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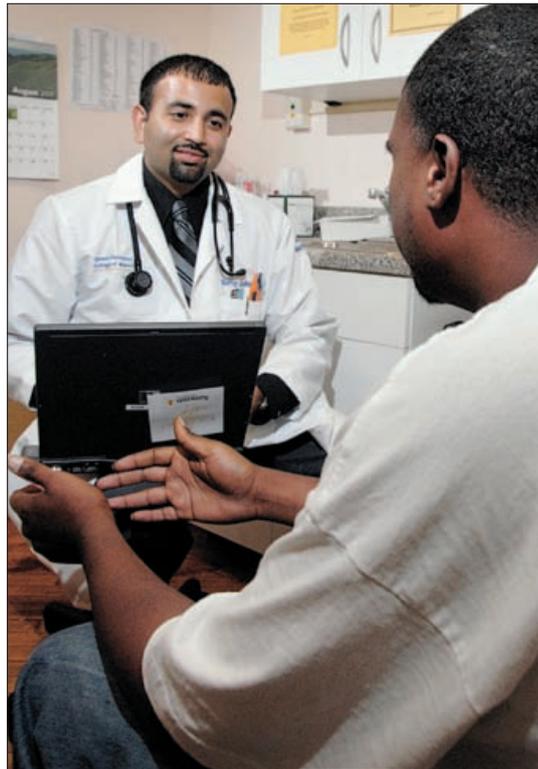


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CURT HUDSON

Drexel University medical student Dr. Sony John talks with patient Kareem Wharton of Philadelphia at the school's family practice in Manayunk.

Physician shortage hits home

JOHN GEORGE
STAFF WRITER

The supply of family physicians is dwindling at a time when demand for their services is poised to explode.

The Philadelphia region is home to six medical schools, but relatively few of their graduates become family physicians.

Last year, 1,156 med school graduates matriculated from Penn, Thomas Jefferson, Temple, Drexel, and the osteopathic medical schools in Philadelphia and Stratford, N.J. Less than 10 percent — 106 students — chose to specialize in family medicine, according to data

SEE PRACTICE, P12

Know It All finds applicants are stretching the truth

ATHENA D. MERRITT
STAFF WRITER

When the downturn in the economy began leading to layoffs and less hiring, Know It All Background Research Services Inc. braced for a slowdown in business.

But the slowdown never arrived for the tiny Bensalem firm, which is instead amid a growth spurt fueled by employers doing more employee background checks. Business has



Bourne

climbed by 20 percent just since January, with a dozen clients added in the past month alone, company Vice President Marc Bourne said.

"I think the [human resource] departments are seeing people are getting desperate out there," Bourne said. "They want a job, they need a job, and they are saying and doing anything to get a job."

Employers have cause to be concerned, Bourne said. Last year, Know It All was only finding discrepancies in about 10 percent of background checks, while this year discrepancies have climbed to 19.8 percent. Among the discrepancies found, 42 percent involve lying about previous employment/positions, 37 percent about education and 21 percent about criminal records.

SEE KNOW-IT-ALL, P35



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'They've been a very good company to work with.'

Charles Forneck | Pa. DEP. P15

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GROWTH STRATEGIES

SOIL SAVIOR



Bill Massa, CEO of Clean Earth, holds a handful of soil treated in the processor in Montgomery County.

CURT HUDSON

HATBORO — While some companies avoid contaminated land at all costs, Clean Earth's business depends upon it.

And business opportunities abound; sluggish economy notwithstanding.

"We live in an area that has a lot of historic contamination," said Bill Massa, Clean Earth's CEO.

The 18-year-old Montgomery County company is one of the country's largest processors of contaminated soil, dredge sediments and other nonhazardous and hazardous materials.

Clean Earth also recycles, or beneficially, reuses about 98 percent of the material it processes.

By reusing the material it collects, Massa said, the Montgomery County company is able to make the removal process more affordable for developers of land impaired by chemical spills or other types of contamination.

"Instead of [the dirt] being dumped in a landfill or in the

Clean Earth is out to clean up by cleaning up contaminated soil

JOHN GEORGE
STAFF WRITER

ocean, which is what was being done not too many years ago, we bring it to one of our facilities where it is cleaned using various types of technology," he said. "Then we find a new home for the material."

