

# EXECUTIVE PROFILE | Mike Lewis

**Mike Lewis** is the co-founder and general manager of **Pearson Fuels**. Pearson specializes in the development of alternative fueling infrastructure for vehicles and the distribution of alternative fuels. Pearson is currently developing wholesale biodiesel blending terminals in Northern and Southern California, as well as 23 new retail E85 ethanol and hydrogen dispensers throughout the state.

## BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY

**Essential business philosophy:** There is common ground in what the government wants from the fuel industry and what the fuel industry needs from the government. We find that common ground and bring the two of them together.

**Best way to keep a competitive edge:** Never forget that though we were the first to this market, there are many right behind us trying to find a way to do what we do better or more efficiently.

**Guiding principles:** Do what you say you are going to do. Tell the truth. Treat others as you wish to be treated. Perhaps most importantly, just show up.

**Yardsticks of success:** We were way ahead of this green energy and alternative fuel wave. Remember we were working on what would become the Pearson Fuel Depot gas station in 2000 when gasoline was just \$1.79 per gallon. So for many years our yardstick of success was just being around the following month. Now, the wave has caught up to us and it is rare when we have a month in the



## RESUME

**Name:** Mike Lewis.  
**Company:** Pearson Fuels and Pearson Fuel Depot LLC.  
**Titles:** Co-founder and general manager.  
**No. of employees:** Six.  
**Year founded:** 2002.  
**Education:** B.S. finance, cum laude, Ohio State University, 1990.  
**Birthplace:** Huntington, W.Va.  
**Age:** 47.  
**Current residence:** Point Loma.  
**Family:** Wife, Cathy Lewis, two sons Ben and Alex.

red. This year, our March bottom line was better than our 2012 bottom line, so I think that is a pretty good yardstick going forward, have a month each year that beats the previous year.

**Goals yet to be achieved:** There are so many. I would like to be able to pay our employees what they deserve, not just what we can afford to pay them. I would like to have our own building instead of paying rent and I would like to retire all the company debt.

## JUDGMENT CALLS

**Best business decision:** For years we just had one very unique but unprofitable gas station. It is very easy to just fall into a financial and psychological hole that is hard to get out of. While we were busy losing money, people from all over the world would contact us about helping them get involved in alternative fuels and we were just mired in this money-losing gas station. We finally were able to step back and see the opportunity in front of us: We would help already profitable gas stations add alternative fuels to their mix and a new business with a bigger picture perspective was born. We have never looked back.

**Worst business decision:** The naming of the company. We have been named RTC Fuels, Pearson Ford Fuels and now Pearson Fuels. It has been confusing to a lot of people and even worse, none of us are even named Pearson.

**Toughest business decision:** Every time I have had to make the decision to let someone go, every time.

**Biggest missed opportunity:** We picked the wrong partner for a grant submittal a few years ago. We worked on it for 8-10 months and were successful in a competitive submittal process and were chosen for an \$11 million dollar grant to develop alternative fuel sites throughout the state. Our partner got cold feet, and we had to give all of the money back; and the government gave the money to our competitors.

**Mentor:** For 18 years my mentor has been my sometimes boss and sometimes partner **John McCallan**. He is the co-founder of Pearson Fuels and many other businesses and even though we all know he is really the boss, he has the grace to always treat you like a partner.

**Word that describes you:** Industrious.

## TRUE CONFESSIONS

**What you like best about your job:** I like the fact that I have the ability to pursue new opportunities as they arise without having to run my priorities and

## Congratulations to the 2013 Visionary Award Winners CELEBRATING COLLABORATION



The 11th Annual LEAD San Diego Visionary Awards were presented on Thursday, May 23 at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront. More than 900 attendees enjoyed fine wines, food stations, networking and an awards presentation honoring local individuals for their collaborative efforts that have resulted in significant community impact.

