

Community Spirit Award Winner

Dowling leads the charge in the greening of Maui

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Courtesy Dowling Co.

Everett Dowling believes the day will come when more new homes and offices will make better use of Hawaii's sunshine, wind and rain.

The Maui developer is leading the way in developing "green" buildings for the Valley Isle that use less energy and resources while minimizing their impact on the environment.

"The goal is to 'zeronize' the impact," Dowling said.

Certified 'green'

His company, **Dowling Co. Inc.**, has registered nearly a quarter of all buildings up for certification in Hawaii under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design program.

At Dowling Co.'s corporate headquarters in Wailuku, the first LEED-certified building on Maui, greenery covers the roof's surface along with photovoltaic panels. Rainwater is stored in catchment tanks for watering plants and flushing toilets. Daylight is maximized to provide gentler light and reduce the need for electricity.

The company, whose slogan is "building in balance," made the commitment to focus on developing green buildings about two years ago.

"For business reasons and for environmental reasons it's just the right thing to do," Dowling said.

The environment is not the only beneficiary of the Dowling Co.'s commitment to the community.

In the past five years, the company's Dowling Community Improvement Foundation has given more than \$4 million in cash to hundreds of nonprofit organizations on Maui. Last year alone, the company gave \$808,615 to about 100 organizations.

Of that, \$156,415 went to Kamalii Elementary School, which Dowling Co. built in the mid-1990s.

Principal Sandra Shawhan said Dowling surprised the school for its 10th anniversary with an oversized ceremonial check for \$45,000 and 83 new Apple computers for the school. Dowling also paid for new carpet for the library.

Changing society

"Schools are probably our favorite sector to give," Dowling said. "If you can support the schools, you have a chance to really change society."

Montessori School of Maui received a \$50,000 "green grant" from Dowling to help the school become LEED-certified, and to start setting an example for its young students on the importance of protecting the environment.

About a quarter of the money Dowling Co. gave to charity last year went to health care, including a \$125,000 challenge grant to the Maui Memorial Medical Center Foundation.

"In the end we were able to leverage the initial grant to raise \$540,000 for development of our new heart and vascular center," said Barry Shitamoto, president of the foundation's board of directors.

Dowling employees do their part for the Maui community by participating in fundraisers and charity races and by contributing their time to such projects as Habitat for Humanity.

And last year, Dowling Co. developed and donated to the county Kulamalu Field in the Upcountry Maui community the company is developing. The dedication was held on the day of the annual Pop Warner Jamboree attended by some 600 young football players. Dowling sponsored the host team, the Kulamalu Cowboys, buying practice and game uniforms, helmets and equipment bags for the team's 105 players and 28 cheerleaders.

"I think that field has really helped and over time will be more of a factor helping that project," Dowling said.

The company, which is developing the Kulamalu Town Center, was required to donate the land for the field to the county, but Dowling said the improvements such as bleachers were not required.

"Once we started in on it we got carried away," he said, noting that the company eventually spent \$2.6 million.

The Kulamalu Town Center also is being developed with LEED-certified buildings that use catchment water and photovoltaic panels to reduce energy costs.

Such green construction doesn't come cheaply. Dowling estimates it adds about 3 percent to a project's cost.

Getting easier to be green

But that's changing, and as more builders and developers use environmentally friendly materials and systems, eventually it will become easier to be green.

"It's a tuition to be paid just to learn what we're doing," Dowling said. "But I also think there will be some incremental revenues that will offset that cost."

For home buyers, it's having a nicer, and healthier, place to live that holds its value. For businesses, it's having nicer environments in which to work or shop, a healthier environment where even paints and carpets use no chemicals.

"I hope in five years there's no question," Dowling said of using greener materials. "It makes so much sense for the environment and [so much] economic sense you just wouldn't consider doing things any other way."