That new home could be as fill to raise the grading level for a highway project, to cap a landfill or regrade a quarry.

Contaminated soil processed by Clean Earth was used to cover a closed landfill near Jersey City, N.J., where the Liberty National Golf Course was built overlooking the New York skyline. Closer to home, processed soil from Clean Earth was used at the brownfield site in Chester that is now home to Harrah's Chester Casino & Racetrack.

The company also eliminates the need for developers to ship in clean dirt from another site. "It doesn't make sense to scar the environment in one place to benefit another," Massa said.

Clean Earth operates a network of seven treatment facilities — including one in Philadelphia and another in Morrisville —

The 80% Factor

We live in a very imperfect world. My cell phone drops calls about 10 times a week. My bacon at breakfast yesterday wasn't served well done like I asked. My flight last week was late. The roof of my Jeep has a small leak.

Imperfections are part of our life. Nothing works 100 percent. We're used to this in our personal lives. And, as penny pinchers, we're used

to this in our business lives, too.



PENNY PINCHER'S ALMANAC

Gene Marks

know all about imperfections. So as business owners, we make up for the imperfect business world by creating reserves on our financial statements. Penny pinchers are constantly creating these reserves for the imperfections with our customers, vendors, products and services.

For example, it's not uncommon for 5 percent or 10 percent of a company's receivables to be reserved as potential bad debts.

That's because some imperfect people who say they're going to pay ... don't. I know of some companies that have up to 20 percent of their inventory reserved as obsolete, or unsellable. That's because product that they purchased and expected to sell ... didn't. Other clients I know build a returns and allowances reserve of anywhere between 3 percent and 7 percent on sales. That's because product or services that they thought were good ... weren't.

Imperfections. The world is full of them.

Penny pinchers know this. Every business has its share of lousy customers, poorly made product or jobs that didn't go as hoped. No one's perfect. We're not going to get it all right all the time. At home, we can apologize and promise to not make that mistake again. In the business world, we do the same thing AND we pay to make it right. This financial impact is then reserved for on our balance sheets.

SEE **CLEAN EARTH**, P15

SEE **PENNY PINCHER**, P15

CLEAN EARTH: Company carves out niche remediating, reversing contamination

FROM PAGE 14

that, combined, ship in and ship out more than 3 million tons of materials a year.

The company was originally based in New Castle, Del., the site of a soil treatment facility that remains part of its network.

Clean Earth has grown through a combination of opening its own facilities and acquiring small mom-and-pop companies in what is still a highly fragmented industry.

Massa, a one-time Navy nuclear submarine officer, who spent more than a decade in the chemical industry, was recruited to Clean Earth by an executive search firm.

His initial chore was to unify the company's operations.

"The task was to meld the individual facilities that were operating largely independently," he said. "What was happening was our different facilities were bidding on the same project."

Equally bad, he said, was one facility in the network turning away business because it was too busy while another was performing below capacity.

Now, he said, facilities share manpower and no longer compete for projects.



Bill Massa (left), CEO of Clean Earth, walks with plant Technical Manager Joe Siravo at the company's Morrisville facility. The soil processor is in the background.

CURT HUDSON

UP CLOSE

COMPANY: Clean Earth
LOCATION: Hatboro
WEB SITE: www.cleanearthinc.com
OWNERS: Littlejohn & Co. LLC
CEO: Bill Massa
TYPE OF COMPANY: Processor of contaminated soil and other hazardous and non-hazardous materials.
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 200
2006 REVENUE: \$115 million
2007 REVENUE: \$123 million
2008 REVENUE: \$129 million
LESSONS LEARNED: I have worked for several well respected, successful companies. None compare to the passion and commitment demonstrated everyday by the Clean Earth employees. This is a challenging, highly regulated and competitive market. We are the market leader because of our employees, a consistent strategy, open communications and a commitment to continuous improvement.

'There is a lot still being dumped in landfills that can be reused.'

Bill Massa
Clean Earth

chemical additives to prevent contaminants from migrating. Other times it will use a thermal treatment in which a giant rotary kiln is used to burn out the contaminants, leaving sterile soil to be reused.