**The Neil Morgan Award for Lifetime Achievement**  
**Joan & Irwin Jacobs**  
*Philanthropic Leaders*

**The Ronald Kendrick Memorial Award for Regional Collaboration**  
**Malin Burnham, Bill Geppert, Bob Kelly and Peter MacCracken**  
*Our Greater San Diego Vision*

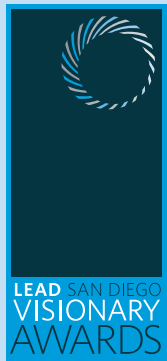
**The Charles Nathanson Memorial Award for Cross-Border Region Building**  
**Carlos Bustamante and Jerry Sanders**  
*Tijuana Mayor and former San Diego Mayor*

**LEAD Graduate of the Year**  
**Dr. Elizabeth 'Betty' Jones (93)**  
*Founder, Foundation for the Children of the Californias*

**Economic Opportunity Award**  
**Bruce Boland, Thella Bowns and Robert Gleason**  
*San Diego County Regional Airport Authority*

**Community Spotlight Award**  
**Ahmed Sahid**  
*Somali Family Service of San Diego*

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## Keeling:

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daytime hours, and they also took advantage of the natural ventilation system, reducing energy by about 38 percent," Vittori said.

### Model for the Future

Vittori said jurors were especially intrigued by the on-site wastewater recycling system, which eliminates the costly wastewater transportation and treatment.

She regards the system as a model for cutting back on a carbon footprint.

Wastewater from the showers and the lavatories runs through separate pipes from other wastewater to a treatment room on the ground floor where it is filtered and stored in a 43,000 gallon underground tank. The stored water supports the landscape needs, including the green roof.

"Many projects say that's (off site treatment) the cost of doing business, but in this case, the (architects) took that cost reality and said 'why don't we rethink our way of doing business and instead of tying it into a centralized system, we pursue the wastewater treatment on-site,'" Vittori said.

She also applauded the architects for taking advantage of the natural landscaping.

Besides having water-efficient irrigation by installing a system of landscape bioswales — elements that remove silt and pollution from surface runoff water,



Photo courtesy of Lanska Aerial Photography

The American Institute of Architects selected the Charles David Keeling Apartments at UC San Diego as one of the top 10 'Green' projects in the nation. Located on the southwestern edge of the campus, the complex has many sustainable features from renewable energy coming from the rooftop to on-site wastewater recycling on the ground.

and retention basins — the design also remediates stormwater flow into the Pacific Ocean.

### 'Modest Budget'

"They say 'it never rains in Southern California,' but when it does, it is torrential," said Martin Poirier, principal designer with Spurlock Poirer. "Instead of flowing through a pipe to the ocean, particulate-laden stormwater runoff is filtered through the landscape. This cleansing process is made visible as beautiful, ephemeral streams on the site."

Jurors were also especially conscious of project costs and awarded the ar-

chitects for keeping a "modest budget" of \$313 per square-foot for the entire 147,000-square-foot project.

Timberlake said the building is a tribute to the legacy of Charles David Keeling, an American scientist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, whose research focused on achieving high environmental ethics in our everyday lives.

Both Vittori and Timberlake feel that the students living in the apartments greatly benefit from having so many elements of environmental sustainability woven into their everyday lives.

"It becomes an educational opportunity for the school, students and the

broader community," Vittori said.

"These are the best housing units on campus and they reach a high level of ethics in construction," Timberlake said.

Though the project's biggest challenge was available space, the architects managed to fit the building into a compact area and even found room for future expansion.

## Profile:

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investments through a committee. I like to plan my day as I see fit.

**What you like least about your job:** Getting mired in the details of last month's deal.

**Pet peeves:** People who do not do what they say they are going to do and who have to work three times as hard because they are not following through or being responsive.

**Most important lesson learned:** It can always get a lot better and a lot worse.

**Person most interested in meeting:** Abraham Lincoln because he had the constitution to do what he knew was right in the face of massive opposition and at an almost unbearable cost.

