



{ *PROGRESS* } MINNESOTA

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FROM THE EDITOR

Now in its sixth year, Finance & Commerce's Progress Minnesota event showcases the entrepreneurial spirit and economic development occurring across the state. More than two dozen individuals, companies and organizations were selected for this year's honors by an independent panel of judges.

The 29 honorees were feted April 6 at the Minneapolis Events Center. Gov. Mark Dayton issued a proclamation to celebrate April 6 as Progress Minnesota Day.

Since the first Progress Minnesota event in 2012, attendees have told us how impressed they are by the strength and creativity in Minnesota's business community.

In this magazine, you'll read about the efforts of well-known companies, such as Xcel Energy's commitment to renewable energy and Ryan Cos. US Inc.'s revitalization of Minneapolis' Downtown East.

You'll also learn about economic drivers outside the Twin Cities metro area, like Carlos Creek Winery, which drew nearly 115,000 visitors last year to its Alexandria lakes-area vineyard and tasting room, and Life Fitness, which in February completed a \$33.5 million, 150,000-square-foot addition to its Owatonna Cybex facility.

This magazine also highlights the economic vitality of Duluth, which has been bolstered in part by the efforts of the College of St. Scholastica, all-weather outdoor furniture designer and manufacturer Loll Designs, and the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, which helps drive economic growth at one of the largest ports in the U.S.

You'll find out about companies that bring Minnesota sensibilities to high-tech industries like IT company Atomic Data, lighting manufacturer aspectLED and Tech Dump, which gives people and electronics a second chance.

Inside you'll also read tributes to individuals who've been boosters for Minnesota's economy, including a posthumous recognition for Todd Klingel, former CEO of the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce. Klingel's emphasis on partnerships and collaborations has left its mark across the metro area in projects large and small, including influential regional economic development agency Greater MSP.

Minnesota's economic growth and potential is impressive, and the people, companies and organizations honored here make the future seem even brighter.

—David Bohlander, special sections editor,
Finance & Commerce

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FINANCE & COMMERCE

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Progress Minnesota is a special publication of FINANCE & COMMERCE,
222 South Ninth Street, Suite 2300, Minneapolis, MN 55402.

Telephone: 612-333-4244 or 800-397-4348. Fax: 612-333-3243.

©2016 FINANCE & COMMERCE ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota (USPS 190-580).
Additional periodical entries made at St. Paul, Minnesota.

POSTMASTER: Electronic Address Change Service Requested,
"Finance & Commerce" Subscription Services 10 Milk St Ste 1000,
Boston MA 02108

Subscription Rates - Payable in Advance
800-451-9998 / subscriptions@BridgeTowerMedia.com
One year. \$249

Finance & Commerce is an affiliate of BridgeTower Media,
222 Ninth St. S., Suite 2300, Minneapolis, MN 55402.

Congratulations Carlos Creek Winery

***Finance & Commerce 2017
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The American Refugee Committee is proud to partner with Jim Wolford of Atomic Data. Thank you for inspiring innovation here in Minnesota and around the world!

American Refugee Committee **ARC**

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2017 Honorees

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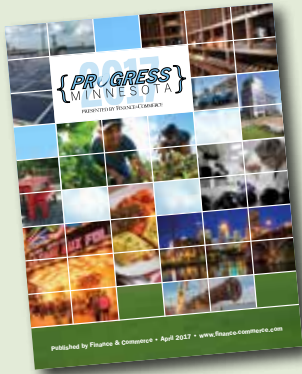
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Ramsey County Commissioner Blake Huffman also leads a nonprofit that provides housing for domestic violence survivors and veterans.

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

BLAKE HUFFMAN

*I*n 2005, then-Shoreview City Council member Blake Huffman cast the only vote against an affordable housing proposal. Today, he heads Journey Home Minnesota, a nonprofit that provides housing for domestic violence survivors and veterans.

A talk by the singer Bono at his church inspired Huffman. “It was important for me to align my values with a simple command like ‘love your neighbor’ with my actions,” he said.

Huffman was a mortgage industry executive, so focusing on affordable housing made sense. He founded Journey Home in 2008 by purchasing and refurbishing houses for domestic violence survivors who needed housing alternatives. Huffman expanded the program to include veterans upon realizing that many clients had connections to vets.

The properties are privately funded, a less expensive, less bureaucratic option than relying on government funding, according to Huffman.

Today Journey Home has built or redeveloped 39 properties that it rents or has sold in the northeast metro. Once-vacant or blighted properties are now generating tax dollars and are home to families who contribute economically to the community.

In an unusual collaboration, Journey Home partners with the carpentry and cabinetry programs at St. Paul College, enabling students to learn their trade on building sites.

Huffman plans to expand throughout Minnesota, doubling Journey Home’s impact in the next several years.

“I am the least likely guy to run an affordable housing organization, and now I have 200 people in homes,” he said. “Whatever you think is wrong in this world, go fix it.”

—Julie Swiler

TITLE: Executive director, Journey Home Minnesota; Ramsey County commissioner, District 1, Ramsey County

EDUCATION:
B.A., communications, Bethel University

KEY TURNING POINT IN CAREER: Realizing he needed to align his faith values with his political values

WHAT’S NEXT: Continuing to expand Journey Home Minnesota throughout the state

FAMILY: Wife, Joy; six children; two grandchildren and three on the way

IN MEMORIAM



Todd Klingel's career was marked by the partnerships he created and the collaboration he encouraged.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

TODD KLINGEL

Todd Klingel left his mark on the area he loved during a 40-year career that included a 13-year stint as CEO of the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Klingel took the chamber's reins in 2003 and immediately made it a priority to establish partnerships with business groups and governments with the goal of a fruitful outcome for all involved.

"He was the great collaborator," recalled Jonathan Weinhagen, the chamber's current CEO. "When I think of this organization and where we were when he stepped into the role 13 years ago, and where it was when I succeeded him, the depth and breadth of the partnerships he created and nurtured are the high point for me."

That gift for collaboration led to the formation of Greater MSP as an influential regional economic development agency. He worked to bring to life projects big and small: Klingel was on the front lines in advocating for state investment in transportation systems and the public funding of pro sports stadiums. But he also was key in the creation of the annual Holidazzle Parade, as well as the Step-Up internship program that was founded by then-Mayor R.T. Rybak and U.S. Bancorp CEO Richard Davis in partnership with the Minneapolis Public Schools to provide opportunities for future members of the workforce.

"Rybak said that during the last conversation he had with Klingel, the only thing he wanted to talk about was making sure that the Step-Up program continued to evolve and thrive," said Weinhagen.

In its 14-year history, 22,000 students have participated in internships with area businesses and nonprofits via Step-Up.

"He was a remarkable leader," said Weinhagen. "He bootstrapped Holidazzle and was in on stadium development. He was at the center of all of it."

—Frank Jossi

TITLE:


Former CEO, Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce

EDUCATION:

B.A., journalism, University of Minnesota

FAMILY:

Survived by wife, three children and two grandchildren



Julie Nelson leads the Small Business Development Center, which offers technical assistance and training to businesses.

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

JULIE NELSON

Julie Nelson's early career gave her experience in banking, the dairy industry and commercial real estate. Then in 1997 she joined an economic development agency in Mankato and found her calling.

"The work is different every day, and there's nothing better than seeing our clients succeed," Nelson said. "It's become a passion."

Located at Minnesota State University Mankato, the Small Business Development Center is one of nine in the state. Funded with federal, state and local money, the center's mission is to offer technical assistance and training to businesses.

The center's 12 contract consultants work with clients on everything from business plan development to selling a business. Client engagements are defined and focused. "We work toward tangible goals and milestones with them," Nelson said "We don't do the work for them, but help them make sound decisions."

Last year the development center provided 3,800 hours of consulting to 400 individual clients who started 36 new businesses and raised \$12 million in capital, she said. A phone survey a few years ago showed 92 percent of clients the center had served over a five-year time span were still in business. "People who ask for help do better," Nelson said.

The development center is one of the best performing in Minnesota. "When I started with this center we were charged with "rebuilding" it," she added. "Within two years we started to be consistently at the top of the state network. We intend to continue that record."

