



It's time to pony up and Buck It Up

“We have to invest in ourselves before we can expect others to even think about investing in us.”

This gem came compliments of the wise widow of my longtime buddy Adam Gaspar. On Sept. 30, 2008, Adam lost his 10-month battle with cancer. Ever since, his wife, Ann, has been juggling the parenting of six children solo while serving as a part-time nurse. And, oh yeah, in her “spare time” she’s been working to help keep Adam’s business vision — GFI Consulting, a small Cleveland-area information technology management provider — alive and on the grow.

Words spoken from the heart speak directly to the heart. That’s why Ann’s words stick with me today. One hard look in the mirror, and I think we all can admit we can do a better job investing in ourselves, our businesses and our wonderful Green Industry.

Lucky for us in this down economy, ponying up to support our industry — and, in turn, ourselves — just got a lot cheaper. In fact, thanks to a new program offered by Project EverGreen, we actually can *save money* while giving back to our industry, businesses and the communities we serve. Sound too good to be true? Well it is — true, that is.

Project EverGreen’s recently launched GreenBack PayBack program allows contractors to contribute \$1,000 (either all upfront or \$50 per month for 20 months) to further the non-profit organization’s cause — promoting the myriad environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of *properly managed* green spaces. By participating in this gas-and-groceries voucher program, you can recoup your entire investment and then some.

All you have to do is sign up today for GreenBack PayBack and show a little brand loyalty. Program participants select one of several major grocery-store chain partners and spend \$100 per month with that brand. Mail in the month’s grocery receipts totaling at least \$100 from that chain and, in return, you receive a free \$25 gift card from the chain shortly thereafter. The program works the same way for fuel purchases.

Do the math. That’s a \$25 gift card for groceries and a \$25 gift card for gas — and you can use these for your next month’s purchases — times 20 months. That totals \$1,000 in gift cards coming right back to you.

And, because Project EverGreen is a non-profit, your \$1,000 contribution via this program is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Join the GreenBack PayBack army and help Project EverGreen, our industry and your business, and add up to a few hundred greenbacks to your bottom line over the next 20 months. Spread the good word: Every one of your co-workers, suppliers, customers, parents, siblings, neighbors, friends — you name them — is eligible for GreenBack PayBack. The program costs Project EverGreen less than \$100 per participant. The organization hopes to net a minimum of \$80,000 this year from GreenBack PayBack. All *we* need is about 90 participants. I’m in; 89 to go to hit goal.

Before I log off my sometimes-trustworthy Hal 3000 computer, this former U.S. Navy sailor has one more request. Since you, and your colleagues and friends, will be adding a few hundred bucks to your bottom lines by joining the GreenBack PayBack program, can you please give a few bucks back to the good folks protecting our great nation?

Project EverGreen also recently launched Buck It Up For Our Military Families. This new program is an extension of Project EverGreen’s widely successful GreenCare For Troops initiative, which provides free lawn care and landscaping services to military families whose breadwinners are serving overseas. During the past three years, GreenCare For Troops has helped approximately 7,700 military families through a national network of 2,100 volunteers.

Buck It Up hopes to generate \$250,000 to start a national scholarship program for military family members seeking careers in the horticultural field and to help fund GreenCare For Troops.

Visit www.projectevergreen.com for program details. Email elizabethneiderhiser@projectevergreen.com or call 877/758-4835 today to enroll in both programs. It’s time to giddyup.