Emphasize safety and be sure visitors have closed toe shoes and a hard hat for their visit.

Create a safe lookout point for visitors to the operation.

Keep the operation neat and tidy to create a good first impression.

Use material to create a natural barrier from the high wall in areas where visitors may be.
Community outreach can build community support

Building community and neighbor relations may seem daunting for aggregates operators starting from scratch, but it can be as simple as channeling employees’ passions into the workplace. “You don’t need to have money to donate,” explains Alan Burnette, director of resource development for Lehigh Hanson’s South Region. “We found that in our own aggregates management division, events, most people in our industry are already doing community relations and just don’t realize it. Even at the grassroots level, it is important to be involved.”

Formation of a neighborhood advisory group for the homeowners and businesses surrounding Lehigh Hanson’s Crabtree Quarry has been well received. It provides a forum for the quarry’s neighbors to air concerns and provide feedback while involving employees. This has helped elevate community relations with quarry neighbors — and has become an important recruiting tool.

“This is a big part of attracting and retaining talents. We all want to be involved in something bigger than ourselves that is more than just a paycheck.”

Bringing people into the operation like this has been invaluable, Roberts says, because it provides opportunities to develop relationships. “When you are ready to make something happen at your site, you may be in a bind if you don’t have relationships because you aren’t different from anyone else,” he says.

Rogers Group’s Lawrenceburg Quarry in Lawrenceburg, Tenn., built neighbor relationships while helping a dream come true for Abigail, a young girl with Down’s Syndrome. She loves baseball and dreamed of playing on a real field, and had been looking forward to the day when she could step up to the plate and swing a bat. As a surprise at the Apex job site in the South Region, she was able to realize her dream. Her father was so touched that he shared the story with the Lehigh Hanson’s South Region office, who sponsored a Habitat for Humanity House, with more than $300 hours put into its construction. One employee, who didn’t live in the area, even took vacation to assist with the project.

Making monetary donations is important, but getting directly involved in projects builds relationships and helps the community view the supporting organization as an asset. On Earth Day, Rogers Group’s Lacey Springs operation employees worked with third grade students at Lacey Springs Elementary to plant new flowers and update landscaping in front of the school. Working with the kids during their classes not only contributed to the community, but allowed some of the employees to work alongside their own children.

When initiating neighbor relations, begin with smaller organized events that provide face-to-face interaction, such as a cookout. From there, expand on what worked and revisit any areas that could use improvement. Smaller-scale events, such as a barbecue open house, allow attendees to give both positive and negative feedback so changes can be implemented to improve the overall community experience. During these events, be transparent about daily business operations. This is an opportunity to create knowledge about the aggregates industry and its processes and procedures, which will, in turn, help to ensure a lasting relationship between the producer and the community.

Lehigh Hanson received an award for its twice-yearly “Big Sweep Pickup,” where employees and their families from multiple local quarries teamed up with Wake County, N.C., to clean up the Crabtree Creek which flows through its Crabtree Quarry operation. More than 6,000 pounds of trash were removed from the creek. Employees spent the day with their families while helping the local community improve the environment.

Get to know local politicians, such as the county commissioner and city council members, and let them know your operation would like to become more active in the community. They are familiar with the needs of a community and are able to put operations in touch with the proper people to help address those needs. This acquisition of operational personnel with local decision-makers. Get employees involved in the process. If help is needed from the politician, the message will then be from several individuals, not just the company as a whole.

Tony Halinsson is operations manager for Lehigh Hanson in Atlanta, Ga. He has held this position for five years and started in the industry with a Hanson predecessor company in 1989.

Derek Roberts is vice president of aggregates for the South Central Division of Rogers Group, the services on the aggregates division of Bomanite. He is a past chairman of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA) and a part chairman of NSSGA’s Young Leaders group.
When it comes to community and neighbor relations, the biggest lesson learned is that even the smallest gesture goes a long way with customers, vendors, and the local community. When a neighbor who lives right by the quarry was moving, some employees of the StoneCo 100th Street location went over to help.

"Neighborhood interactions are inevitable in our business," says Tony Halloran, operations manager for Oldcastle’s StoneCo’s 100th Street location in Byron Center, Mich. "We try to stay really close knit, especially with the neighbors close to us. If we hear they need something, we’ll try to provide equipment, labor, or whatever they need."

When an employee was picking up his daughter at school, he learned about the school’s plans to add reading stones for its students. He mentioned it at work, and StoneCo donated them to Coldwater Elementary. "We encourage that with our guys," Halloran says. "We want them to bring it to work, and we’ll see what we can do."

Whether it’s supporting a local school, giving scouts a tour of the quarry, or hosting a barbeque, Halloran says it’s important to seek out community events for sponsorship or volunteer opportunities, especially when it’s important to an employee. "It gives them pride knowing that their company will stand behind them, support causes important to them, and even help out their own children," he says. "Employees’ families and other community members also participated, building both a company and community culture where people work together."

At Lehigh Hanson’s Crabtree Quarry in Princeton, N.C., several employees volunteered to participate in Habitat for Humanity, putting in more than 800 man hours. Don Harvey, who runs the Princeton Quarry, worked extensively with his location’s team on Habitat for Humanity. "We ended up having an entire crew, including some people from the regional office, so there were employees from all levels," Burnette says. "They spent their personal time and strengthened their bond as a team. They hammered nails side by side."

Employees’ families and other community members also participated, building both a company and community culture where people work together. At Lehigh Hanson’s Crabtree Quarry in Raleigh, N.C., Plant Manager Jim Hilton organizes the semi-annual "Big Sweep" cleanup effort for the Crabtree Creek that runs through the quarry. "Twice a year, we rent canoes and kayaks to pick up trash in the river," Burnette says. "Being a good neighbor is a 'want to, not a have to' for our employees."

Burnette says that community involvement and operational transparency are absolutely essential for construction materials producers: "We can’t be scared to engage with neighbors who don’t understand or don’t want a mining operation in their area. Even if we agree to disagree, we want to make sure we are responsible operators."

"The more we are able to educate them, the more they seem to understand we are not so bad," Roberts says. "If we get a blast complaint, we follow up with the homeowner and partner with our seismic company. We put a seismograph in their yard so they can see the numbers measured and correlate it to what they feel. Once they understand what we are doing is in a controlled atmosphere and the calculations that go into it, they are okay with us being a neighbor."

Voice of Experience - Tony Halloran

Building good neighbor relations is about more than just writing a check or simply donating material. "While the financial component is important, it doesn’t really create the kind of involvement that builds relationships," says Alan Burnette, director of resource development for Lehigh Hanson’s South Region. "If someone is asking for a donation for a fun run, ask how else you are able to help. Are you able to help with registration so you’re not just a stone provider or someone just writing a check? There is not always involvement with investment."

Genuine investment in neighbor relations is about individual involvement and collaboration. At the Lehigh Hanson Princeton Quarry in Princeton, N.C., several employees volunteered to participate in Habitat for Humanity, putting in more than 800 man hours. Don Harvey, who runs the Princeton Quarry, worked extensively with his location’s team on Habitat for Humanity. "We ended up having an entire crew, including some people from the regional office, so there were employees from all levels," Burnette says. "They spent their personal time and strengthened their bond as a team. They hammered nails side by side."

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