—Frank Jossi

TITLE:

Interim regional director,
Small Business Development
Center, hosted at Minnesota State
University Mankato

EDUCATION:

Attended South Central College,
University of St. Thomas

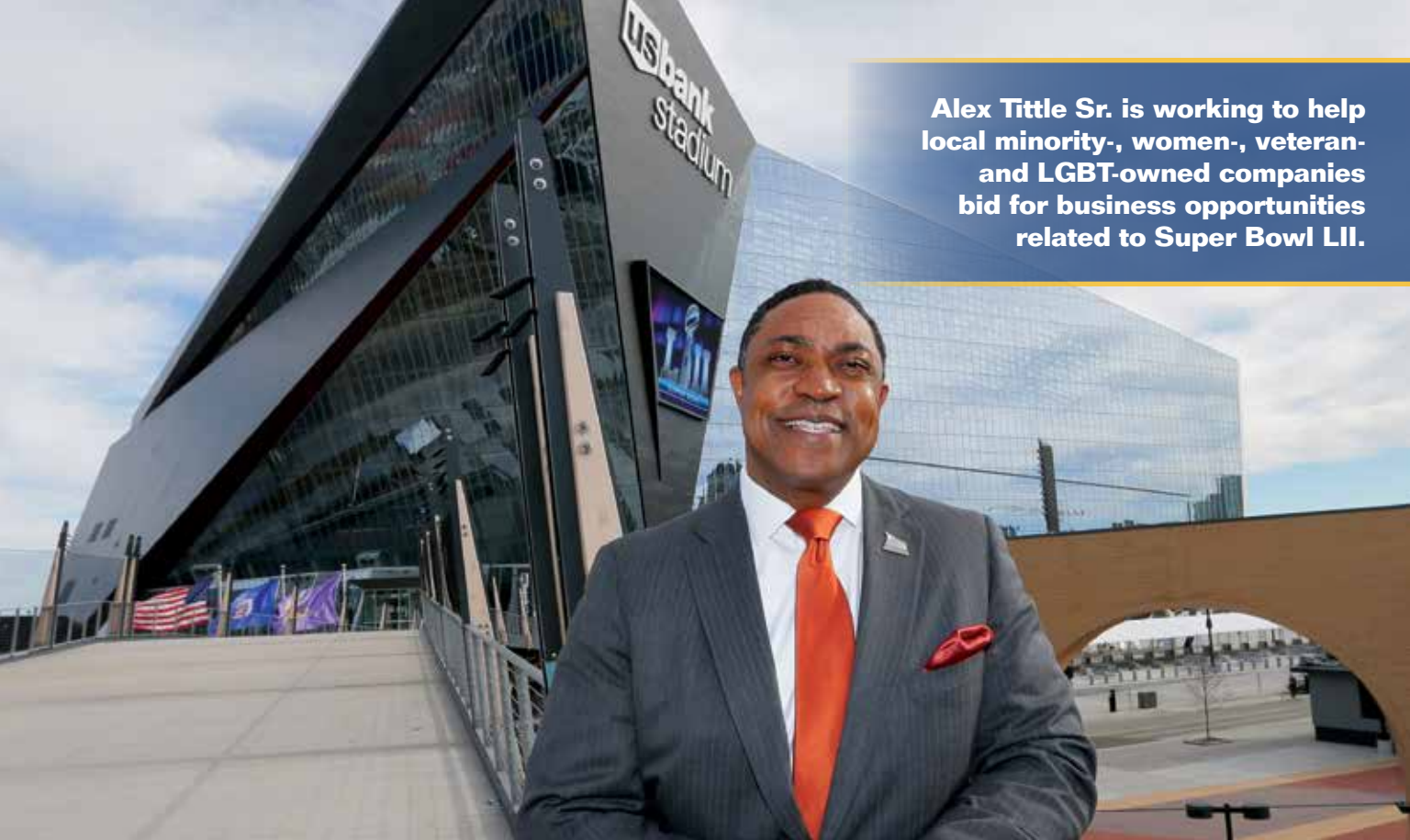
KEY TURNING POINT IN

CAREER: Joining an economic
development agency

WHAT'S NEXT:

Continue growing the program
and client list

FAMILY: Husband, Gene

A photograph of Alex Tittle Sr., a Black man in a grey suit and orange tie, standing in front of the US Bank Stadium. The stadium's modern architecture with glass and steel is visible in the background. A blue banner with white text is overlaid in the top right corner.

Alex Tittle Sr. is working to help local minority-, women-, veteran- and LGBT-owned companies bid for business opportunities related to Super Bowl LII.

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

ALEX TITTLE SR.

Alex Tittle Sr.'s efforts helped minority and women contractors account for nearly 30 percent of work on the \$1.1 billion U.S. Bank Stadium project.

He's now working to help hundreds of local minority-, women-, veteran- and LGBT-owned companies bid for entertainment, event planning, food service and other business opportunities with the NFL and its partners when the stadium plays host to Super Bowl LII in February 2018.

"We want to see our local businesses benefit because that's better for Minnesota," Tittle said. "It's even better when our local diverse businesses come out of the ashes and become a game changer or a player when normally they can't because the current inclusion laws, regulations and statutes are not set up for them to succeed."

Business practices in Minnesota aren't discriminatory in nature, Tittle said, but laws and regulations governing them can limit opportunities. He cited low-bid contract requirements as a challenge for businesses that "don't have the margins that large, traditionally experienced white male-owned businesses have."

Minority- and women-owned businesses generally are more successful winning contracts that emphasize best value over the lowest bid, he said.

Tittle, previously equity director for the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, leads the supplier diversity program and statewide business outreach for the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee. Before that he directed the office of civil rights at the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Tittle, raised in a military family, served as a U.S. Army intelligence analyst and transportation officer for 10 years before beginning his professional career at Summit Academy OIC.

— Todd Nelson

TITLE: Vice president, Business Connect and corporate affairs, Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee, Minneapolis

EDUCATION: B.S., The Citadel, Military College of South Carolina; M.A., management, M.A., human resources, Webster University

KEY TURNING POINT IN CAREER: "The St. Croix River Crossing project ... opened my eye to the reality that you can be a diverse and local business and be successful in this market if only you have somebody woven into the fabric of the decision-making that holds your best interests in those conversations."

WHAT'S NEXT: Leading Business Connect, the supplier diversity program, and statewide business outreach for Super Bowl LII

FAMILY: Wife, Lisa; two children, Raven and Alex Jr.



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Alliance Machine's state-of-the art flexible manufacturing system took two years to complete, and is capable of "lights out" production.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

ALLIANCE MACHINE INC.

Family-owned Alliance Machine Inc. has gained a reputation for providing high-value precision manufacturing to the medical, defense, aerospace/aircraft and technology industries.

The manufacturer of short-run production jobs started in 1987 and, through the years, has expanded its services, production facilities and workforce. Some examples of the company's growth:

- Alliance Machine offers a full line of milling and lathe machines, including a state-of-the art flexible manufacturing system. Alliance's expanded line of business services is reflected in its annual revenue that has grown from about \$4 million in 2014 to \$7 million in 2016.
- Alliance operates a 42,000-square-foot plant in Elk River, including an 18,000-square-foot addition built in 2014.
- In the past decade, Alliance has doubled its workforce to 40 full-time employees and it expects to add about another 15 full-time jobs within the next two years, said Greg Hofstede, Alliance Machine's manager of operational excellence.

Alliance's growth has also rippled across the community: Alliance's workforce generates nearly \$500,000 annually in local consumer spending, indirectly stimulating another 20 community jobs, according to the Elk River-based Decklan Group.

Alliance executives credit their company's success to employee and customer loyalty. One important reason for devoted workers is that Alliance has heavily invested in on-site training through the Anoka-Ramsey Community College and some grants from the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership, Hofstede said.

Alliance expects this year to expand its on-site employee training facility on the heels of recently winning a state apprenticeship award.

BUSINESS:

Precision machine manufacturing

BASED:

17520 Tyler St.,
Elk River

FOUNDED: 1987

OWNERS:

Family-owned; founder and president is Patrick Provo

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 40

WEBSITE:

alliancemachine.com

—Scott Carlson

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Recessed LED light fixtures are assembled in aspectLED's clean room facility in Arden Hills.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

ASPECTLED

From designing light fixtures for their energy-efficient house a few years ago to producing lighting for Bruno Mars' triangular stage at this year's Grammy Awards, Beth and Steve Nielsen established and grew aspectLED into an innovative designer and manufacturer of LED lighting fixtures and components.

This company is the husband-and-wife team's third startup. Beth Nielson says this one got its start while building their home when they tried but couldn't find recessed LED light fixtures to fit in a limited space. So they designed and made their own.

Their architects, electricians and builders liked them and were adamant there was a huge market for their lights. So, for nearly two years before starting the company they researched the market, showing their product and talking with prospective customers.

"Steve and I have always believed that the best way to build a successful business is by offering a product that solves a specific customer pain point," she says. "Our products have solved many of those most common pain points."

And aspectLED does business with a number of Minnesota companies, including Discount Steel, LePage and Sons, Metro Mold & Design, Midwest Extrusion, Minnesota Corrugated Box, NEI, Pentair and Storopack.

