



Tim Firster



Resident relations and *Sizzling* community upgrades:

As our bodies age and mature, it becomes important with each passing year to take care of our physical internal mechanisms and vital structures so that our total health and well-being is kept in top working order. At the same time, periodic revitalization can also be made on our external appearance and dress, thus allowing us to present a fresh and appealing countenance to others. When personal internal and external revitalization takes place, the effect does wonders for our health, safety, and self-confidence, and as a bonus, compels others to see us in a positive light.

Likewise, as our manufactured home communities continue to age and mature, owners and operators find it increasingly important to maintain internal plumbing and mechanisms of our properties' infrastructure. No less important is the periodic revitalization of its external appearance. In response, we will spend a great deal of time and effort each year—along with a significant portion of our respective budgets—to maintain or improve our communities' utilities and infrastructure to keep our residents safe and comfortable. As with maintaining and enhancing our body's internal workings and outward appearance, so we strive to “put on a good face” for residents with regards to our properties, in an effort to avoid appearing old, outdated, or worn out.

Physical vs. substructure renaissance

We will replace a main electrical run, overhaul transformers, and replace water lines in an effort to prevent or repair major safety problems in our communities. Although these renovations are all well and good and necessary, residents usually have no idea that these repairs are being

performed. We may spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on unseen, many times unappreciated, underground work, only to have a resident remark, “What have you done for me lately?” Thus, for resident morale and satisfaction, it may be important to occasionally provide residents with a very visible demonstration of upgrading that they can see, touch, and even use.

For example, you can have the clubhouse repainted every few years; the facility may even be given a fresh look by merely changing the color. Many times simply replacing old plants with new foliage can revitalize a property's landscaping. We should routinely appraise our communities and seek new and different means of maintaining an attractive neighborhood that residents admire, just as we maintain the vital “hidden” infrastructure for residents' health and safety.

Just one example of aesthetic upgrade

An exciting and spectacular solution to a hum-drum outdoor eating experience that provides an enormous amount of *wow*, is the replacement of the old, worn out, free-standing barbecues with an attractive, well-appointed, barbecue island. The barbecue island has provided our residents with something that they can see, touch, and more importantly, use to great delight. The barbecue island offers residents tangible evidence that we are updating our communities and providing

neighbors with improved amenities.

Barbecue islands already have been installed in 50% of our communities to date, and the response from the residents has been fantastic. In most of our communities, the handsome barbecue islands are located in the swimming pool areas so that families and friends can enjoy the facilities together. These attractive and nifty upgrades are popular with groups and provide a central gathering place for entertaining and general camaraderie. Community social clubs, with the support of community management, have sponsored events using the new barbecues, and we have witnessed some large spontaneous parties around these new facilities.

Now that's what I'd call a true *sizzling* community upgrade! *m*

Tim Firster is a Field Representative for Vedder Community Management. VCM operates its 18 communities, which include 4,500 homesites and over 9,000 residents.



Above, the little stand-alone barbecue serves a function for cooking small amounts of food, but has limitations for larger groups and a variety of food preparation. Below, the barbecue island is multi-functional, looks great, and handles large gatherings and food without problem.



Barbecue islands have quickly become a social gathering area for residents and their friends and families. The attractive areas also provide a relaxing atmosphere for owners, management, and residents to meet and mingle and just talk about family and life in general.