



MARVIN S. GILMAN
SUPERSTARS
IN BUSINESS



SUPERSTARS IN BUSINESS WINNER

DOING RIGHT BY ITS PEOPLE

60-150 Employees: Tidewater Utilities, Inc.

BY COLIN HEFFINGER | PHOTOS BY DICK DUBROFF / FINAL FOCUS

DOING RIGHT FOR COMMUNITIES when disaster strikes isn't easy. When COVID-19 began to spread across Delaware, ensuring uninterrupted water service to support public health protection became Tidewater's primary focus. As essential workers, they continued to operate plants, monitor water quality, and maintain infrastructure.

Tidewater Utilities also leapt into action by providing support to Delawareans who became unemployed and relying on food pantries to support their families. By double-matching employee contributions to nonprofits, Tidewater was able to donate funds that helped provide critical equipment for first responders and support replenishing food banks.

The company's reaction to the pandemic is not new for Tidewater, it is consistent with Tidewater's ongoing commitment to support its community and involve employees in volunteering initiatives that play a role in maintaining and shaping the future of Delaware.

Tidewater Utilities, Inc., was established in 1964 and today is the largest private water and wastewater utility in Delaware south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal. Water service is provided to approximately 50,000 domestic and commercial customers throughout the state of Delaware in roughly 415 separate communities in New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties. Tidewater owns and maintains 171 groundwater wells, 47 storage tanks, and over 765 miles of water main. Last year alone, Tidewater produced over 2.4 billion gallons of water.

Tidewater, whose mission is to provide service in the water and related fields in a safe, reliable and efficient manner, views itself as a provider of a life sustaining service, vital to quality of life, public health protection, and essential to support economic development. Its operations, business decisions, and community service are based on their "Do Right" value system of doing right by their customers, their shareholders, and by each other. Tidewater employees respect each other, their stakeholders, and the environment by seeking value in other's perspectives, listening with empathy, and making conscious decisions to reduce the impact of their operations on the environment.

Bruce O'Connor, president of Tidewater Utilities, discusses the role of being environmentally responsible for Tidewater. "By our nature, we are environmentally driven," O'Connor explains. "We must meet state and federal regulations to ensure the water we provide is safe and clean. Even residuals, a by-product of the treatment process, must be properly and environmentally disposed. All our processes are environmentally regulated. We comply with them to make sure that what goes into the ground is void of contaminants. We work closely with and are strong advocates of environmental agencies throughout Delaware."

Tidewater attributes its success in maintaining or in some cases, exceeding, standards for environmental, social, and governance to their dedicated workforce. The management team understands the importance of show-



ing their employees that they are valued, and their role plays a significant impact on delivering a life-sustaining service. Benefits and pay rates are regularly compared against industry standards to provide employees with equitable compensation for their work efforts. Consistently monitoring the employee turnover rate, which currently sits below three percent, provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of the management team and the overall success of the business.

Looking forward, Tidewater aims to continuously attract and retain talented individuals to become a part of their team. A comprehensive benefit package, a strong focus on safety in the workplace, personal and professional development opportunities and additional career support help create the backbone of what draws in skilled professionals.

"An aging workforce is a particular challenge in our industry," O'Connor explains. "Many of our jobs require technical licensing and as experienced professionals retire and enjoy the fruits of their labor, we're always focused on ways to make the water industry appealing to the next generation of talented workers. We think that our small company environment can offer benefits and training to acquire the best talent for the future."

As O'Connor reflects on receiving the Superstars in Business award, he added, "It's really about the people who work for Tidewater and are out there every day. They make us who we are. I've worked with Tidewater since 1992 and our employees consistently go above and beyond to do meet customers' needs." ■