



**Land Development
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A Look Inside RGS

Time for Reflection and Celebration

RGS Celebrates its 10-Year Anniversary

Ten years ago, Dick Stauffer struck out on his own with an entrepreneurial drive he had to satisfy, and a staff of three.

With the admittedly anxious support of his wife, Wendy, and some help by Lancaster architect Robert Beers, a mentor and friend who leased him his first commercial space, Stauffer was up and running.

“It’s been a great decade,” says Stauffer. “As I look back on these years, I do so with great satisfaction and fondness for the many people who have helped it all come together.”

Stauffer’s original staff of three has now grown to 30 and the firm has served some 600 clients. RGS’ first client, Garden Spot Village, continues



to be served by the firm today.

Now, RGS has four owners, not one. Mark Johnson has been a partner for 5 years and, just last year, Joel Snyder and Mark

Hackenburg were also named partners. Among the many other long-term staff members are Bonnie Neff, administrative assistant (8 years with RGS); Denise Dohner, landscape architect (9 years); and Joyce Gerhart, project manager (9 years).

Says Bonnie, “You couldn’t ask for a better place to work. The relationships and knowledge that I’ve gained at RGS will be a part of my life forever.

I especially appreciate the balance of client service, professional expertise and acknowledgement that a person’s family life is at the core of who we are at our very best.”

Denise Dohner affirms that, saying she joined RGS as a part-time employee so that she could fully enjoy her role as the mother of two girls. “They’re now 14 and 11, and I’m still part-time.” But that doesn’t keep her from making key contributions as a valued member of the professional staff, or from participating in all of the training offered by the firm. “These years have been truly enjoyable,” she added. “At RGS, I have found what every working mother searches for — a balance between two

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OPEN LINES

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SPRING 2003

Willow Valley Calls Upon RGS for Spring Run Community Project

One of Lancaster County's architectural crown jewels is the new Cultural Center at Willow Valley, a building designed to meet the social and physical well-being of the community's 2,000 senior residents. The jewel's setting, if you will, is the carefully planned site that accentuates the facility's purpose and design. Since 1998, RGS has worked with Willow Valley — now the nation's second largest non-profit continuing-care retirement community — in developing its 37-acre Spring Run community where the Cultural Center resides.

"This has been an especially rewarding project for us," said Mark Hackenburg, RGS vice president, "because of the level of involvement we've had since the very beginning." Hackenburg explained that the design-build process for Spring Run, begun in 1999, required an intensely collaborative effort among all key participants including Willow Valley managers; RGS; Bernardon Haber Holloway Architects

PC; building contractor Paul Risk Associates; and site contractor Abel Construction.

RGS was involved with the community's master plan, landscape architecture, site design, civil engineering, municipal and agency approvals and even graphics for the development of marketing materials, 3-D modeling and signage in the recently-opened Welcome Center. The project involved extensive public hearings and a neighborhood meeting, with local media tracking several contentious issues, all of which were ultimately resolved.

The campus design was centered on respecting the existing landscape and features. This involved the protection and crossing of wetland areas, preservation and adaptive re-use of a historic farmstead, the siting of 220 independent living apartments with underground parking, the 82,000 square-foot Cultural Center with

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Spring Run Community



This year, RGS celebrates its 10-year anniversary! Won't you join us for our open house celebration on June 26? Please see the article on page 4.



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pools, auditorium and social areas, a 5-story health center, and a 2-story, 191-space parking deck. The project also includes a central community green space with two prominent water features and the preservation of 8.3 acres of open space for campus residents.

“We were also pleased that our Maximum Price Management (MPM) program met the needs of this project so well,” added Hackenburg.” MPM is a managed team approach with Abel Construction that incorporates construction input into the design process to arrive at and maintain a ceiling price for all aspects of the site construction work. The basis of this process is centered on the principle that understanding site construction costs, including costly rock excavation, early in the process, can have a significant impact on the financial success of the project.

“In Willow Valley’s case, the Spring Run community has proven to be both challenging and rewarding to the project team,” said Hackenburg. “As this community continues to evolve it truly is proving to be a well-planned, well-designed and well-built project. The residents certainly seem to love the facilities, and they are the ones we are most striving to please.”

Lincoln Meadows

Designed from the Outside In

A new residential development at the junction of three townships will soon be home to 165 families. The property’s location at the meeting point of Ephrata and Clay Townships, and Ephrata Borough, help to make it an ideal location for homeowners, but challenged site approvals for land developer and builder Rich Hurst, president and CEO of the Ephrata-based Hurst Brothers Development Company.

Today, the 60-acre development is nearing completion of Phase 1. Forty-two of the lots are ready for construction, with 8 homes under roof and sold. Homes in the development are expected to range between \$175,000 and \$275,000.

