



Karen Wittig Leads ARAMARK Toward Green Gold

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Name: Karen Wittig

Title: Vice President of Sustainability & Environmental Education, ARAMARK Harrison Lodging—since March 2007

Number of years with ARAMARK: 24

Most recent position: Vice President, Premium Services for ARAMARK's Sports and Entertainment Group

Primary responsibilities: Karen is responsible for influencing current business practices and for raising awareness about sustainability and environmental concerns throughout ARAMARK Harrison Lodging.

What she likes most about her work: "I am someone who is very passionate about what I do. This is another extension of my passion. The people I work with are very passionate about what they do. It is a great atmosphere to work in."

PHOENIX, ARIZ.—Having worked 24 years for ARAMARK Corp.'s Sports and Entertainment Division, of which ARAMARK Harrison Lodging is a part, Karen Wittig knows her company very well—especially from an environmental standpoint. In 2000 she helped the company green the foodservice operations at the Athletes Village and Media Village at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia. She lived in Sydney for a year.

Seven years after that event, Wittig has a new V.P.-level role with ARAMARK; this time in charge of sustainability and environmental education for the more than 30 properties that the Phoenix-based company manages. It is no small task. ARAMARK manages destinations ranging from the Kalaloch Lodge in Olympic National Park in Forks, Wash., to the National Conference Center in Lansdowne, Va.

"What ARAMARK is trying to do is increase its overall environmental focus by initiating training programs at the corporate and property level," Wittig says. "We want our employees to be knowledgeable so that they can communicate our environmental mission and practices to guests so that they can take the ideas home with them."

In her new role, Wittig works with the operations side of ARAMARK to identify opportunities for improvement. She also works with the company's clients to uncover best practices.

"We take a look at what we can do to minimize our impact," Wittig says. "In our conference centers, for example, we purchase organic and sustainable food products and minimize waste by using biodegradable, compostable containers."

ARAMARK's Planet EVERgreen

For the last 10 years, ARAMARK Harrison Lodging has run Planet EVERgreen, its official "greening" program. The program focuses on environmental initiatives that produce positive, measurable results. Here are a few examples of additional steps ARAMARK has taken to operate its managed properties in an environmentally responsible manner:

- It purchases products in bulk to reduce waste. For example, amenity dispensers are used in guestrooms instead of amenity bottles. The company has avoided the disposal of 1 million bottles because of that step.
- A towel and linen reuse program in more than 5,000 guestrooms saves an estimated 21 million gallons of water annually.
- The company's award-winning Trash Tracker program collects hundreds of thousands of pounds of trash annually.
- When running on propane, ARAMARK's bi-fuel trucks release approximately 40 percent fewer emissions than vehicles using gasoline.
- Through Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP), the company selects products and services that minimize negative impacts on the environment.
- ARAMARK provides comprehensive training to staff on programs such as waste management, recycling procedures, Clean Water Act requirements, resource management, sustainability, record keeping and best management practices.
- The company partners with organizations that share its mission to preserve and protect the environment.

Wittig says these initiatives are just a portion of the many in place at the properties it manages around the United States. Her biggest challenge, she says, is sorting through all of the environment-related resources available and identifying what direction to take ARAMARK. In regard to the approach the hospitality industry is taking toward environmental protection, Wittig is realistic.

"The green movement is alive and kicking, but our industry is just catching up with it," she says.

Go to [ARAMARK Harrison Lodging](#).