



### HARPER'S MILL, CHESTERFIELD, VA Branding a Community

Several years ago Holiday Signs became involved with constructing the entrance way to the Harper's Mill community in Chesterfield, a neighborhood that markets its natural setting. The signage is an iconic feature along a collector road at the entrance to the large subdivision with multiple neighborhoods of varying price points, a school, and an amphitheater in their plans. There is also a retail element planned for later.

Richmond-based landscape design firm, Higgins & Gerstenmaier, LLC, designed the iconic signage structure and Holiday Signs managed the project for Oakridge Development, the developer of the Harper's Mill property. Holiday Signs got the job because of our knowledge and experience with iconic environmental design projects, especially those involving technically challenging aspects of concrete construction. Henry Moore, Holiday Signs project manager, consulted with the landscape architect on the substrates and structure to help come up with an effective design.

As with any new construction project, the first hurdle is being able to envision the end result as you stare at a pile of ungraded earth. "Figuring out where to put the foundation in the midst of a big dirt pile and power line takes planning," said Henry. An important element of large projects is being able to effectively coordinate things between the developer, the architect, the county, the utility companies and various trades and professions. Holiday Signs consulted with a surveyor to get the foundation placed exactly right and, working from his reference points, the huge limestone structure was placed just where it needed to be. Many of the limestone blocks weighed 400 pounds and the end column with the community's brand was 20' high. Daniels Masonry handled the concrete and limestone part of the project.

The sign boasts a waterfall and fountain. A company from California provided the waterfall, and a local company installed the fountain. "The biggest challenge on larger projects like this is getting the concrete foundation right the first time to make sure all the subsequent pieces will fit together," said Henry. "The end product has to convey what the original design concept was all about. As



*Pictured above:*

*The expansive sign structure contains landscaping as well as a waterfall, pool and fountain. The branding sign on the twenty foot limestone column welcomes people in while complimenting the community's natural setting.*

*Pictured left:*

*A broader view of the entrance to Harper's Mill that shows the scale of the structure and its position on the roadway.*



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project manager, you have to be able to look at all the parts and pieces in advance to make sure they will all go together as planned. If you miss one part, you have to do a lot of manipulation to make it all come together." The value in utilizing an experienced sign company is an important aspect for consideration when constructing such an icon for the area.

It was the desire of the developer to build a modern, up-to-date community with walking trails and all the many amenities found at Harper's Mill. "The sign is distinctive and different and it helps a lot with the marketing of the development," commented Mark Sowers, president of Oakridge Development, Inc. "It's the focal point when you come in and it sets the tone of the community. It really helps us. We have a lot more projects out there and we'll be using Holiday Signs again," he said.