

GENERATION Y ENGINEERS BRING FRESH IDEAS, TEAM BUILDING TO US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

They don't like to stay too long on any one assignment. This is a generation of multi-taskers, and they can juggle e-mail on their BlackBerrys while talking on cellphones while trolling online. And they believe in their own self worth and value enough that they're not shy about trying to change the companies they work for. That compares somewhat with Generation X, a generation born from the mid-1960s to the late-1970s, known for its independent thinking, addiction to change and emphasis on family.

This generalized statement helps



Alana Sattin- "Engineering is becoming a very big team oriented type thing. It's bringing a lot of engineers out of their shells."

describe young people born between 1982 and 1994. They're known as Generation Y, and they're beginning to enter the workforce in droves. They're bringing with them new thoughts and ideas, sometimes

much different from those of their older colleagues.

Wes Brown, 23, and Alana Sattin, 24, are two NC State-graduated civil engineers who shared a little bit about what they're bringing as new employees to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



Wesley Brown inspects beach erosion after Hurricane Hanna as part of the New Hanover County Preliminary Damage Assessment team. (Ed Dunlop Photo)

"The Corps went dam crazy

decades ago and now the environmental side is saying that wasn't such a great idea," said Wes Brown who's currently working in Coastal, Hydraulics and Hydrology. "I think I'm more conscious of that sort of thing because it's more about sustainability. Right now we take water for granted. I was in Raleigh at the time of a lot of drought issues. People really don't seem to know if they'll know what to do if it happens again."

Part of what drew Brown to

Con't on Page 15

GENERATION Y CON'T

USACE was the Corps' high visibility in the national media during the unwatering of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

"The Corps was in the news a lot more than in the past. I'd seen what they had done and how they reacted to things. And I learned that the Corps of Engineers was all over the country and spread out around the world. That also steered me in. I've also felt that what I should be doing is important in the big picture and working to make a difference and being part of the government."

Brown said he would like to add a sense of adventure with his work. When the time comes he'd consider deployment. And he'd rather be fulfilled than make big bucks.

"It's definitely not about the money because there are other engineering degrees that you could get that would make you a whole lot more money. I'm doing what I want to do."

Alana Sattin always had a fond-

ness for math in high school. Technically savvy, she chose to go into civil engineering because it was the "most functionable."

"You could go more places with a civil engineering degree than you could with anything else," she said. "I like the versatility of it. I started out in structures concentration, did a little environmental engineering, and ended up in transportation. I like to a little bit of everything."

What Sattin says she's bringing to the Corps is team building, a highly-developed function that comes easily to Generation Y because of numerous organized activities they experienced growing up. And she feels this will bring out a different side of normally shy engineers.

"My class in college was not as introverted as the majority of other engineer classes," she said. "Engineering is becoming a very big team oriented type thing. Even in classes right now they're focusing on team building and learning how a lot of organizations are

switching to teams. It's bringing a lot of engineers out of their shells."

Both Brown and Sattin understand that the numbers of civil engineers entering the workforce is declining, and the shape of the U.S. infrastructure continues to deteriorate. They hope that trend will reverse because the country will need qualified civil engineers.

"There is a big drop out rate during the sophomore year because a lot of people switch majors," said Sattin. "There's always going to be a need for civil engineers."

Brown said he recognized a big generation gap within the Wilmington District and throughout USACE. He's hoping that there will be enough civil engineers to replace those who will retire.

"When I went to Corps Day I noticed that there were a lot of people who were receiving their 30-plus years of service. In the coming years there are going to be some big changes in the Corps." ■