to actively link the four main principles of the EC to all its actions. An internal Earth Charter Steering Committee was established to work in collaboration with the General Manager, Mark Driscoll, in developing a 5 year capital plan to make the hotel 100% sustainable. The Earth Charter was at first introduced to the management staff, then to all the associates in the hotel. Each hotel departmental manager has taken charge in establishing sustainable practices. Each staff member has also endorsed the Earth Charter, after going through an introduction and training session on it. The Hilton Arlington became the first world-wide hotel to endorse the Earth Charter.

Ms Hann points out, that being sustainable doesn't mean that profit won't be made. "As a result of the energy saving program, the expenditure of savings in water for 2009 compared to 2008 was \$26,539. This savings mostly came from being able to handle all leaks from bathrooms and kitchen area in a timely, efficient manner", Ms Hann says. "The gas savings for 2009 compared to 2008 was \$36,660. This savings is from controlling the usage time and by shutting off machines during times not heavily needed

and also repairing items to avoid excess usage. We overspent on electricity in 2009 compared to 2008 by \$28,322. This prompted our initiative to replace all lighting with energy saving bulbs and in the last 4 months we have saved \$13,148", Ms. Hann explains.

The Hilton Arlington is a great example of how the Earth Charter can be used as an inspirational tool in businesses and how the Earth Charter Principles have been translated into concrete actions, not only within the different departments of the hotel but within the local community, too!

Human Resources Department

The hotel has a rich cultural diversity with 40 different countries represented in a work force of 104 people. This diversity is encouraged and cherished in this company. They have been taking some actions to increase an inclusive work environment, promoting the professional development of its associates, some actions are:

- For the past 3 years, Hilton Arlington has provided free ESL (English as a second language) to its non-English speaking associates, a population of about 40 associates. By also providing an interactive, self learning English software program students have been exposed and have the opportunity to learn basic computer skills.
- The hotel collaborated with the VA Hispanic Committee to teach a course on financial literacy so that their associates could learn more about establishing checking accounts, building credit, budgeting and saving money, buying/renting a house, building wealth, IRA Accounts, and 401(k) plans.

Arlington hotel has been trying as well to have a positive outreach and collaboration with the local community and producers/ vendors whose products support sustainability, that is why they have been taking the following actions:

- In honoring associate birthdays, the HR Department orders its cards from a company that uses tree-free alternatives like Kenaf, a fibrous plant. No harmful chemicals are used in processing and it is fully recyclable. Kenaf is grown in North America and brings income to farmers while preserving the forests.
- The HR Department orders special award plaques and other incentive pieces from a manufacturer that uses 100% recycled materials in both products and shipping. The company produces creative pieces of 100% recycled glass and salvages about 200 tons of scrap per year that otherwise would have been dumped in landfills.

- The HR Department established community partnerships with Ashlawn Elementary School, ACE (Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment) and Kenmore Middle School. The hotel has donated food, beverage, time, labor and numerous giveaways in support of the partnerships annual Silent Auctions.
- The hotel collaborated with Ashlawn Elementary School's 5th grade class and parents on several art projects to paint images on our associate café walls and decoupage our table tops. The table top themes were the four basic principles of the Earth Charter. Using crayons, the students wrote messages on 3X3 paper pieces. The hotel's management staff was split into 4 groups and each was assigned to collect pictures based on the principle. The decoupage combined both art mediums on the table tops and eliminated the need for linen covering which require change and washing, thus reducing waste water, chemicals and energy to keep the linen clean.
- The hotel has collaborated with its partnerships on community volunteer projects such as cleaning up park area, making bagged lunches for the homeless, food & clothing drives for local shelters, fun fare days where assisted living residents can participate in events with the children and provide the popcorn, and planting vegetable gardens.
- The hotel uses soy/vegetable or water based inks and all management staff uses recycled paper when it is necessary to print reports, memos, etc.

Food & Beverage Department

This hotel's department has found many options to move towards sustainability in very feasible and practical ways, these are some examples:

- Switched coffee service from starbucks to a rainforest assured product, a certified sustainable coffee product.
- All disposable drinking cups have been replaced from foam to recycled paper.
- Recycle all cardboard, glass, waste oil and separated waste, and more recently, have commenced with streamline recycling.
- Dishwasher maintenance program to cut down on waste water and chemicals.
- An art project in conjunction with Ashlawn school to decoupage the table tops in the hotel team member café to eliminate the need for linen covering.



- Plan to purchase electric induction chaffers for the team member café; reducing the need to use chaffer fuel which burns oils and releases CO2 into the atmosphere and is an open flame hazard.
- Recycling program in the banquet meeting space, paper, glass, cans.
- The hotel now offers an Eco friendly meeting package to clients which include pitcher water instead of bottles. Bulk cream and sugars instead of PC packets, bulk beverage instead of individual bottle of soda and juice. Sustainable food menus are available.
- As much as possible the hotel is making food choices that reflect sustainability, eco friendly and environmentally responsible. The Food & Beverage Director/Executive Chef makes every effort to purchase seasonally and locally grown food over imports. He also refuses to purchase any endangered species menu items.
- A transition to using alternative reception food choices to reduce the need for disposable products or the washing of service ware, example would be the use of more finger food, the use of corn hulks as plates of food service and the use of bamboo toothpicks.
- Use of the 40-45 gallon heavy duty trash liners because this product, which contains 75% recycled plastics, and includes a minimum of 10% post-consumer plastics.
- The hotel's room service trays are bamboo.

