

# MEB General Contractors

## 3rd Mid-Sized Company



**Company description:** General contractor providing design and build services.

**Address:** 4016 Holland Blvd., Chesapeake 23323

**Phone:** 487-5858

**Web site:** www.meb-inc.com

**Top local executive:** George Clarke IV, owner/principal

**Number of local employees:** 112 full-time

**Benefits include:**

1. On-site health screening.
2. Education in a bag lunch session.
3. Free flu shots.

**Fun factor:** Annual beach party held at Fort Story in Virginia Beach hosts an estimated 600 of MEB's employees, their families and friends.

**Community service:** The company is involved with Noblemen, which raises money for local charities. It supports the HER shelter for battered women; St. Gregory the Great Catholic School; the Chesapeake and Virginia Beach Rotary clubs; the March of Dimes; and the United Way. Employees participate in Lee's National Denim Day to help raise money to fight breast cancer, Angel Tree, Habitat for Humanity and Hope House. MEB contributed to the Hokie Memorial Fund following the shootings at Virginia Tech campus and created the MEB 25 in 2007, a charitable foundation to provide support for charities in Hampton Roads.

**Pictured left to right, Jamie Skinner, Jennifer White, Lynn Duffee, Kim Forbes**

By Philip Newswanger

**F**amily is the heart and soul of MEB General Contractors.

"I think, generally, the overwhelming sentiment with employees here is that it's a family business," said Tom Atherton, the company's director of business development. "From the top down, it's a family business."

Everyone pitches in and everyone is involved in the company's affairs or in community events, from management to the guys working in the fields and driving trucks.

The company's philosophy: Have fun, whether you're with your family, your friends or co-workers.

Once a month, the company holds a barbecue at a job under construction. Everyone is invited, including subcontractors, vendors, clients and company employees working on other jobs.

The barbecue "is a family dinner, a family philosophy," said Atherton, who has worked for MEB for 10 years.

What keeps MEB primed is that employees aren't segmented by job or project. Resources are shared. Because of MEB's diverse portfolio of projects, an employee may work on a utility

project one month and an office project the following month.

"Whether you're digging on a pipe crew or management, you get to see it all," Atherton said.

The family approach contributes to high morale and makes the job interesting, he said.

"He's not going to strap you to your desk from nine to five," Atherton said, referring to George Clarke IV, the owner and principal of the firm. The flexibility in getting the job done boosts morale, Atherton said.

Balancing work and family is the cornerstone of the firm.

Rarely is the office occupied after 6 p.m., which MEB says is proof that family is important.

And it is common to see children roaming the halls or sitting at an unoccupied computer, particularly during school holidays, MEB said in its Best Places to Work application.

Over half of MEB's employees have been with the company for five years or more and half of those have been with the company for 10 years or more.

The voluntary turnover rate for employees is less than 10 percent.

One of MEB's goals is to bring together its

field personnel with its office personnel. The company does this by providing in-house training for its field personnel.

Field employees then meet office people at headquarters in Chesapeake.

Additionally, office personnel are invited to groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting ceremonies where they get to mingle with field personnel on construction sites.

Another perquisite is the chance to work additional hours Monday through Thursday and then have Friday off between May and August.

The firm's annual revenues reached \$50 million in 1999. In 2003, the firm opened a Richmond office and its annual revenues exceeded \$100 million.

Based in Chesapeake, MEB has seen its share of mega-jobs, mainly government work, including the Chesapeake Expressway and a number of wastewater treatment plants. The company's first contract was for the Defense General Supply Depot Center in Richmond, a contract worth \$3,500. In 2006, the firm began work on its first high-rise hotel, the Ocean Beach Club.

On its 25th anniversary in 2007, the company created MEB 25, a charitable foundation.