"Supporting local businesses is not only the right thing to do, but it's also good business. Many of aspectLED's local suppliers have been so impressed with the products, they've also turned into customers," Beth Nielson says.

—Betsy Carlson

BUSINESS: Design and manufacture recessed light fixtures, flexible/linear strip lights, exterior LED lighting, architectural lighting, as well as products for the retail fixture/display and trade show exhibit industries.

BASED: 3735 Dunlap St. N., Arden Hills

FOUNDED: 2014

CO-FOUNDERS: Beth Nielsen, chief executive officer; Steve Nielsen, chief marketing officer

EMPLOYEE COUNT: From two beginning in 2014 to 22 employees at the end of 2016; the company expects to end 2017 with 44.

WEBSITE: aspectled.com

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Atomic Data has built a successful company by combining IT knowledge and Minnesota sensibilities.

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

ATOMIC DATA

Not all high-tech success stories happen in Silicon Valley. Here in flyover country, the people at Atomic Data have built a successful IT company by following their instincts and staying grounded in Minnesota.

After the 2001 dot-com collapse, CEO Jim Wolford and his partners saw an opportunity in data centers, which typically were cost-prohibitive for smaller companies. They opened a midmarket alternative offering IT services to companies of any size.

The company expanded to offer 150 products and IT services. Clients can use them as their IT department or choose products on a monthly basis. Today, Atomic Data is a \$25 million company serving clients worldwide. Expected growth is 20 to 40 percent this year.

Wolford believes their Minnesota roots make a difference. They are committed to remaining privately held, unlike many tech businesses that grow the company to sell it. “I’ve seen how transient that makes your culture,” he said.

That commitment creates an entrepreneurial culture that enables them to solve problems quickly. Said Wolford, “We have one driver: Take care of clients.”

Charitable giving is a core company value; 15 percent of the company’s profits go to 35 nonprofits.

Atomic Data also is committed to workforce diversity. It recruits candidates from community colleges, the training and placement program IT Ready, and a program it is creating with the Urban League. Twenty-five percent of its employees are women and minorities, significantly higher than the industry.

“It’s good for decision-making and generating ideas,” said Wolford. “It makes us a better company.”

—Julie Swiler

BUSINESS:

IT products and services

BASED:

615 N. Third St.,
Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 2001

OWNERS:

Jim Wolford, owner and CEO;
Larry Patterson, chief technology
officer and co-owner;
Dr. John Dowdle, co-owner

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 150

WEBSITE:

atomicdata.com



The Bellwether Enterprise team in Minneapolis includes, from left, Vice President Mike Vannelli, Executive Vice President Mark Vannelli, senior analyst Annie Zager, Senior Vice President Mike Poloncheck, Vice President M.J. Vukovich, financial analyst Andrew Capra and Senior Vice President Dan Mott.

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

BELLWETHER ENTERPRISE

One of the nation's fastest-growing commercial mortgage banking companies is doing business in our backyard. Formed two years ago via a merger with Towle Financial Services, Bellwether Enterprise provides one-stop shopping for a variety of loan products from the Federal Housing Administration, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, as well as various life insurance companies and pension funds. Based in Cleveland, the company has 27 offices, including one in Minneapolis.

From the time of that merger, Bellwether's annual revenue has doubled to close to \$90 million. Last year, the company's local office, led by Mark Vannelli, closed 55 loans with an estimated loan volume of almost \$500 million.

"We approach the marketplace with several different ways to provide financing for different types of projects," said Vannelli, who previously owned Towle Financial. "Our business platform is based on for-profit, market-rate financing. But we also have a stable of institutional lenders, which are set up to invest in mortgages."

One focus of the company's mission is creating affordable housing, and not just in city settings. It recently provided a sub-rehab loan of \$1.3 million for Sunrise Manor Apartments, a 32-unit Section 8 development in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. Other recent Bellwether commercial projects include a \$25 million multifamily property in Duluth, a \$50 million office in St. Paul and a \$13 million retail complex in Woodbury.

A large percentage of Bellwether's revenue goes to its parent company, Enterprise Community Partners, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that advocates for and creates affordable and workforce housing in communities linked to good schools, jobs, transit and health care.

"We can provide property owners with all these different avenues of financing that generally aren't offered in one shop," said Vannelli.

—Dan Heilman

BUSINESS:

Multifamily mortgage banking

BASED:

225 S. Sixth St.,
Suite 4100, Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 2014

**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL
REGION:** Mark Vannelli

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 207
(11 in Minnesota office)

WEBSITE:

bellwetherenterprise.com



Buddy's Kitchen's custom-made frozen food is featured on airlines and convenience stores.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Buddy's Kitchen Inc.

Airline passengers having a breakfast sandwich on one of the nation's three largest carriers are unlikely to know that the meal came from Buddy's Kitchen in the Twin Cities.

Buddy's Kitchen makes custom-made frozen food for airlines, convenience stores and retail customers, said CEO Dave Smith. Those categories have seen increasing sales, which means good news for Buddy's Kitchen.

"Airlines are more profitable so they're spending more money on the customer experience," Smith said. "The rest of our customers are in businesses where food wasn't their initial purpose but food has become a much more meaningful part of their revenue."

Revenue growth topped 55 percent last year and will increase by 80 to 100 percent this year, he said. Another 100 workers will be hired in 2017, increasing employment to 450. The company added a second plant last year in Lakeville to handle the business.

Helping the company's sales has been its focus on producing gluten-free options, a category that will constitute 30 percent of revenue this year. "We are a little ahead of our competitors," Smith said.

Rather than simply sell products to clients, he said, Buddy's Kitchen invites them to its Twin Cities test kitchen to help develop their own offerings. Such "agile innovation" in product development allows customers to have distinctive food offerings in their portfolio, he said.

"We make custom food that's unique to that customer, and designed for that customer," he said. "Our clients get to offer their customers something unique."

—Frank Jossi

PRODUCT:

Custom frozen food for specialty food service

BASED:

12105 Nicollet Ave. S.,
Burnsville

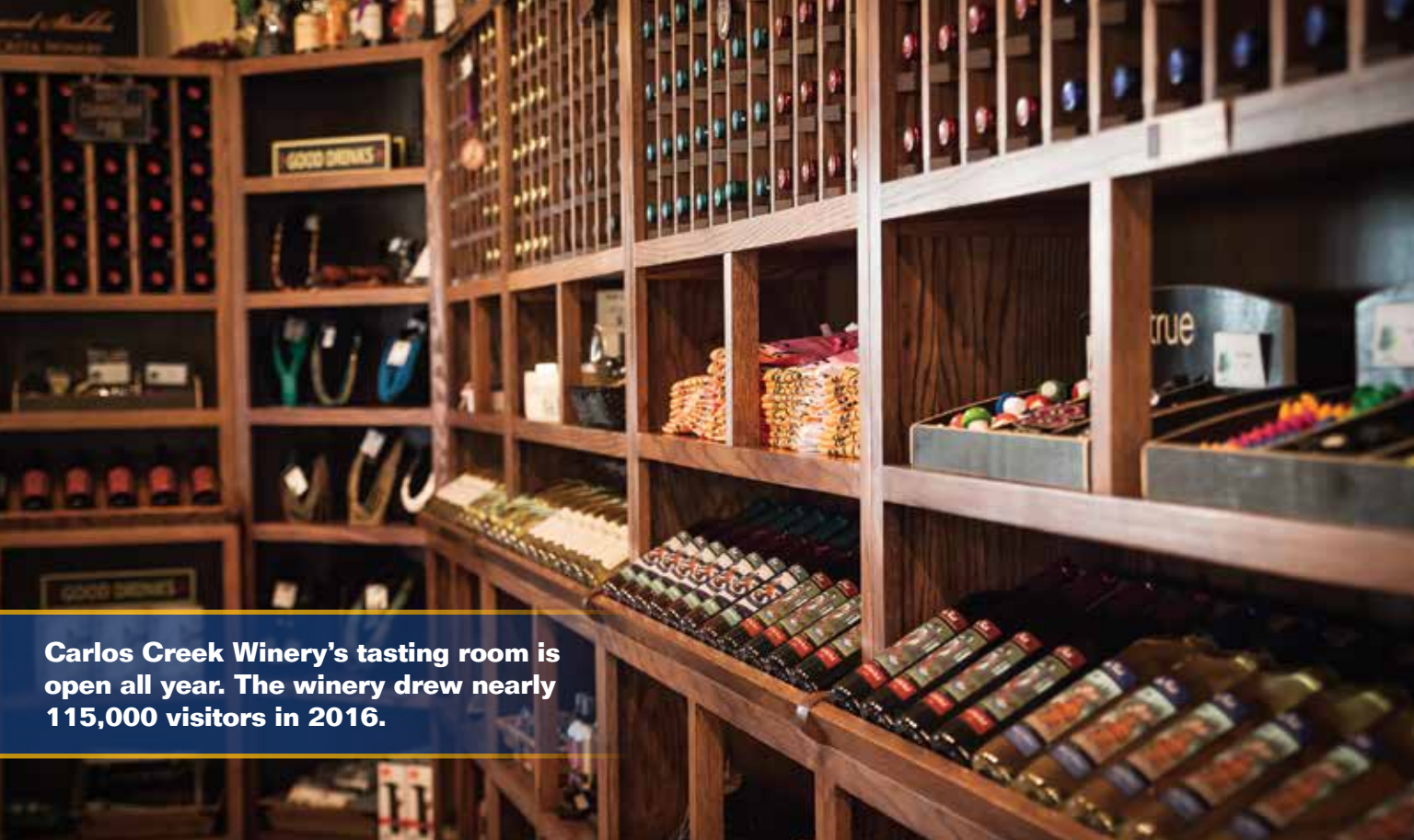
FOUNDED: 1974

CEO/CO-OWNER: Dave Smith

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 350

WEBSITE:

buddyskitchen.com



Carlos Creek Winery's tasting room is open all year. The winery drew nearly 115,000 visitors in 2016.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