“This was an intense project,” said Hurst, who negotiated the purchase of six separate properties to complete the tract, and also waged complex site negotiations with PennDot and the three

municipalities. “RGS, who we’ve worked with closely for many years, played an important role in bringing it all together,” added Hurst. According to Joyce Gerhart, RGS project manager, accommodating storm water runoff became one of the site’s key engineering challenges. “It’s one thing to solve a runoff problem,” said Gerhart, “but it’s another to design a solution that will satisfy the developer, site aesthetics, the homeowner’s association, and prospective homebuyers. We’re proud to say that it all came together at Lincoln Meadows.”

A focal point for the storm water runoff was a gently-sloping basin, designed into an open area that met every functional need while contributing to the property’s unique appeal. Interacting with the basin are expansive green areas with walking trails, a children’s play area, gazebos and foot bridges.

“We offer a quality home, well built and in a great location,” said Hurst. “But an important facet to the overall satisfaction of homeowners is the site design. You might say we’ve designed the development from the outside in.

“This is the third major project I’ve done with RGS,” he added. “They’re very attentive to my needs, offer creative solutions, and move toward — not away from — any challenge, collaboratively. They’re the best land development consulting firm I’ve worked with in our 40 years of doing business. RGS not only has great capabilities on tap, but they’re fun to work with. They help make my job exciting, year after year.”



Lincoln Meadows

Know Your Market

Using Consumer Research

*Resident focus group at Mennonite Home*

The use of consumer and end-user research is a rapidly growing trend among organizations today. Think of it: if you wanted to take a product or service to market, wouldn't you want to know what's inside the minds of your "target market?"

According to the American Management Association, since 1990 there has been a 91% increase in the

use of focus groups and a higher emphasis on qualitative research when initiating new projects. According to the *Boston Business Journal*, the use of focus groups has bloomed into a \$1 billion/year industry. Volumes of data are no longer looked upon as a prerequisite to solid decision-making. Today's rapidly changing environment calls for swift decisions. Calculated risk-taking—based on experience—is leading many project efforts, with "number-crunching" moved into a supporting role.

According to Chris Miller, president of Lancaster-based Innovation Focus, one of the nation's leading market research firms, "Focus groups are an effective means of conducting qualitative or 'ethnographic' research. By leading client focus groups to ask for the wishes and desires of retirement community residents," adds Miller, "RGS is, in essence, asking meaningful, immediately applicable, day-in-the-life questions that reveal the true likes and dislikes of residents. Clients can tailor their investment accordingly."

RGS agrees, and feels the added time and cost required to probe for consumer opinions and attitudes is extremely valuable. "It's one of the best investments our clients can make," says Dick Stauffer, RGS president. "Over the past few years, we've conducted focus groups and other end-user research methods for clients. In every instance, we've encountered valuable insight, sometimes leading to dramatic change to initial project direction."

10th Anniversary—Continued from Pg. 4

important roles and the opportunity to be a part of the larger family at RGS."

"Garden Spot Village was my first client assignment when I joined RGS nine years ago," recalled Joyce Gerhart. "It's a great sense of satisfaction to know that they're still here. What amazes me most is our focus on creating a 'sense of place' for the end-user. It's not just outdoor areas we're developing, but environments people can

truly live in and experience fully."

On June 26, RGS Associates opens its doors and invites you to attend our "Celebrate With Us" client appreciation/open house event showcasing our new addition and renovated offices. You'll be seeing more details soon, but mark your calendars now!

And, for the next 10 years? No doubt they'll be exciting. Come join us as we grow.

Mennonite Home

Listening In

"We've seen the value of focus groups," said Nelson Kling, president of the Lancaster-based Mennonite Home Communities. "RGS facilitated focus group sessions here, helping us to make smart and useful decisions about the use of outdoor spaces. Residents participated in the process, and this taught us some very interesting things."

Kling explained that the focus groups brought to light the ideal placement of campus courtyards, activity areas, walking trails with gazebos and waterfalls, and more secluded quiet areas with seating. "Focus group participants wanted areas protected from noise, something we otherwise would not have considered as so important," he added.

The focus groups helped Mennonite Home avoid inadvertently developing areas that would not have been used, stated Kling. The sessions were positive and kept everyone engaged in the process of improving the facility. What also helped was RGS' ability to artistically illustrate design concepts so that residents could see the influence of their decisions before expensive decisions were made.

RGS began its work with Mennonite Home Communities in 1994 during one of its expansion phases. The Mennonite Home complex has a total resident population of about 1,000, with 203 health care beds, 275 assisted living beds, and 383 independent living apartments and cottages.