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# Heller Pacific employees work hard, play hard

Monthly massages, golf outings, cooking parties in Napa and an extra week of vacation are just some of the employee perks at Heller Pacific, a real estate development company.

"Mike (owner Michael Heller Jr.) believes in goals, hard work and taking time off," said Lisa Kopochnski, Tara Castro, the firm's property manager who has been with the company for 3½ years.

"Mike likes to end the year strong, which motivates staff. In return, he closes the office during Christmas so employees can relax with their families. What an awesome thing to do and we certainly enjoy it."

Sacramentan Michael Heller formed Heller Pacific in 1997. Heller comes from a construction background — his father, Michael Heller Sr., was the owner of Continental Heller Construction, which for 40 years was one of the top firms in the region.

"We work hard and we play hard," Heller said. "I have learned that delegation and empowering is a much better business practice than micromanaging. Everyone is given decision-making ability, a real voice to collaborate and true responsibility to do their job with excellence."

STORY BY

LISA KOPOCHINSKI

PHOTO BY

NOEL NEUBURGER



Sara Jenkins, Brenda Fischer, Kelly Dunn and Liz Harris meet in a Heller Pacific conference room. "I never dread going to work," Jenkins says. "I look forward to it. The environment is always positive."

Heller has not had any layoffs or reduced salaries or benefits in the recession — though he is taking a loss to accomplish this. "I offer them my trust, and I think and hope they feel that I care about everyone outside of work."

This feeling is definitely shared by the staff. "When people ask me about my job, a smile automatically comes to my face," said Sara

Jenkins, Heller Pacific's accountant for the past three years. "I never dread going to work. I look forward to it. The environment is always positive, even through this rough economy. Michael keeps us involved and maintains a great outlook on our future. He sees this company as



**Heller Pacific Inc.**

**FAST FACTS**

Business: Real estate development

Executives: Michael Heller Jr., Patrick Molloy

Founded: 1997

Employees: 12

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**"When people ask me about my job, a smile automatically comes to my face."**

Sara Jenkins  
accountant, Heller Pacific

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# HELLER | Civic involvement meets business on Crocker Art Museum building committee

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a family and treats it as one.”

Embracing change and innovation, Heller Pacific has immersed itself in a broad array of development — office, retail, mixed-use, adaptive re-use and residential. Projects include 2600 Capitol, Fair Oaks Office Park, the Blue Cue, Tributary Point, the Elliot Building, OI Lofts, MARRS and many more.

“We want our office buildings to be as relevant in 50 years as they are today,” Heller said.

Heller is involved in a number of civic causes as well. He became a Big Brother in 1994 and was active as a weekly volunteer at the Shriners Hospital for Children for seven years. “This experience had a significant impact on me. I was really able to help those kids who, through no fault of their own, were dealt a tough set of cards in life,” he said.

He was invited to join the board of directors for the Crocker Art Museum and for the past eight years has chaired the building committee overseeing the design and construction of the Crocker’s

\$80 million expansion.

He also is actively involved with the Downtown Task Force and Midtown Business Association as well as various charitable organizations.

Liz Harris, property manager for Heller Pacific, said Heller has inspired her to get into real estate development.

“Mike has taken time out of his incredibly busy and stressful schedule to mentor me,” she said. “He seems to attract employees that share his high level of motivation and positive perspective — and this makes our workplace a very

pleasant place to be. I was really lucky to find a job in real estate during this economy, and even luckier to land it here.”

Executive assistant Kelly Dunn echoes this sentiment: “We have little to no employee turnover, plus employee attendance issues are nonexistent. That speaks volumes. Mike listens to staff needs. He makes sure we have the tools needed to be successful and keeps the lines of communication open. He not only wants HP to succeed, but his staff as well. He doesn’t ask any more from us than he would ask of himself.”