CARLOS CREEK WINERY

Carlos Creek Winery owners Kim and Tami Bredeson call their Hot Dish Red, Wobegon White and other varieties the “Official Wine of Minnesota Fun.”

They back up that claim with a tasting room, open all year, that along with weddings, corporate and other events drew nearly 115,000 visitors to their Alexandria lakes area destination in 2016. More than 16,000 attended Grape Stomp!, an annual three-day fall celebration where hundreds of two-person teams stomp 10,000-plus pounds of grapes.

Sustaining a winery in Minnesota's climate — and offering all that fun — also involves some serious business and a continuing effort to diversify.

The Bredesons learned that when they acquired the winery in 2008, just as the recession and soaring gasoline prices slowed business.

“You could shrink into yourself, spend as little as possible and try to weather it,” Tami Bredeson said. “We decided that we needed other ways to make income.”

They added weddings and now host more than 50 a year, and began selling bulk wine as a food ingredient.

This year, they've launched a grapevine nursery, Tami Bredeson said. Having reached a planned maximum of 20 acres of vineyards on their 160-acre property, they now sell vines grown in their greenhouse to other vineyards.

Investing in equipment to produce single-serving plastic bottles helped Carlos Creek get into Minnesota Wild games and other Xcel Energy Center events, which has driven demand at liquor stores, Tami Bredeson said. Carlos Creek also is available at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis.

BUSINESS:

Winery with 20 acres of vineyards, a tasting room, events and free tours

BASED:

6693 County Road 34 NW, Alexandria

FOUNDED: 1997; opened 1999

OWNERS:

Kim Bredeson, CEO;
Tami Bredeson, president

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 15 full-time plus 30 part-timers in the summer

WEBSITE:

carloscreekwinery.com

—Todd Nelson



Cemstone trucks have delivered concrete to construction sites around the Twin Cities metro, including St. Croix Crossing, U.S. Bank Stadium and the Kraus-Anderson block project in downtown Minneapolis (pictured).

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

CEMSTONE Cos.

Success, you could say, has been cast in concrete for Cemstone Cos.

In 1927, when Hammon T. Becken started Cemstone, workers dug sand and gravel with their hands to produce high-quality concrete blocks.

Ninety years later, Cemstone stands as Minnesota's largest family-owned concrete company, operating advanced ready-mix concrete plants and aggregate facilities in more than 90 locations in the Midwest with about 2,000 employees.

During the past 10 years, Cemstone has expanded its geographic reach by acquiring more than 30 similar family-owned concrete businesses, said company spokeswoman Rachel Kanz. The company has added several new lines to its business and its ready-mix division now includes 22 new production plants in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa.

Cemstone's products range from premium ready-mixed and decorative concrete to concrete masonry units and decorative stone.

Cemstone also runs a chain of contractor supply stores, and its fleet of ready-mix concrete trucks and booms deliver high-quality concrete that is used for everything from residential driveways and roadways to bridges and high-rise commercial buildings.

In the Twin Cities, Cemstone has participated in the building of, among others, St. Croix Crossing, U.S. Bank Stadium, Target Field and the Lowry Avenue bridge.

Company executives credit Cemstone's success to employees and their perseverance to continually improve products and services. A leader in environmentally friendly technologies and practices, Cemstone has won numerous industry awards for its work, including the National Ready Mix Concrete Association's environmental excellence award and the 2012 Charles Pankow innovation award for its work on the Interstate 35W bridge in Minneapolis.

—Scott Carlson

BUSINESS:

Concrete and aggregate manufacturing

BASED:

2025 Centre Pointe Blvd.,
Mendota Heights

FOUNDED: 1927

OWNERS:

Becken family, fourth generation

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 2,000

WEBSITE:

cemstone.com

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MIKE POLENCHECK

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MPOLENCHECK@BWECAP.COM

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**READY MIXED
CONCRETE**

A photograph of a blue concrete mixer truck parked on a construction site.

**CONCRETE, MASONRY
& HARDSCAPE SUPPLY**

A photograph showing various construction materials, including pipes and blocks, stacked in a warehouse or storage area.

**CONCRETE PLACING
SERVICE**

A photograph of a concrete pump truck with a long boom extending over a construction site.

AGGREGATES

A photograph of a yellow front loader with a bucket full of dark aggregate material.

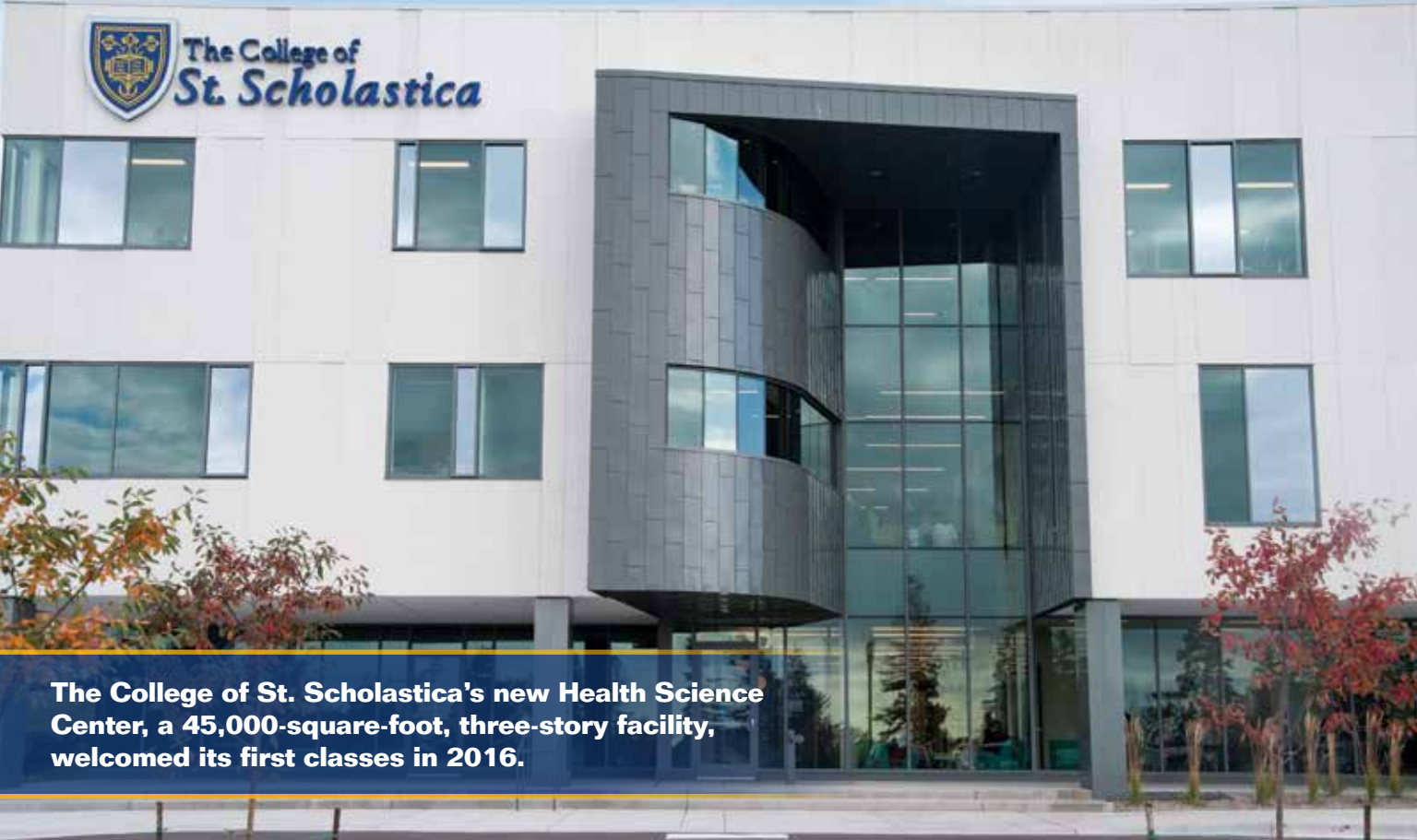
PRECAST

A photograph of two workers in safety gear handling large precast concrete slabs.

