

Stockton Alumnus Rick Ricciardi keeps building on his success as a planner, engineer and humanitarian.

June/July 2015



Stockton University alumnus Rick Ricciardi has *built* his reputation - figuratively and literally. He has worked in the *building* industry, while simultaneously *building* his community service legacy by *building* affordable housing. As president and principal environmental scientist for Marathon Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc. a civil and environmental consulting services firm based in Swedesboro and Atlantic City, New Jersey, he has over 40 years of environmental land use experience in federal, state and local regulatory affairs, connected to various New Jersey construction projects.

Fueled by two degrees from Stockton – 1975 bachelor’s degree in Sociology and then another bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies in 1976, Rick, a licensed professional planner, has a professional and volunteer career that shines a spotlight on the higher education field for which Stockton is so renowned.

Since 2001, Rick has used his skills in the area of environmental testing and planning and construction management to work several hours per week – as a volunteer - for another New Jersey entity -Habitat for Humanity- Atlantic County (HFHAC). For the time he spends on Habitat projects he gets paid in satisfaction – “knowing that I am helping to change the lives of individuals by helping them help themselves.” Habitat volunteers work together with the prospective homeowners whose incomes would qualify as “low and moderate” to build and then purchase quality affordable homes.

“Instead of being exhausted, I am energized by my Habitat work. There is nothing dramatic about how I became involved,” he said.

“Through my work with the NJ Builders Association and the Builders League of South Jersey, I started to get mailings about HFHAC. In the boom years of McMansion construction, our firm grew tremendously. It occurred to me that I was spending a lot of time designing and advising on home projects for families that were fortunate enough to purchase a beautiful home. It just seemed natural for me to give back to my community by helping to provide housing for those who are willing to work hard, but who earn salaries that preclude them from ever owning a decent house in which to raise a family.”

Serving on the HFHAC board of directors since 2003, he was president of the board from 2006-2007 and then again from 2012-2015, and involved with several HFHAC’s committees: Fundraising Committee, the Building Committee, the Site Selection Committee, the Golf Committee, the Legal Committee and the Executive Committee. HFHAC usually constructs one to two new homes each year for families in need. But under Rick’s leadership, HFHAC constructed for itself an exciting new future of home repair and renovation. Following Superstorm Sandy in 2012, HFHAC initiated a critical home repair program for approximately 30 homes that were damaged. Now that the Superstorm Sandy repair initiative is coming to a close, Rick is moving forward with another initiative – house moving. With a “supportive partners” in the Atlantic City and the Atlantic County improvement authorities, HFHAC has connected with owners of small homes in shore communities who do not want to fix their Superstorm Sandy ravaged homes and would rather build anew. Instead of demolishing these homes, HFHAC is looking at moving them to vacant lots in

Atlantic City and fixing them. Some may be coming to Atlantic City on a barge later this summer. If this initiative fails to materialize, HFHAC also is looking at building 20 modular homes on vacant plots of land in Atlantic City.

All these initiatives take money – considerable amounts of money – which is why Rick has spent much of his volunteer years as a builder of a different type - building up the Habitat coffers. Rick, also a member of the Stockton University Foundation board, has a lot of experience convincing people of the “extraordinary value” of the two institutions with which he is so proud to be affiliated. “I do not consider what I do on either the Stockton University Foundation Board or the HFHAC board as ‘work’ because the institutions’ value is so evident. I consider it to be an honor to represent the groups. The key is to be able to communicate not only the mission of the organization, but also the trustworthiness of the organization. People have to believe that their donations are utilized in the most responsible and fiscally prudent manner possible.”