

PLANET NEWS

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What's next?

PLANET members talk about
the economic landscape



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Software supplier stays involved

Nanette Seven, vice president of Include Software Corp., has been a PLANET supplier member for 15 years. Like so many supporters of PLANET and the green industry, her company plays an active role in several of the association's events throughout the year, including the Green Industry Conference, Student Career Days, Renewal & Remembrance, and Executive Forum. Seven is currently a member of the Renewal & Remembrance, Student Career Days, and Supplier committees and works closely with the Public Relations Committee.

"One of my highlights this year was seeing my six-year-old twin daughters lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery," says Seven. "Renewal & Remembrance is a terrific undertaking and an example of just one of the reasons why I love this industry. The people are genuine and always willing to give of themselves and their companies."



Seven has nearly 20 years of industry experience under her belt. Prior to joining Include, she worked for a Maryland design/build landscape contractor where she was responsible for scheduling, billing, and coordinating jobs. She went to work for Include in 1994 and later married company founder and president Bill Seven.

As she explains, her husband also has roots in the green industry. Before founding Include in 1989, he worked as an estimator for a Southern California landscape contractor. "Bill knew there had to be a better way to estimate than with a pad and pencil," Seven relates. "After doing much research, he found that there was some estimating software on the market, but it was expensive and didn't do what he wanted it to do. So, with a background in computer science, he developed his own estimating program."

After marketing the program primarily in California for the first couple of years, Bill formed his company and took his software nationwide. "Customers soon wanted more," Seven recalls. "So, Bill added scheduling, billing, receivables, financial reporting, and job costing capabilities, and today the applications are fully integrated."

In 1996, Include moved across country to Maryland where it is now headquartered in Glen Burnie and supports more than 200 landscape contracting companies nationwide that are using its software.

End of complacency

Seven is very optimistic about 2010 and thinks the country is definitely coming out of the recession. "Too many business owners became complacent and were busy running and not managing their operations," she emphasizes. "This goes for all industries, not just ours. Once the economy turns around, though, and there are definite signs that it is, these same owners will be more savvy managers and in a strong position to take advantage of the recovery."

She notes that the emphasis on developing better business management strategies bodes well for her company and others that market business management tools. Containing costs, finding efficiencies, and yes, taking advantage of the resources that PLANET members have at their disposal should be part of any strategic plan.

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Nanette Seven
Include Software Corp.

Ruppert Landscape becomes PLANET AEF Ambassador

Challenging economic times have not stopped PLANET members from coming forward to help support the green industry's future leaders through the PLANET Academic Excellence Foundation (PLANET AEF) scholarship program. Ruppert Landscape recently pledged \$25,000 to the Foundation, making it the latest PLANET AEF Ambassador.

"We are pleased to be associated with an organization like PLANET that is doing so much to promote our industry as a professional career choice and that has provided us with such guidance over the years," says Ruppert's CEO Craig A. Ruppert. "These funds will be put to good use helping hard-working horticulture students to complete their education, which ultimately benefits our entire industry."

"PLANET AEF is a leading promoter of careers in the green industry," says PLANET AEF President David J. Frank, Landscape Industry Certified Manager. "The current economic downturn provides our industry with a unique opportunity to attract otherwise unavailable quality candidates to the green industry. It is especially significant that Ruppert Landscape is participating at this time."

Throughout Ruppert Landscape's long 30-year history, it has been known nationwide for its cutting-edge management practices and has regularly won top business management and industry craftsmanship awards. The management team, many of whom have been with the company since its inception, continues to focus its efforts on making Ruppert Landscape the landscape service provider of choice for customers and employees. The company dedicates itself to providing exceptional value to clients and to providing significant opportunities for employees to grow and prosper.

Ruppert Landscape provides commercial landscape construction and management in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and North Carolina from 11 branch offices. In addition, the company operates a 475-acre wholesale tree nursery specializing in large tree growing and moving in Montgomery County, Maryland.

The PLANET AEF scholarship fund was formed in 1998 to award scholarships and fund educational activities for the green industry. Promoting and advancing the lawn care and landscape services industry by supporting academic excellence is the Foundation's mission. To fulfill its mission, the PLANET AEF relies on tax-deductible donations and long-term pledges from individuals, corporations, organizations, and estates. The Foundation's assets total more than \$2 million.

For more information about the PLANET AEF scholarship fund, call (800) 395-2522 or visit LandcareNetwork.org.



Craig A. Ruppert

Leading the Way

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Among PLANET initiatives, she would like to find a way to advance the use of their new software Censeo™ in horticulture programs around the country. Doing so would give students an opportunity to learn how to use some of the latest advances in technology and make them even more marketable upon graduation and more valuable to their new employers.

Seven would also like to see a few more PLANET programs geared specifically toward larger companies. "No, you can't be everything to everybody, but larger companies face obstacles that smaller companies don't," she adds. "Maybe a few seminars that target their specific needs, along with a

couple of 'large-company' table topics at the Breakfast With Champions would add even more value to their PLANET membership.

"There is a lot to be said for getting to know your clients and helping out the industry," she continues. "It's not just about selling product; it's about understanding the challenges that affect everyone in the industry and working together to find solutions."

It's not all about work either. In her spare time, Seven plays softball and water volleyball, and, in her words, "spends quite a bit of time in the gym." Since they live near the Chesapeake Bay, Seven says her family also enjoys boating. When asked if her husband joins her at the gym, she replies, "Bill's favorite hobbies all involve technology — tinkering with and testing out the latest gadgets." ☺