**Three greatest passions:** My family, new projects and travel.

**First choice for a new career:** History professor.

### PREDILECTIONS

**Favorite quote:** "You cannot discover new oceans unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore," — André Gide.

**Most influential book:** "Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive," by Harvey Mackay.

**Favorite status symbol:** The desire to not have any.

**Favorite restaurant:** C Level on Harbor Island.

**Favorite place for business meetings:** Several Asian restaurants up and down El Cajon Blvd.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Idyllwild.

**Favorite way to spend time:** Watching my son play Little League baseball and talking with my other son about math, science and anything else that big brain of his comes up with.

## Design:

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### Declared a Sustainable Site

The native stone was reclaimed from the site or nearby quarry.

The Sustainable Site Initiative (SITES) has declared the project as a sustainable site, only the second in California, the 11<sup>th</sup> in the world. SITES is an interdisciplinary effort by the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at The University of Texas at Austin and the United States Botanic Garden to create voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction and maintenance practices.

Schmidt says the initiative's emphasis is the health and well-being of those using the sites so cited, and he says the Stone Brewing gardens provide a "very relaxing environment."

"It's incorporated into the notion of a sustainable landscape," he said.

In the execution of the landscape design for the 1-acre Horton Plaza project, a year away from completion, Schmidt Design Group is working within the footprint of the demolished Robinson May building.

"Now that the building is gone, you get a much better view of the historic Balboa Theatre," he said. Renovation of the theater was completed five years ago.

### Deter the Homeless

The final design features an amphitheater plus three kiosk areas to generate public gatherings to help deter the homeless from congregating there as they have done in the past.

The design of the paving, stone resembling the color of the bluffs through the city, will invoke basket weaving designs of the Native-American Kumeyaay Nation, whose members once inhabited the



Rendering courtesy of Joe Cordelle

The new 1-acre Horton Plaza project is taking place within the footprint of the demolished Robinson May building. The project is designed by prime consultant Walker Macy in collaboration with Schmidt Design Group Inc. Among the many features, the final design includes an amphitheater and three kiosk areas.

area in large numbers, he said.

All of the plants to be used will be those made popular by pioneering San Diego horticulturalist Kate Sessions, who originally planted the trees and other plants that adorn Balboa Park.

Schmidt said mall owner Westfield will sponsor more than 200 events a year in the plaza.

"It's going to be heavily programmed so that there are a lot of activities," Schmidt said. "There are going to be a lot of people in that space, which will make the area vibrant and attractive."

Schmidt emphasized that he's working closely with lead landscape architectural firm for the Horton Plaza project, Walker Macy of Portland, Ore., which also designed the landscaping and public spaces for the much-lauded Pioneer Courthouse Square there.

For the park that will supplant parking at the San Diego County Administration Building, Schmidt becomes the landscape architect of record using a scheme developed by a San Francisco firm with



Rendering courtesy of Fuscoe Engineering Inc. The above is a rendering of the future water feature for the redesigned Children's Park between First Avenue and Front Street downtown. The park will include play areas, water features, a café and restrooms. Schmidt is a subcontractor for Fuscoe Engineering on the project.

McCarthy Building Cos. serving as the general contractor.

The project will feature large open spaces where public gatherings can be held.

"In the last few years, though, the world has finally caught up with the approach," said Schmidt. "These days, it's almost — or it should be — a given that a project should be somewhat sustainable."

## Law:

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national leaders.

The San Diego County Bar Foundation would like lawyers to donate one hour — or at least the equivalent of that in cash — to the organization. The campaign is "Give an Hour,"

James Gilpin, president of the board of directors said. The campaign kicks off in the beginning of June and runs through the month, and donating is as easy as going to [www.sdcbfa.org](http://www.sdcbfa.org). "San Diego attorneys are known for their generosity in donating pro bono hours to help the disadvantaged," said Gilpin. The foundation is the charitable arm of the San Diego County legal community and has donated more than \$2 million to more than 40 legal aid and public interest organizations to provide access to justice for people impacted by poverty, abuse and discrimination.

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