**ENGINEERING
SERVICES**

A close-up photograph of hands wearing orange safety gloves working on a mechanical or structural component.

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The College of St. Scholastica's new Health Science Center, a 45,000-square-foot, three-story facility, welcomed its first classes in 2016.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

THE COLLEGE OF ST. SCHOLASTICA

Physical therapy and occupational therapy programs were bursting at the seams at The College of St. Scholastica until they were moved last fall into a new \$16.5 million Health Science Center and Maurices Community Clinic, at 940 Woodland Ave., about a mile from the Duluth college.

The new, three-story, 45,000-square-foot building gave the college four new lecture facilities and three laboratory areas and alleviated crowded conditions on the main campus, says Bob Ashenmacher, St. Scholastica's executive director of communications.

Bruce Loppnow, dean of the School of Health Sciences, says, "Laboratory learning is critical in the health professions and the new Health Science Center provides a major improvement in the amount of space and the versatility of that space. The Health Science Center provides our educational programs with state-of-the-art academic facilities and an improved learning atmosphere."

He noted that with the support of Duluth-based retailer Maurices, the college was able to expand its community educational clinic and to significantly improve the learning and patient care experiences.

With the new health center, the college increased the number of students who started this year in graduate-level programs from 36 to 48 in physical therapy and from 32 to 36 in occupational therapy. A new physician's assistant program with 30 students is expected to be housed in the new Health Science Center in the fall of 2017, pending accreditation.

Assisting with the building project were Maurices; HGA Architecture, Engineering and Planning; McGough Construction; and Health Sciences Education Facility Corp.

—Betsy Carlson

MISSION:

Providing intellectual and moral preparation for responsible living and meaningful work

BASED:

Duluth

FOUNDED:

1912

PRESIDENT:

Colette McCarrick Geary

EMPLOYEE COUNT:

550 full-time equivalent positions

STUDENTS:

4,406, including 1,565 graduate students and 2,841 undergraduates

WEBSITE:

css.edu



One of four huge pressure vessels from South Korea, eventually bound by rail for Alberta, Canada, was offloaded recently from the BBC Mont Blanc at the Port of Duluth-Superior's Clure Public Marine Terminal. An average of 38 million tons of cargo move through the port each year.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

DULUTH SEAWAY PORT AUTHORITY

This year is shaping up to be a big year for the Duluth Seaway Port Authority. Not only is the DSPA's \$18 million rehabilitation of Docks C and D in the Superior Bay set to be ready for shipping season, but the authority is working with the Canadian National Railway to establish the Duluth Intermodal Ramp on-dock at the Clure Public Marine Terminal, a major transportation logistics development for Duluth.

That's impressive work for a company that essentially runs like a small business. The authority's operating budget is about \$4 million, less than one-quarter of which is funded by county taxes. Most of its operating revenues are self-generated through cargo handling, warehousing services and property leases, and are enhanced by grants.

"What I try to think about is, how do we use our assets to grow our organization?" said executive director Vanta Coda II. "Sometimes you have to go where the market allows you to grow. Since I've been here, we've thought more about the direction where we should put more of our weight."

The authority said that the economic impact of the Intermodal Ramp could be conservatively estimated at \$878,000 in direct revenues to Lake Superior Warehousing and the DSPA, with direct logistics cost reductions for local companies estimated at \$2.3 million. Each year, an average of about 38 million tons of cargo move through the port via water, making it the 22nd-largest port in the United States by tonnage.

In addition, 11,500 jobs in Minnesota and Wisconsin are supported by cargo moving through the marine terminals in the port, which makes the public a valuable partner in any undertakings the authority decides to pursue.

"We've invited public input from the outset," said Coda. "That sets the operating parameters for us: Bring business to our port. Bring economic development to the region. Connect us to a global marketplace."

—Dan Heilman

MISSION:

To bring business and economic development to the Port of Duluth-Superior and advocate for maritime and transportation industry interests

BASED:

1200 Port Terminal Road, Duluth

FOUNDED: 1955

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Vanta Coda II

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 11;

agent and property tenants employ 1,100

WEBSITE:

duluthport.com



Eutectics worked with Aeon and the design team on The Rose apartment project to evaluate and facilitate renewable energy options including the project's vertical solar hot water system.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

EUECTICS CONSULTING INC.

*T*he more than \$86 million in efficiency and renewable energy projects that Eutectics Consulting Inc. has helped complete nationally have helped bring environmental benefits.

But they also drive economic development in job creation and community investment, Eutectics president and CEO Jeremy Kalin said.

“We get all the sustainable benefits from cleaner air, cleaner water and a more reliable electric grid,” Kalin said. “But our real key focus is translating all of that into economic development.”

Eutectics concentrates on projects in underserved areas, from small businesses to rural communities to affordable housing, Kalin said.

Kalin founded the for-profit Eutectics after focusing on clean energy policy as a Minnesota state representative in 2007-2010. He also served as national chair of a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers working with the White House on clean energy.

Eutectics’ network of capital partners has committed more than \$1 billion, and the company now is engaged in \$132 million in projects, Kalin said. Eutectics uses public financing only when necessary to access private capital.

Through its clean-energy financing hubs, Eutectics works primarily with governmental agencies to finance and support energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. One such hub is part of a community-wide effort to use locally generated renewable energy to power all of Chisago County by 2025.

“One thing we’re asking local governments to commit to is LEDs everywhere, basically upgrading every taxpayer-funded light bulb to a super-efficient LED light to save money for taxpayers and get all the other environmental benefits,” Kalin said.

—Todd Nelson

BUSINESS:

Facilitating financing in efficiency and renewable energy projects in underserved markets

BASED:

100 N. Sixth St.,
Suite 227B, Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 2010

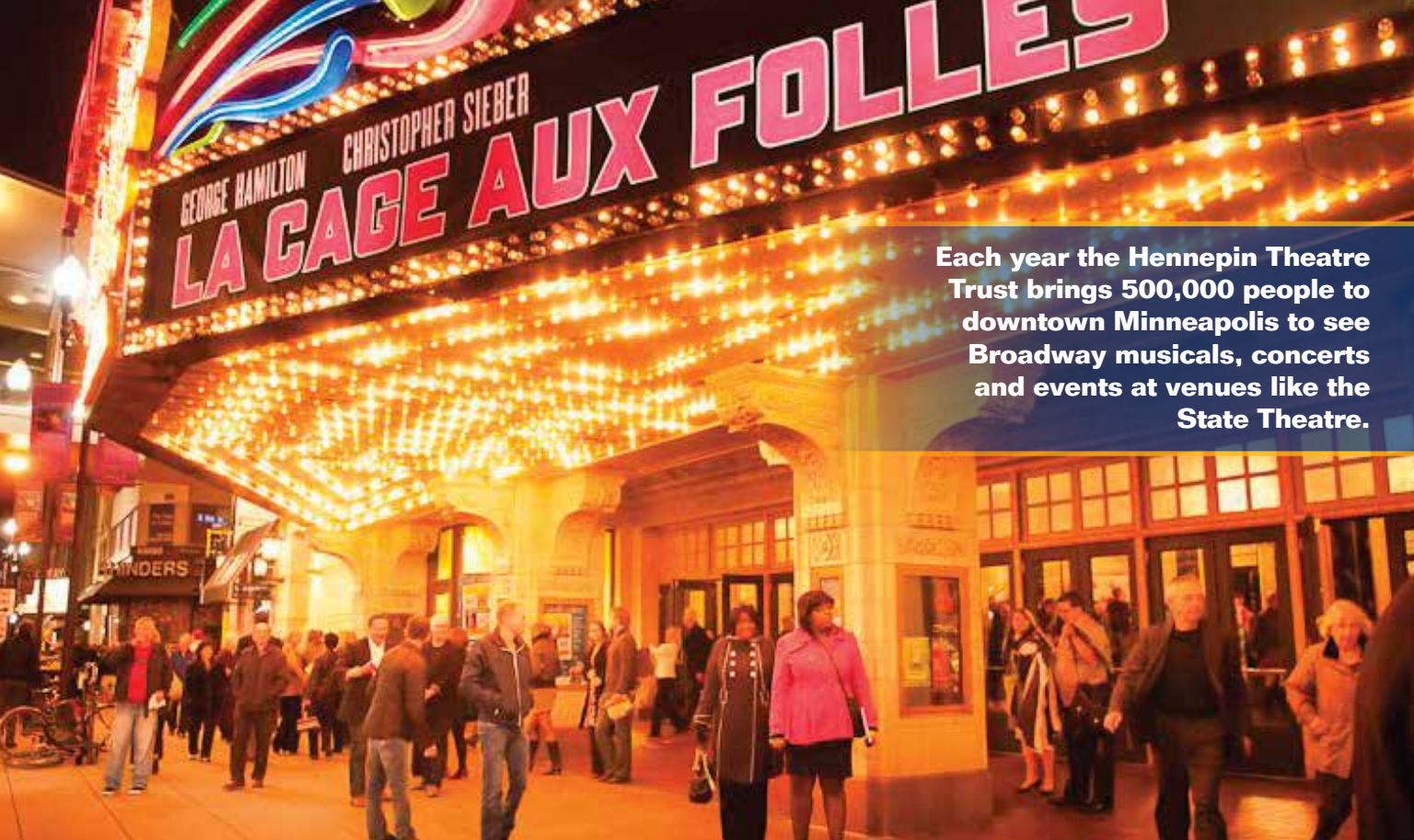
PRESIDENT AND CEO:

