

CHEMICAL COMPANY HAS GLOBAL IMPACT

By Brian Sherman
Photography by Stan Foxworthy of Foxworthy Studios

Some publicly traded businesses base their level of success strictly on dollar signs. That certainly is not the case with North Charleston-based Ingevity, which develops and manufactures specialty chemicals and high-performance carbon materials used across the globe. The company does business in 70 countries around the world, but there's no place more important to its leadership than the South Carolina Lowcountry.

Ingevity has shared its financial success and the volunteer spirit of its employees with a lengthy list of local nonprofits, ranging from Trident United Way to the Lowcountry Food Bank to the Center for Women. It has been cited as Corporate Philanthropist of the Year and earned a 2018 Industry Impact Award from the South Carolina Department of Commerce. In the words of Chief Executive Officer Michael Wilson, Ingevity is "a different kind of chemical company."

Spun off from WestRock in 2016, Ingevity is not the largest company in the Charleston area, but it has had a significant impact on the Carolina coast, both financially and in terms of its support of local charities. It has 1,600 employees worldwide, 500 of them in the Lowcountry, along with a payroll of nearly \$60 million a year. Even when it was part of MeadWestvaco and then WestRock, Ingevity had a long tradition of community involvement.

"We look for opportunities for engagement," said Wilson, who was hired in 2015 to lead the spin process. "We all find ways to give back to the community. It's a way for us to make a difference locally."



D. Michael Wilson / President, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Ingevity

“We are dedicated to **advancing technologies in automotive carbon, pavement, oilfield, and industrial applications that are **not only sustainable,** but improve daily living.”** + Michael Wilson



When he said “we all,” he was referring to his executive team as well as the company’s employees, who have a say in determining which organizations the company supports. Ingevity employees participate in many of these charitable activities, such as the Lowcountry Food Bank’s Fresh for All program, which provides fresh produce to residents who live in low-income areas.

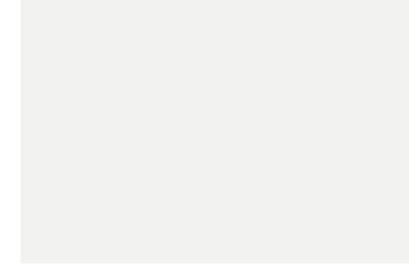
This year, Ingevity, which makes products that are kind to the environment, made a large donation to the S.C. Aquarium to help support “In Our Hands,” a campaign that encourages local residents not to use plastic bags, straws, and cups, all items that could eventually end up polluting the Atlantic Ocean.

Other organizations that have benefited from Ingevity’s community involvement include the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, the March of Dimes, YES Carolina, and Metanoia. For the fourth consecutive year, Ingevity raised more than \$1 million for Trident United Way in 2017.

Ingevity’s concern for others extends beyond the Lowcountry and to the entire planet. For example, the company has come up with a way to create useful products out of materials that otherwise would have been wasted: crude tall oil, a by-product of the process of making paper, and hardwood sawdust, which is a leftover of the furniture-making industry.

“We are dedicated to advancing technologies in automotive carbon, pavement, oilfield, and industrial applications that are not only sustainable, but improve daily living,” Wilson said.

There’s more. For the past four decades, Ingevity has been manufacturing systems that capture gasoline vapors and prevent them from escaping into the atmosphere from cars, trucks, motorcycles, and boats. The company has installed more than 900 million units around the world and has also helped conserve energy and reduce pollution by developing materials that permit paving at cooler temperatures.



“It’s good for the environment, saves energy and emissions, and helps build a better road,” Wilson said.

Ingevity was nominated for the 2018 Industry Impact Award by Charleston County Economic Development. Among the examples cited by CCED included the local and global impact of the company’s products, its safety record, its support of the Aquarium, Lowcountry Food Bank, Metanoia, and Trident United Way, its investment in employee growth and development, the installation of solar panels at Ingevity’s North Charleston plant, its sustainability initiative, and its acquisition of Georgia-Pacific’s pine chemicals business.

Paying relatively high salaries, sharing its financial success with local charities, encouraging employees to help determine which of those organizations are deserving of the company’s largesse, actually providing manpower for their fundraising and people-helping activities, and developing products that treat the environment with respect are lofty goals and ambitions, even for a company with just over \$1 billion in revenues. It’s all part of what Wilson refers to as “a virtuous circle.”

“All this enhances what we do to make us a better company and get higher returns,” he said. “But it also helps us attract talent for the future so we can continue to grow. It’s a remarkable story.”

