

Solitude Lake Management president Kevin Tucker visits one of his company's pond and fountain projects in City Center. The company manages the location for the city of Newport News.



TESS GOLDBLATT

# Solitude Lake Management: Love of water, quality service bring growth, name change

BY JESSE HINES

Kevin Tucker, founder and president of Solitude Lake Management (SLM), relays a humorous, yet telling story related to his company's recent name change (it was previously Virginia Lake Management): he authored a letter detailing his reasons for changing the company's name and sent it to his clients. One client saw the letterhead with the name Solitude Lake Management on it and tossed it aside without reading it because she was already so satisfied with her current water management company, Virginia Lake Management. Eventually, she realized what happened and shared a laugh with Tucker about the episode.

While such a reaction can indicate the potential difficulties inherent in changing the name of an established business (Tucker says it's been smooth sailing for the most part), it also shows how much Tucker's clients value his company's work, to the extent that "competitors" might not even get a chance to have their marketing materials read.

So, why the name change?

"Virginia seemed like a very big place back in 1998 when I decided to start this company. Today, Virginia is but one of the many states we serve throughout the United States. At this point, we have chosen to redefine ourselves, not only for our customers, but in the overall market. We have chosen a name that will better identify who we are, what we stand for and where we are going—one that better reflects the principles that characterize us and the markets we serve," Tucker explains in a press release announcing the name change. The new name took effect in November 2010.

Tucker has taken his business from one man (with part-time help) working from home servicing one state to 16 full-time employees (including himself), working out of four offices servicing eight states: Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New Jersey and New York.

SLM does exactly what its name indicates: the company manages lakes and ponds for "homeowner and condominium associations; apartment communities; commercial developments; golf courses; municipal, state and federally-owned lakes; private ponds; fishing and recreational lakes' and similar properties," according to its website.

Tucker's team is responsible for making their clients' lakes and ponds look good and clean as they restore ecological balance to these bodies of water. A major problem they encounter? Algae. It's "green, shiny and visible," Tucker says, and it's his job get rid of it in an environmentally sustainable way.

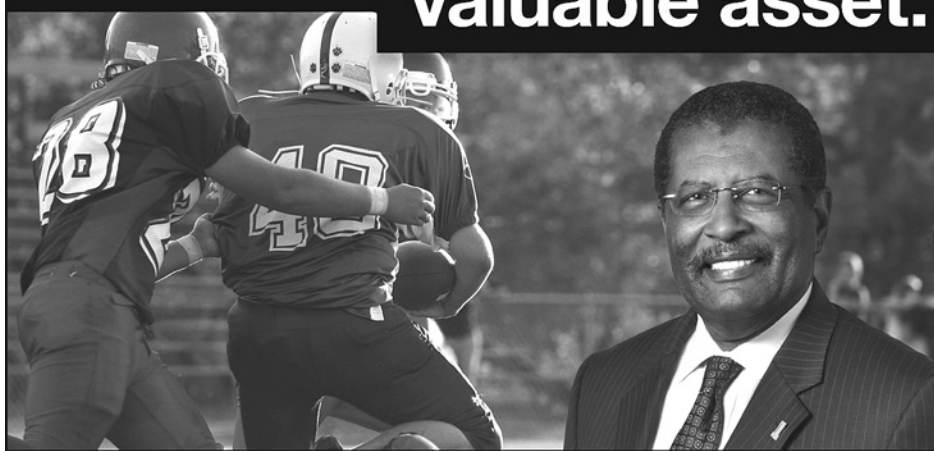
In addition to algae and aquatic vegetation control, SLM installs and maintains fountains, manages fisheries, monitors water quality and measures water depth. And a lot more. They also have an online store where they sell water quality products.

"Most of what we do you can't do yourself. [You're] either not legally allowed to do it yourself or there's a high degree of failure," Tucker says.

"Dollar for dollar [we're] the best but not necessarily the least expensive," Tucker says, preferring his company's value to come from their high level of service rather than the parading of bargain basement prices.

A Hampton Roads native who spent many years on the Outer Banks, water has thus always been a big part of Tucker's life. He loves the water: white-water rafting, kayaking, surfing, boating, getting in the ocean or just watching a waterfall. Tucker is married with three children, who accompany him on his outdoor adventures. ◀

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