

ENR

Engineering News-Record

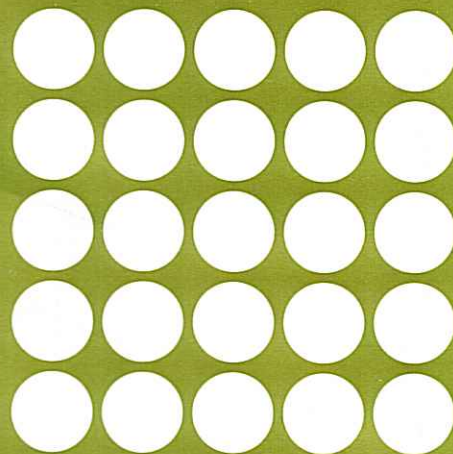
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BARRY THACKER • BRIAN WINTER
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THE TOP 25 NEWSMAKERS



BARRY K. THACKER

Knoxville, Tenn.
ENR 10/22/12 p. 41

Thacker's foundation has set a new standard of achievement for making an impact on a local community.

ENGINEERING REAL COMMUNITY CHANGE, ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

In a corner of Appalachia used to visits from bureaucrats and other would-be do-gooders, it's not hard to understand why, a decade ago, the people of Tennessee's Coal Creek region were suspicious of engineer Barry Thacker's offer to clean up their waterways, tainted by mine waste.

Thacker, president of GeoEnvironmental Associates Inc., thought his skills could improve the trout habitat, but he never envisioned the life-changing impact his Coal Creek Watershed Foundation (CCWF) would have on students and others in Briceville, Tenn. The foundation connected them to their unique environment and rich heritage as well as the poverty-eradicating power of a college

education and new career options. To date, his non-profit group has awarded more than \$250,000 in scholarships to 32 students who had few options for higher education. As the first high school student to take community college classes before graduation, senior Victoria Wright is now eyeing a career in engineering or technology. Says Wright, "I didn't want to do what every high school girl was doing."

Thacker and Carol Moore, the firm's administrative manager and CCWF's workhorse, have become Briceville's key academic partners—in and out of class—from kindergarten on. "Barry has discovered that while people may not be projects, a community could be, and you can



MENTOR EXTRAORDINAIRE Thacker (center) takes kids on annual check of creek's water quality.

take engineering principles and apply them to great effect," Moore says. His efforts have made him a regional celebrity and helped him gain lawmaker attention and client support. "He's a power in that area, and he's known as an engineer," says John Bachner, executive director of ASFE, the geotechnical engineering professional group. "Imagine if this was replicated in 100 places." ■

By Debra K. Rubin