

# DECOSTAR INDUSTRIES: A MODEL OF SUSTAINABILITY

**DARIA PUSHKAREVA'S "DEEP INTEREST IN ALL THINGS GREEN" INCLUDES A STINT WORKING WITH THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT'S GREAT APES SURVIVAL PARTNERSHIP IN NAIROBI, KENYA TO HER CURRENT JOB AS ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR AT MAGNA'S DECOSTAR DIVISION.**

Her colleague, Darion Colbert, Decostar's environmental engineering supervisor, is equally dedicated to being green.

As part of an Engineers Without Borders project in spring 2018, Colbert traveled to Cerro Verde, Ecuador, where contaminated drinking water was sickening children. The trip turned into a long-term effort to put filtration systems into those homes and end diarrheal diseases in the rural farming community.



Whether it's conservation of a species or the manufacture of cars and car parts, the idea behind both is the same. There are a lot of common elements that can be applied.

Being green is a personal and professional passion for Colbert and Pushkareva, who is known as "Dasha" to her colleagues.

Together, they have put several initiatives in place to get Decostar's 1,164 employees motivated to be environmentally responsible.



**DARIA PUSHKAREVA**, Environmental Coordinator



**DARION COLBERT**, Decostar's environmental engineering supervisor

The programs include an Earth Week Challenge every April, where employees submit pictures and stories about how they are reducing their environmental footprint at home and at work. The best ideas win "green" prizes that have included an electric lawn mower, a solar backpack and LED light bulbs.

In January 2019, the two kicked off Decostar's Sustainability Report that tracks how the division is meeting environmental challenges. There is lots of progress to chronicle, including the division achieving a 36 percent increase in recycling and a 27 percent reduction in hazardous waste from 2017 to 2018.

In addition, a monthly newsletter that started in summer 2019 recognizes employees who are making a "green" difference.

"You can change people's perception of what's possible," Colbert explained. "It becomes inspirational. That's what we do. We want to be benchmarked. We want to be a model of how a company can be sustainable."

He envisions sustainability extending beyond Decostar and Magna.

"We had a meeting with our suppliers to get them aligned with our sustainable development goals," Colbert said. "We try to leverage that as a competitive advantage with our customers and show that a division in Carrollton, Georgia can have an impact on the broader automotive industry."

Adds Pushkareva: "Whether it's conservation of a species or the manufacture of cars and car parts, the idea behind both is the same. There are a lot of common elements that can



**DALE MEYERS**, Magna maintenance technician



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## MORE DECOSTAR IDEAS FOR SAVING THE PLANET

Dale Meyers said he and his 15-year-old son Caleb, a ninth-grader who wants to be an engineer, often talk about climate change and the environment.

“He came home from school recently and told me that if we don’t change the way we do things now, we’ll be in trouble,” Meyers said. “I told him, ‘You need to come to Decostar because we are doing things every day to save the environment.’”

## ONE MAN’S QUEST TO GO GREEN

Dale Meyers looked around the Magna Decostar plant and saw lots of room for improvement when it came to energy efficiency.

“The first thing I noticed on the production floor were all the fluorescent lights,” said Meyers, a master electrician who was hired as a Magna maintenance technician in 2013. “I thought, ‘We need to catch up with the times and change the culture.’”

He added: “Being who I am, and being an electrician, I knew it was time to make the switch and go green.”

At his suggestion, hundreds of lamps in the Decostar molding department were changed to LEDs. Then, Meyers began installing motion detectors on light switches in offices in the plant to further conserve resources.

With the help and encouragement of people like Meyers, the Decostar environmental movement has grown.

Today, Meyers is the CMMS (computer maintenance management software) coordinator at Decostar, and a model of sustainable practices, inside and outside of Magna.

A father of five, Meyers has a long list of volunteer activities that include serving as a marital and youth counselor at Family Life Restoration Center in Mableton, Georgia.

“Part of what I do is talk to young women, empowering them to know their true beauty,” Meyers said. “I teach them to believe in themselves, despite the environment they live in, and to have vision and direction.”

He also has volunteered as a basketball and football coach for local middle-school students and taught Sunday school at Word of Faith Church in Austell, Georgia.

“I’m a firm believer in giving back,” Meyers explained.

His green practices begin at home in Dallas, Georgia, where he and his wife Yvette recycle and have cut down on energy consumption by updating lighting and switches.

He also talks to his kids and grandsons, Donté, 11, and CJ, 5, about being environmentally aware. After a recent visit, the grandkids told their parents they needed a recycling receptacle “like Pawpaw has.”

“They are learning just by being around the way we do things in our house,” Meyers said. “When you start talking about the environment, it has to be a selfless act. We may not see the fruition of it right now, but our children’s children and grandchildren will be able to see changes. We will be able to thrive in a healthy environment.”

Some of those things include:

- Putting filters in the storm drains of the plant’s parking lot to catch spills from vehicles leaking oil.
- Switching from absorbent pads to recyclable pads to mop up oil spills and leaks. The recyclable pads are laundered, and any spills are traced to make sure the liquid is not being poured down the drain.
- Installing a power data logger to track how much energy machines consume on a day-to-day basis, even when they are idle.
- Building an in-house containment facility for oil storage and creating a specific location for hazardous waste.
- Redoing the floor of pits on the assembly lines to make sure no hazardous waste escapes through cracks or crevices.