Jeremy Kalin

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 3

WEBSITE:

eutecticsllc.com



Each year the Hennepin Theatre Trust brings 500,000 people to downtown Minneapolis to see Broadway musicals, concerts and events at venues like the State Theatre.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

HENNEPIN THEATRE TRUST

Imagine downtown Minneapolis bustling with even more arts and culture. That's the goal of WeDo, the West Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District, an area that runs from the Walker Art Center to the Mississippi River and First to Nicollet avenues.

A project of Hennepin Theatre Trust, the Walker Art Center, Art Place and the city of Minneapolis, WeDo promotes a vision of a downtown entertainment district that includes theater, visual arts, sports, restaurants and more.

"We are true believers that arts and culture are critical drivers of economic activity," said Naomi Pesky, vice president of external relations for Hennepin Theatre Trust, the WeDo project lead.

Her organization has a track record of doing just that. Each year the nonprofit brings 500,000 people downtown to see Broadway musicals, concerts and events, generating millions of dollars for area businesses.

Now, the Trust is taking art to the street by working with artists, businesses and community organizations to create public art and engagement opportunities along Hennepin Avenue.

Made Here is one such initiative. It takes vacant storefronts and transforms them with artwork. "We put beautiful works of art in them and pedestrians start looking at those buildings again," said Pesky. Ten properties, cumulatively vacant for 50 years, have been leased since participating.

Made Here showcases local artists and pays them, too. In three years, \$188,000 has been paid to 396 artists.

Soon WeDo will have an anchor in what was Solera on Hennepin. The new Trust headquarters will be a center for education, arts and entertainment.

—Julie Swiler

MISSION:

Bring positive change to the arts by bringing together people, businesses and organizations in WeDo™

BASED:

615 Hennepin Ave.,
Suite 140, Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 2000

CEO: Ann Simonds,
interim CEO and president

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 35

WEBSITE:

hennepintheatretrust.org,
wedompls.org, madeheremn.org



Horizon Roofing employees insulate the roof of the J&B Group distribution center addition in St. Michael.

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

HORIZON ROOFING INC.

For 41-year-old Horizon Roofing, the focus has shifted from not only doing quality work, but also providing quality workers.

Using its steady 30 percent annual growth as a springboard, the company has built a 3,000-square-foot training center inside its Brooklyn Center headquarters. The center runs an accelerated training program that promises to take workers to journeyman level in less time than other available programs.

“Instead of counting on someone else to develop our workers, we figured we would do it ourselves,” said Kurt Scepaniak, Horizon president and CEO. “I decided to put my money where my mouth was. We’re able to bring them in and train them faster, which lets them be successful sooner.”

The company, which anticipates \$30 million in revenue this year, plans to reach out to veterans’ groups, inner-city organizations, technical colleges, high schools and more, appealing to the desire for success with the potential of a six-figure salary in commercial construction.

The company is also in the process of setting up a nonprofit, the Scepaniak Enrichment Center, to direct Horizon profits toward workforce development and children’s organizations.

Horizon is a company that believes that no idea is too out of the ordinary to be considered. It offers a \$500 bounty to anyone who can find a roof leak the company can’t fix. And as one of the few contractors with a full-time programmer, the company claims it has one of the best reporting systems in its industry, thanks in part to more than half a million dollars it has invested in reporting technologies.

“What stands out for us is our commitment to quality and customer satisfaction, said Scepaniak, who got his first roofing job at age 12. “I know every company says that, but we have the awards to prove it.”

—Dan Heilman

BUSINESS:

Roofing contractor

BASED:

4912 France Ave. N.,
Brooklyn Center

FOUNDED: 1976

PRESIDENT/CEO:

Kurt Scepaniak

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 100

WEBSITE:

horizonroofinginc.com



The King Technology team includes, from left, Jackie Rieck, director of marketing; Randy Roseth, president; Laura Larson, controller; Joe King, owner/CEO; David Guy, director of engineering; and Jon West, national sales manager

SUBMITTED PHOTO

KING TECHNOLOGY INC.

Joe King and his staff “are in the business of improving the customer experience” through innovative products designed for the residential pool and spa market. The company sells mineral sanitizing systems that reduce chlorine by as much as 75 percent.

Anyone with a backyard pool knows the challenge of being a “weekend chemist,” he said. The wrong chemical mixture can result in a frustrating and potentially harmful experience for pool users.

In 1988, King acquired a division of the company his father founded and has continued the legacy of invention. The success of King Technology’s products is derived from their sustainability and simplicity. “We feel we have a responsibility to the consumer and to the environment, and we want to take care of both,” he said. “We approach the business holistically with a simple, complete answer to water treatment.”

King Technology does that by employing chemists, microbiologists and engineers who work on products that minimize the need for chlorine in easy-to-use application systems.

The United States has about 10 million residential pools and an equal number of spas, he said, but overall sales remain flat because as many are removed as are built annually. King’s focus has been on continuous product improvement and growing market share. This year King anticipates double-digit growth in employment and revenues.

His pitch is simple. “Worry is a big thing when you own a pool or spa,” he said. “We want to take the worry out of that experience and make it fun again.”

—Frank Jossi

SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Frog mineral water system is equipped with pre-filled cartridges that eliminate bacteria and purify pool water while using 50 percent less chlorine.

PRODUCT:

Pool and spa water purification products

BASED:

530 11th Ave. S.,
Hopkins

FOUNDED: 1988

CEO & OWNER:

Joe King

EMPLOYEE COUNT:

Fewer than 50

WEBSITE:

kingtechnology.com





Businesses assisted by the Latino Economic Development Center include La Sureña Cooperative, a small, family-run farm at 1600 Fourth St. SE in Austin, Minn.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

LATINO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CENTER



RAMON LEON

Ramón León ran businesses in Mexico and California before he began helping Latinos launch ventures in the Twin Cities.

As his efforts expanded — through faith-based organizations in the 1990s and since 2003 as leader of the Latino Economic Development Center — León ended up closing his furniture manufacturing business and other enterprises.

“All of a sudden I found myself in the middle of the nonprofit sector,” León said. “I saw the need to have an organization that would help the Latino immigrant community address and overcome the social and economic issues that prevented us from incorporating into society.”

Through its business development and lending programs, the Latino Economic Development Center, with \$4 million in lending capacity, has helped entrepreneurs start and build businesses with operations in multiple locations and millions of dollars in yearly revenue.

The organization makes 18 to 23 loans a year ranging from \$150,000 to more than \$1 million, León said. “They can afford it, they have the operations and they have credibility,” León said.

Most of the businesses LEDC works with contribute to the Latino Scholarship Fund, which León founded to enable low-income students to attend college.

LEDC’s work has helped revitalize Lake Street, which León said he saw suffering from lack of investment when he arrived in Minneapolis from California in 1991. The commercial corridor has gotten a boost in the years since as Latino, Asian and East African immigrants opened businesses despite a lack of resources, León said.

—Todd Nelson

MISSION:

Statewide, membership-based nonprofit that operates programs in business development and lending, workforce development and agricultural development.

BASED:

1501 E. Lake St.,
Lower Level, Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 2003

**FOUNDER, PRESIDENT AND
CEO:** Ramón León

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 13

WEBSITE:

ledc-mn.org

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Lennar Multifamily Communities' latest Minnesota project, Nordhaus, is under construction in northeast Minneapolis and will feature 280 apartments and 22,000 square feet of retail.



