

Martinez Plant Named Among Bay Area's "Top 100 Workplaces"

August, 2014



The City of Martinez, CA, cherishes its heritage as home of the original martini, home to baseball legend "Joltin' Joe" DiMaggio, and home to conservationist John Muir, founder of the National Park System. Martinez is also the home of a Solvay Eco Services plant, which has proven itself as the safest and most reliable sulfuric acid plant in the world. The site regenerates a million pounds of sulfuric acid every day for nearby refineries. The site also supplies sulfuric acid for mining, pulp and paper manufacturing, agriculture, water

treatment and battery production.

This summer, the Solvay plant added another distinction.

It was named one of the San Francisco Bay Area's "Top 100 Workplaces" by the Bay Area News Group, publisher of the *Contra Costa Times*, the *San Jose Mercury-News*, the *Oakland Tribune* and other daily and weekly newspapers in California. The award recognizes a variety of attributes that make the Martinez site unique, in categories of "interesting facts," "health & wellness," and "community involvement."

Selection to the "Top 100" is also based on employee surveys using statistical survey tools. Surveyed employees responded to a set of statements using a seven-point scale. Each of the statements is tested to ensure a high correlation with how employees feel about their workplace. Statements are then correlated to a control question which asks each employee to rate their workplace on a scale of zero to 99. The survey methodology also requires minimum response rates for employers of various sizes.

Based on the survey results as well as the interesting facts, health and community categories, the Martinez plant scored 34th among the top 50 employers selected in the small company category, with less than 149 employees. Fifteen large companies were also selected and 35 midsize companies rounded out the "Top 100."

"This was quite a feat," said Plant Manager Darrel Hodge, noting that overall, the newspapers evaluated more than 1,400 company entries and 47,000 email interviews with employees to determine the overall winners. "The Martinez plant feels a strong sense of family, camaraderie and teamwork among our 45 employees," Hodge continued, "and it showed in our evaluations.

"We're proud of our work, of course. Our team members constantly encourage themselves to build things together that the site needs and to let folks develop skills in areas they

normally would not have the chance to do. Once built, there is a great sense of pride in the accomplishment, much like a home improvement project that you've done yourself."

In its examples of interesting facts about award winners, the papers noted that Martinez logged 100 percent employee participation in the company's "10,000 steps a day" wellness initiative. The reward for that performance was to build a gym in an older building on the site. Using only site employees and no outside contractors for demolition or construction, the employees broke down solid block walls, removed plumbing, poured a new floor, installed a drop ceiling, added rubber flooring and outfitted a new gym with donated and purchased equipment.

Hodge notes "the gym was not enough. Our employee excellence team wanted to develop a two-acre hillside at the plant. Again, with all plant volunteer labor, the hill was graded with terraces and planted with more than 200 trees and cacti, with irrigation and electric service.

"Then we added two pit barbecues and shade sails, two bocce courts, and other recreation features." The park, called "Con Nuestras Manos" (With Our Hands) hosts family picnics, visitors and community meetings.



Con Nuestras Manos Park inside the grounds of the Martinez facility - Con nuestras manos translates from Spanish, "with our hands" – a fitting name as the park was constructed entirely by Solvay employees.

The papers' health & wellness section noted that Solvay employees exercise at Con Nuestras Manos on the site, complete with a walking course and the employee gym. Every employee is trained in first aid and CPR and 80 percent are on the emergency response team. The effectiveness of the training is evident: in one instance, an employee revived a jogger who had suffered a heart attack; in another instance, an employee's wife extinguished a fire in a church kitchen.

In a recap of winning companies' community involvement, the newspapers noted that Solvay's Martinez site "provided the initial endowment for the Martinez Community Foundation that provides community-based grants." These grants help support special events, downtown beautification in Martinez and other arts and community-based improvement programs.

Other financial contributions from the plant support early childhood education and youth sports as a way to educate and keep kids focused. Employees also raise money for the Boys Scouts and the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer.

The Bay Area News Group was not the only voice commending Solvay's Martinez team. California Fifth District Congressman Mike Thompson (D) echoed congratulations, too. In a letter to Hodge, Thompson wrote, "Your commitment to fostering a happy, environmentally friendly and community-oriented workplace is admirable and serves as an inspiration to all."

Hodge concludes, "Healthy employees with high morale, team work and ownership allow Solvay Martinez to be the safest and most reliable sulfuric acid regeneration plant in the world, and to contribute proudly and positively to our community."

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Solvay's craftsmen, from left to right, Brandon, Luis, and Brent as they prepare to take on a maintenance assignment at the Martinez facility



Solvay's Martinez, CA Plt Mgr., Darrel Hodge, accepting award and congratulations on behalf of the facility and employees



Carl Yamada and his grandson enjoying "Big Jim's" water slide at Con Nuestras Manos Park inside the grounds of the Martinez facility



Bay Area News Group
would like to congratulate the
Top 100 Companies of 2014!



James P. Connolly, a stand-up comedian and colorful TV host livened up the 5th annual awards luncheon



Darrel Hodge, Plt Mgr. and Alex Akhtari, maintenance craftsman - member of Solvay employee excellence team