

## Innovative Health & Safety Leadership: Keep an Eye on Safety

**RiverStone Group Incorporated's** safety engineer **Mike Mudd** instituted a concept and practice he dubbed "Keep an Eye on Safety" which was selected by members of the IAAP Safety Committee for the 2014 *Innovative Health & Safety Leadership* award. Working with the company's corporate safety director, **Jim Papenhausen**, and the blessing of company owners, they began implementing this new safety program in the winter of 2010. RiverStone Group is based in Moline, Illinois and along with its sister company, Central Stone, operates limestone quarries and sand & gravel pits in western Illinois and the Illinois Valley region as well as Iowa and Missouri.



The goal of Keep an Eye on Safety is to bring all operations personnel, including miners, supervisors, and safety managers, together as a crew ensuring hazard awareness and injury prevention is paramount. The concept is simple and motivates miners to take ownership of personal safety and safety of others as everyone strives for zero injuries and citations. According to Mike Mudd, "Employees are now talking the talk and walking the walk."

The miner's annual pre-season safety meeting is conducted by Mike and the plant superintendent and includes a review of the past year's citations, reportable injuries and the root causes of those accidents. Afterward, everyone moves outside for a walking visual inspection of the whole mine site looking for hazards to persons and equipment. Each miner has a different perspective and level of competency so checking and evaluating as a group gets more eyes and knowledge on the process and more opportunity to detect and correct potential issues. Mike credits some significant safety improvements to asking employees to look at areas of the operation where they don't normally work. By doing so, all employees have started keeping an eye on safety by communicating with other miners and looking out for each other.

Throughout the year, miners are encouraged to lead safety meetings for their peers, sometimes discussing their own near-misses, and take part in injury investigations. With this program, employees are engaging in more open discussion about work task modifications that will make mining safer.



Comparing the company's safety record in 2010 to 2013 indicates dramatic results have been achieved. During 2010, before Keep an Eye on Safety was implemented, the company's ten mine sites received 91 MSHA citations, 11 of these were S&S, and experienced 3 reportable injuries. Even though reportable injuries were low, these citations indicated a potential for injuries which Mike and Jim wished to address with a completely new way of engaging employees. In 2011, after the program was implemented and workers began taking ownership of safety, citations dropped by 71% to 26 and just 4 reportable injuries. The level of MSHA citations in 2012 remained much improved at a total of 24, six of these were S&S, and 6 reportables. However, 2013 concluded with even more remarkable numbers as reportable injuries and citations were cut in half again to 3 re-

portables and 13 citations, with zero S&S. Since 2011, the first full year for Keep an Eye on Safety, to the beginning of 2014, the company's ten mining operations have experienced 17 full MSHA inspections and 8 spot compliance inspections where no citations were written.



Prior to the Keep an Eye on Safety program, the company's safety program was pushed down to workers in the traditional ways but things have changed at RiverStone and so have the worker's attitudes. Now, Mike says miners are more proud of their operations and are happy working together as a crew every day to identify and correct safety hazards. They are comfortable and responsive during interviews conducted by MSHA inspectors because they know what everyone has done to ensure a safe operation. Several MSHA inspectors have applauded the program during recent inspections. This year, after demonstrating positive results from Keep an Eye

on Safety at RiverStone, Mike Mudd and Jim Papenhausen expanded the program to Central Stone Company mining operations.

RiverStone Group has demonstrated safety & health leadership by engaging employees and instilling in them the understanding of what is needed to build and sustain an injury free workplace through their innovative and collective efforts. The IAAP and its Safety Committee commend them for these efforts.