



## Going Back to School for Sustainability

by Dr. Jim Hoff

For contractors wanting to get more involved in recycling, maybe it's time to go back to school to learn just how effective modern recycling and reuse programs can be. Kalkreuth Roofing & Sheet Metal of Wheeling, W.Va. certainly gets an "A" for their recycling efforts at Brooke High School in Brooke County, W.Va. For starters it was a very large roofing project calling for the removal of 260,000 square feet of existing EPDM roofing membrane installed many years before. By lining up the right equipment, training the roofing crews how to remove and store materials and partnering with an experienced recycler, Kalkreuth was able to remove, stage, and transport over 60,000 pounds of rubber roof membrane, which has now been recycled into a wide variety of useful products such as walkways, parking bumpers and mulch. But this roofing contractor didn't stop there. Additionally, more than 10,000 pounds of sheet metal copings and decking and 30,000 pounds of concrete wall caps and pavers were also successfully removed and recycled from the project. And that's doesn't include the 3 million pounds of existing ballast stone that was also removed and recycled at several other sites in the vicinity. Altogether, over 100 dumpsters of materials were diverted from the waste stream and converted into valuable products with a new lease on life.

In recognition of this outstanding recycling achievement, the Center for Environmental Innovation in Roofing recognized Kalkreuth Roofing & Sheet Metal with honorable mention for best recycling project in the 2011 RoofPoint Excellence in Design Awards. And I certainly hope this project will be the start of many more RoofPoint recycling projects in 2012 and beyond.

As a result of Kalkreuth's successful "schooling," there are a number of lessons for all of us to learn about recycling. And I hope every contractor will take some time to think how these lessons can be applied to your individual projects and local communities:

- Think big. Yes, many roofing membranes can now be recycled, but don't forget the tons of stone, concrete and metal that can be recycled as well.

- Don't discount reuse. When you carefully preserve the insulation and other existing roof components, you're "recycling in place," which also eliminates the environmental impacts of transportation and re-manufacturing.

- Start tomorrow's recycling today. Spend some time with your customers up front talking about how the roof you're installing today can be recycled tomorrow. Hopefully, that will



A Kalkreuth Roofing & Sheet Metal employee loads stacks of EPDM from Brooke High School onto a truck for transport to the recycler.

be many years in the future. But it will have to be recycled sometime, and you can make the most of that recycling by planning ahead.

- Get your employees involved. Recycling offers a way for everyone to give back to their communities simply by doing their job. And the personal reward that comes from giving back is priceless.

- Find reliable recycling partners. You can't do it all yourself, so always be on the lookout for partners who can help, both with the logistics of moving materials and end-users interested in recycled materials.

- Get the community involved. And while you're giving back to the community and the environment, don't forget to get other members of the community involved. Look for ways you can get local media coverage and help promote other community recycling initiatives.

As our entire nation starts a new school season this September, maybe it's the right time to think how new lessons in recycling can benefit your business, your employees and the communities you live in. **R**

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