SUBMITTED RENDERING

LENNAR MULTIFAMILY COMMUNITIES

Since its launch six years ago, Lennar Multifamily Communities has made big strides in building a noticeable presence in the Twin Cities.

An arm of Lennar Corp., LMC is a multifamily real estate developer that has invested more than \$250 million over the last three years in building boutique mixed-use housing and retail communities across the region, according to Jon Fletcher, company senior development manager.

Currently, LMC is in northeast Minneapolis, Edina and Bloomington with a combined 905 dwelling units. Its three projects have created or sustained more than 500 construction, engineering, architecture and related jobs, Fletcher said. Nationwide, LMC's portfolio includes some 12,800 apartment homes in 43 communities and more than 22,700 high-rise, mid-rise and garden rental apartments.

LMC's latest Minnesota project, Nordhaus, is under construction in northeast Minneapolis and will have 280 apartments, 22,000 square feet of retail, a restaurant and 390 parking spaces. Its first units are expected to be available for rent in August.

Besides helping boost the local economy, the Nordhaus project is noteworthy for "undertaking the difficult task" of rehabbing the once-polluted site that was formerly home to Superior Plating, Fletcher said.

In addition, LMC's Twin Cities projects have spawned "hundreds of indirect permanent jobs in support roles and services throughout the region," Fletcher noted.

Weiss Builders Inc., which has been a contractor for LMC in the Twin Cities, praised the company. LMC has brought "national design, technology and operational standards to the local housing scene, raising the bar for all future projects," said Steve Knight, Weiss Builders vice president.

— Scott Carlson

BUSINESS:

Multifamily real estate development

BASED:

Charlotte, North Carolina

FOUNDED: 2011

(parent company started in 1954)

OWNER: Lennar Corp.

EMPLOYEE COUNT:

17 in Minnesota

WEBSITE:

livelmc.com



At Life Fitness' Ramsey manufacturing facility, employee Theng Cheng assembles a weight lifting machine destined for a Planet Fitness gym.

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

LIFE FITNESS

With the completion of a \$33.5 million, 150,000-square-foot addition to its Owatonna Cybex facility in February, parent company Life Fitness brought the size of the manufacturing plant to 490,000 square feet.

The addition to the 10-year-old plant ultimately will bring with it more than 100 new jobs in welding, fabrication, powder coat painting and assembly. The facility had about 300 workers before the addition. Some 200 fitness products, including the Cybex Arc Trainer, are produced there.

"We are thrilled to celebrate the completed expansion to the Cybex facility in Owatonna," said Scott Darsow, vice president of global manufacturing for Life Fitness in a company news release. "This expansion is our second in Minnesota in two years, and we produce more products in the state than anywhere in the world."

"With this expansion, we're underscoring our commitment to growing our global manufacturing footprint and to growth in the local community."

The city of Owatonna is providing tax increment financing of almost \$1.4 million for the project. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development made grants of \$850,000 for job development and capital investment.

The expansion cost \$11 million for construction and \$22.5 million for equipment. The architect was Mohagen Hansen Architecture/Interior, Wayzata, and the contractor was Bauer Design Build, Plymouth.

Life Fitness' other plant in Minnesota is in Ramsey, where more than 140 products are manufactured. A 50,000-square-foot expansion brought the plant to 333,000 square feet in March 2016. About 460 people work there.

—Betsy Carlson

MISSION:

Provide solutions that get the world moving and help people lead active and healthy lives. Life Fitness says it's the global leader in commercial fitness equipment, game tables and furnishings. It is a division of Brunswick Corp.

BASED:

Rosemont, Illinois

FOUNDED: 45 years ago

CEO: Jaime Irick

EMPLOYEE COUNT:

3,000 globally, 351 at its Owatonna facility

WEBSITE:

lifefitness.com



Loll Designs' T77 dining chair is designed to fit most bodies comfortably while eating, drinking and talking.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

LOLL DESIGNS

A lark of an idea to build skateboard ramps out of scrap plastic has turned into a cash cow for Duluth-based Loll Designs. The 11-year-old company has taken the idea and expanded its product offering, doubling its revenue to \$10 million over the past four years in the process.

"The purpose at first was really just to use scrap material and not let it go to waste," said Loll sales associate Heather Strasser. "They were just playing; Why not make an Adirondack chair? It just snowballed from there."

Most of Loll's products are made from single-use milk jugs that are made into 4-by-8-foot sheets in three thicknesses by a Pennsylvania company. Design and manufacturing are done in-house, and Loll's products are sold in the United States and internationally via the internet, independent and national retailers, and contract/hospitality representatives.

Loll's green initiatives extend beyond using all recycled and recyclable material. Loll also built a heat-recovery system for its production floor and is working toward a zero-waste program. Almost all of the plastic production waste the company generates is recycled and sold to another company that makes agricultural drain tiles.

Loll is even bringing the idea of responsible re-use to its production side, expanding back into the building it moved out of in favor of a new facility two years ago. The 14,000-square-foot production space will be used in part to add a steel shop. According to Strasser, the ability to work with steel will enable the company to launch a new collection called the Sunnyside, whose products will contain steel components in the framing. The collection will also mark the first Loll products to be upholstered.

"We outgrew our current building within about year of moving there," she said. "We've been lucky to see some strong growth lately."

—Dan Heilman

BUSINESS:

Designer/manufacturer of all-weather outdoor furniture and accessories made with recycled plastic

BASED:

5912 Waseca St.,
Duluth

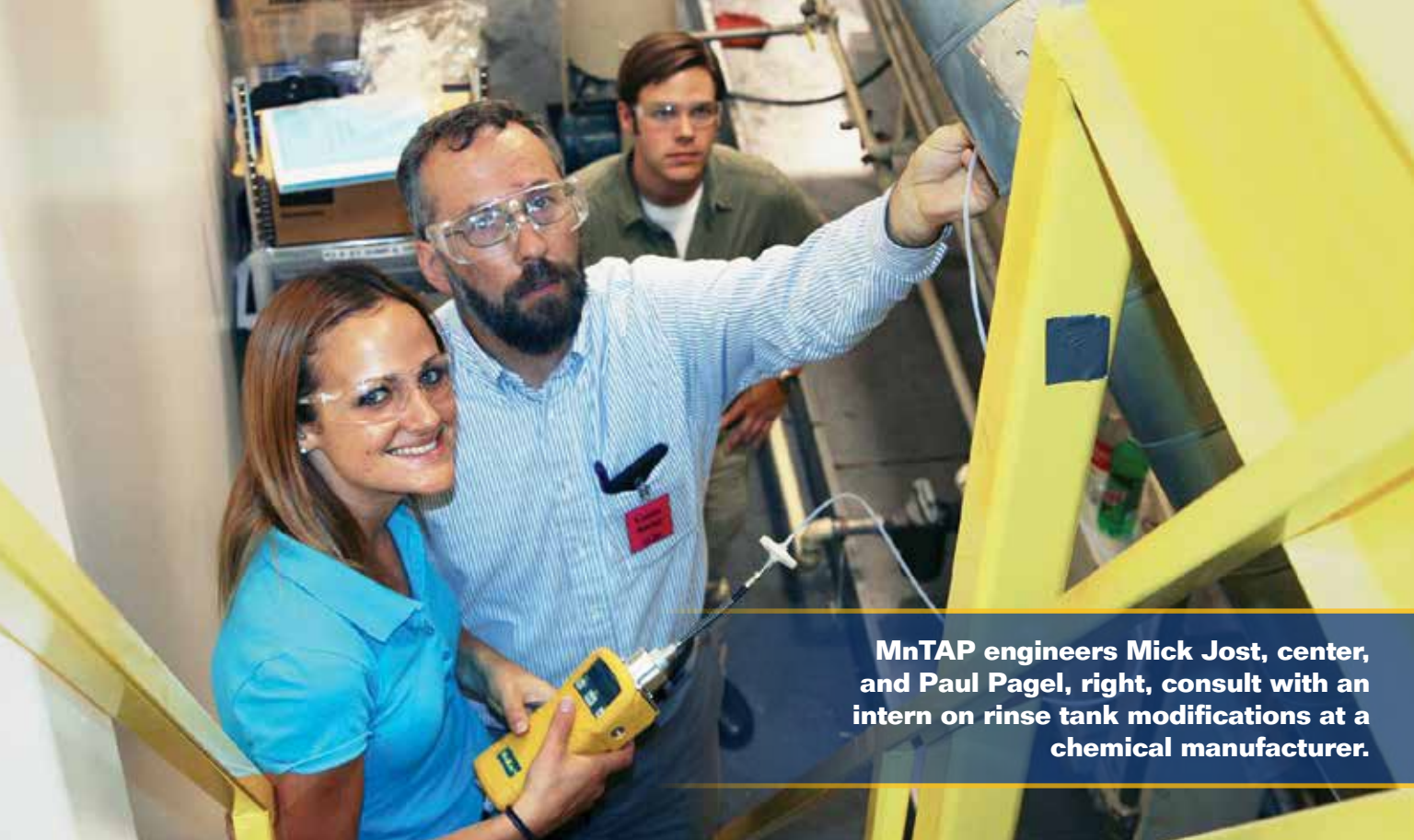
FOUNDED: 2006

CEO: Greg Benson

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 42

WEBSITE:

loll designs.com



MnTAP engineers Mick Jost, center, and Paul Pagel, right, consult with an intern on rinse tank modifications at a chemical manufacturer.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

MINNESOTA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

As a no-cost outreach program of the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program works with industrial, commercial and government customers looking for ways to improve operations.