A third treatment option is bioremediation, in which bioengineered bacteria is used to eat contaminants and leave behind only harmless excrement, Massa said. When the contaminants are gone, the bacteria have no more food source and die.

Massa said the business is highly regulated and his company is subject to "a lot of scrutiny" from government agencies. He accepts all the oversight because it helps validate Clean Earth's business model.

Charles Formeck, an environmental engineer with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, said he has worked with the company since

the early 1980s when it was operated as Soil Remediation of Philadelphia.

He said the company has continually upgraded its facilities and not been the subject of any serious violations or incidents in its handling of materials.

"They've been a very good company to work with," Formeck said. "Whenever I've asked for something, they have done it."

Going forward, Massa wants Clean Earth to target other waste streams.

"There is a lot still being dumped in landfills that can be beneficially reused," Massa said. "There is a lot of construction demolition debris that end up in landfills — metals, plastics, wood, paper and cement — that can be reused."

This year's economic woes haven't bypassed Clean Earth, which has experienced a slowdown linked to the trouble developers are experiencing in obtaining financing for new projects.

"This is an event-driven business," Massa said. "Every day you have to find

what your next project will be."

Massa is hopeful his company — which had to cut its work force, now at 200, by about 10 percent — will experience a trickle-down effect from building and road projects getting government stimulus program funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

"In the last six week business has picked up, some of it from projects funded by the stimulus package," he said. "We believe work will accelerate as the year goes on."

Massa, a pilot who in his spare time volunteers with Angel Flight flying sick children to specialized treatment centers, said after working at five different chemical companies he enjoys the new direction his career has taken.

"My sister-in-law tells me I spent 15 years polluting the Earth, now I can spend the next 15 cleaning it up," he said.

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PENNY PINCHER: The theory is, if 80% of your customers are happy so are you

FROM PAGE 14

Mary Buckley also knows this. She calls this "The 80% Factor." It's a theory that she lives by daily. This is her emotional reserve. And it goes like this: "As long as 80 percent of my customers are happy, then I'm happy," Mary says.

Because Mary knows she's not perfect. She has corns on her feet. She doesn't recycle as often as she should. She admits to sometimes watching "Two And A Half Men." And her oldest child is a Republican.

More important, as a penny pincher, she knows that she can't make everyone happy. Her hair salon, located on a busy street, serves hundreds of customers every month. This may come as a surprise for some, but I've heard that a few women can be quite fussy about their hair.

Just a rumor. But that's what I've heard.

Mary confirmed this suspicion. "There are times when we follow a customer's instructions and she's still not happy," Mary says. Sometimes you do everything you can do. But it's still not good enough.

Good penny pinchers reserve. Both financially and emotionally.

Financially, we're honest with our balance sheets. Bad receivables are reserved or written off. This way we can get this bad karma out of our heads and focus on the good receivables from the good customers. Unsellable inventory isn't left lying around. It's scrapped or disposed of. All it does is re-

Good penny pinchers reserve. Both financially and emotionally.

mind us of jobs gone bad, dreams that never happened. We don't need that kind of karma either. And let's face it, some of our products are going to be returned. A reasonable reserve should be set up so we don't get ourselves into an emotional state whenever a silly customer has a silly complaint. We return, we move on. We focus on the good.

Reserves are just a cost of doing business. Good penny pinchers understand this and plan for their own imperfections. That way when a customer doesn't pay, or a part doesn't work like it should, we've already absorbed the cost. Both financially and emotionally.

That's why Mary lives by The 80% Factor. She does her best. But she knows she's not going to make every customer happy. Instead of spinning her wheels on the 20 percent of customers who give her 80 percent of her headaches she instead spends the time on the 80 percent of her customers who give her 0 percent of her headaches.

"You want to please everyone," she says. "But you just can't. I don't let it bother me. I do my best. I sleep soundly. I watch 'Two and A Half Men.'" And she makes her reserves.

GENE MARKS, CPA, is the author of "The Streetwise Small Business Book of Lists" and three other books on small business. He heads The Marks Group (www.pennypinchertips.com), which provides technology and financial consulting in Bala Cynwyd. Marks was a senior manager with KPMG in Philadelphia for nine years.