Engineering

On energy and water savings, the hotel has undertaken important changes regarding light bulbs, use of efficient machines and others. These are some examples:

- 95% of the guest room lighting is 27watt twist ideally green fluorescent light bulbs.
- Evaporator Coil Cleaner will be used for the guestroom coil cleaning purposes, because it conserves water.
- Utilize the E-Z Flush Automatic Retrofit Kit for common area bathrooms all over the hotel. They are ideally green.
- They are currently using the 400LS Leak Sentry Fill Valves on guestroom toilets: this includes refill adjuster which allows the right amount of water to be delivered to the bowl.

- The hotel is currently fading out old out dated guestroom shower heads and replacing with ideally green low flow shower heads.
- The common area HVAC is currently set up using a brand new Energy Management System that has economizers on each unit to allow free cooling by using outside air during the months and the days that air conditioning is not needed.
- The hotel will start using the 40 watt T12 fluorescent lighting for the stairwells and the central plant and the back banquet hallways.
- Automatic soap dispensers have been installed in all the lobby and banquet space restrooms, and we are currently looking into the use of refillable amenity dispensers rather than individual bottles for bathroom amenities in guest rooms.

The hotel facility has pedestrian or other access to mass transit, an important feature to promote the use of public transportation. The distance from mass transit facility is 27 steps and the hotel is accessible by mass transit to the airport.

Hilton Arlington anticipates being 100% LEED Certified in June of 2010, which seems feasible considering the improvements made so far.

Housekeeping Department

These are actions of the hotel on going Green Program in its guest rooms:

- Placards are placed on the guest room beds in every guest room giving the option for guests to reuse linen and towels. If they would like to participate, they simply place the placard on their door and call the Front Desk to request participation.
- Change to Eco friendly paper products in guest rooms
- Preference to cleaning products which are environmentally responsible (i.e. low toxicity, organic or locally grown).



Some actions of the hotel recycle program when servicing & cleaning guest rooms are:

- Room attendants have pouches on carts to separate plastic, cans, bottle and paper.
- Use of eco-friendly dry cleaner for associates' and guests' laundry.

There are plans underway to add or change over a recycle waste basket for the guest rooms. And, the Housekeeping Department is currently in process of establishing the recycling of amenity bottles (shampoo, conditioner, body lotion).

The Hilton Arlington was the first commercial business in North America to host the ‘Ark of Hope’, to celebrate the hotel’s endorsement of the Earth Charter in October 2007. Crafted from a single plank of sycamore maple from a sustainable forest in Germany, the Ark of Hope is a hand painted wooden chest that contains Temenos books with images and messages of global healing, peace and gratitude from schoolchildren and citizens around the world. Inside the Ark’s lid is the Earth Charter handwritten on papyrus paper; it aspires for nations around the world to spread hope and recognize the interdependence of justice, economic and ecological integrity that together build a culture of peace. Rick Clugston, Executive Director of the Earth Charter US and Sally Linder, the artist who designed and painted the Ark of Hope, among others, were speakers at the event.

In 2007 the Hilton Arlington started a partnership with Arlington-based Ashlawn Elementary School, introducing the Earth Charter to the school’s principal who collaborated with a planning committee of teachers and parents developing a proposal, “The Global Citizenship Project”, adopting the EC’s four main guiding principles. Through the Global Citizenship Project, the school introduced the EC to another elementary school in Costa Rica, as well establishing a partnership with them. To simplify the process, in a number of occasions the hotel used a children’s adaptation of the Earth Charter as a tool, taking one of its four main principles at time, to customize it in order to create and develop ideas and projects.

In November 2009 Ashlawn Elementary School’s fifth grade class of 24 students designed and painted the Hilton Arlington’s Team Member Café with food-inspired art. The theme was “Food from the caveman to present”. Eco-friendly paints were used. The message of the project was the importance of consuming mainly locally produced organic food, in order to support the sustainable development. The students along with their siblings and parents came back to the Hilton in March of 2010 to paint more images and decoupage the café table tops using a theme focusing on the four basic principles of the Earth Charter.

In addition, the Hilton Arlington has spread the word about the Earth Charter by sending out letters to other organizations, associations, businesses, interest groups, elementary schools, colleges, universities and ministries. The hotel supports the local community by sponsoring and planning numerous projects, such as food and clothing drives for the local homeless shelters, participation in school Silent Auctions, recycling programs, planting vegetable gardens and community park clean up days.

The hotel encourages its management and staff to participate in community events that promote sustainability, offering a calendar of local voluntary opportunities the year throughout.

Inspired by the Earth Charter website and the ‘It Starts with One’ campaign, the hotel team made a video depicting themselves as a business that put the Earth Charter into practice. Watch it [here](#).

For more information please contact Vickie Hann at Vickie.Hann@hrco.com