“We provide technical assistance to support material, energy and water efficiency,” said MnTAP director Laura Babcock. “MnTAP engineers look at organizational resource utilization and make improvement recommendations.”

MnTAP sometimes directs efforts regarding a particular market segment. For the past three years it has focused on wastewater treatment facilities looking to increase energy efficiency.

The process includes benchmarking wastewater facilities, creating partnerships with stakeholders and conducting assessments, a similar process is employed with all clients. MnTAP’s recommendations “have helped the facilities save tremendous amounts of energy and money,” Babcock said. “That frees up resources for them to do other important things.”

In 2016, MnTAP provided assistance to 279 Minnesota companies. The first-year savings for the 56 businesses that implemented recommendations amounted to \$1.375 million.

MnTAP gets the word out mainly through direct mail and plenty of referrals. Roughly 35 to 40 percent of clients implement the recommendations, which matches the performance of similar organizations nationally, Babcock said.

MnTAP’s robust internship program will place up to 18 students this year. “The Intern Program strengthens the Minnesota workforce by giving students meaningful engineering experiences throughout the state,” she said. “Sometimes the internships result in students later taking permanent jobs at these companies.”

—Frank Jossi

MISSION:

No-cost assistance for energy, water and waste reduction

BASED:

McNamara Alumni Center,
200 Oak St. SE,
Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 1984

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Laura Babcock

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 16

WEBSITE:

mntap.umn.edu



By year's end, Runnings will have 41 stores, with 16 in Minnesota, including this store in Red Wing.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

RUNNINGS

Runnings, a 70-year-old retailer with deep roots in fleet and farm supplies, is enjoying continued growth as it opens larger stores with expanded selections including sporting goods, clothing, tools and pet supplies.

In recent years, Runnings has relocated its New Ulm store into a 100,000-square-foot space, adding 20 jobs, and opened 90,000-square-foot stores in Austin and Monticello, generating more than 60 jobs in each of those new markets. In all three cases, Runnings took over buildings that once housed national discount stores.

The transition to larger stores began in 2005, when the Marshall location moved into a former Wal-Mart, said Dennis Jensen, Runnings marketing and advertising director. That roughly coincided with a brand evolution to make Runnings “a destination to find anything and everything you want for your home, your farm, your ranch, your shop and your outdoor lifestyle,” Jensen said, noting that the Marshall store location underwent a 2015 renovation.

To support its growth, Runnings last year completed a \$10 million, 100,000-square-foot addition to its 65,000-square-foot Marshall distribution center. It also has distribution centers in South Dakota and New York.

By year's end, Runnings will have 41 stores, with 16 in Minnesota, including one opening this fall in Moorhead, and locations in the Dakotas, Montana, New York and New Hampshire.

Norman “Red” Runnings opened the first store in 1947 in downtown Marshall. A group including CEO Dennis Reed acquired Runnings in 1988 and the Dennis and Adele Reed family took over sole ownership in 2004.

—Todd Nelson

BUSINESS:

Family-owned retailer offers sporting goods, clothing, footwear, pet supplies, housewares, tools, farm supplies, lawn and garden supplies, toys and outdoor equipment along with hunting, fishing and archery equipment and accessories.

BASED:

901 North Highway 59, Marshall

FOUNDED: 1947

CEO: Dennis Reed

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 2,000

WEBSITE:

runnings.com



Finished late last year, Ryan's \$588 million Downtown East project brought a park, 195 residential units and 24,000 square feet of retail to the area around U.S. Bank Stadium, along with hotels and parking.

FILE PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

RYAN Cos. US Inc.

*F*or a company as firmly established in its field and region as Ryan Cos. US Inc. is, it's hard not to take success for granted. That's why Ryan's leadership is determined to never let that happen.

"Instead of a project type or market sector, we are always after making sure we deliver leading-edge, innovative commercial property solutions," said Ryan Regional President Collin Barr.

Locally, that thirst for innovation has led Ryan to steer such signature projects as the Downtown East development in Minneapolis. Finished late last year, the \$588 million project brought the 1.1 million-square-foot Wells Fargo campus, a park, 195 residential units and 24,000 square feet of retail to the area around U.S. Bank Stadium, along with hotels and parking. Setting up on former parking lots and land once owned by the Star Tribune near the glittering site of next year's Super Bowl, Ryan has called Downtown East a "once-in-a-century" project.

Outside Minnesota, Ryan's presence, if anything, is only growing, thanks to that flair for innovation. Ryan recently converted a vacant racetrack into a new campus for a Seattle health care giant — a project that included toeing the line on Washington's strict stormwater pollution prevention standards.

Closer to home, the company also recently finished Aurélien, a luxury 31-story, 373-unit apartment community in the Gold Coast neighborhood of Chicago. While it might sound simple, said Barr, there's no secret to landing such prominent projects — just a level of two-way loyalty that results from client relationships that in some cases go back decades.

"We follow our key customers wherever they want us to go in the continental U.S.," said Barr. "We're building projects in Seattle, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, upstate New York. Our customers know we can serve them anywhere they want us to."

—Dan Heilman

BUSINESS:

Construction, development, and real estate

BASED:

50 South 10th Street,
Suite 300, Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 1938

PRESIDENT/CEO:

Pat Ryan

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 1,342

WEBSITE:

ryancompanies.com



Select Comfort's Sleep Number beds let consumers adjust for firmness and support.

SELECT COMFORT CORP.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Select Comfort Corp. had a novel idea in 1987 when it introduced mattresses to the bedding market that consumers can adjust for firmness and support to meet their individual sleep needs.

Thirty years later, Select Comfort, with its Sleep Number beds and services, is the leading U.S. provider of individual sleep technology, with annual revenue of \$1.31 billion and 3,700 employees. In the last two years, the company has added nearly 750 workers.

Another sign of Select Comfort's success: It has ranked "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Mattresses" by J.D. Power for the past two years.

Select Comfort CEO Shelly Ibach credits her company's growth to its employees and business partners. "Our team's dedication to their customers' experience is nothing short of amazing," she said in the company's 2015 annual report released last year.

Despite its success, Select Comfort hasn't rested on its laurels. In the last three years, the company has been transforming its business, rolling out new Sleep Number products (Sleep IQ and Dual Air) and a new logistics operating system. Although that latter move initially put a dent in Select Comfort's earnings in the fourth quarter of 2015, the company reported a 13 percent increase its 2016 earnings per share.

In 2017, Select Comfort plans to boost its store count by 3 percent to 4 percent. The company ended 2016 with 540 stores, a net increase of 52 new stores.

—Scott Carlson

BUSINESS:

Maker and retailer of mattresses offering individualized sleep solutions and services

BASED:

9800 59th Ave N.,
Plymouth

FOUNDED: 1987

CEO: Shelly Ibach

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 3,700
(including about 900 in
Minnesota)

WEBSITE:

sleepnumber.com

Sherman Associates' projects include the 205 Park apartment and condo mixed-use project near U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.



SUBMITTED RENDERING

SHERMAN ASSOCIATES



GEORGE SHERMAN

Bringing a vacant Minneapolis car dealership back to life with new, community-focused roles and renovating Duluth's empty, historic NorShor Theatre are two examples of Sherman Associates' commitment to improving and giving back to the communities it works in.

In the past year, the development company undertook an \$8 million rehabilitation of the 1925 car dealership at 800 W. Broadway to create a complex that includes a Minneapolis Public Schools facility for GED and high school diploma seekers, the North Minneapolis Workforce Center, a health clinic and retail spaces.

The \$30.5 million NorShor Theatre project will create a 700-seat mainstage area, a wine bar, music and theater classrooms, retail opportunities and office space. The theater will be handed over to the Duluth Playhouse upon completion, which is expected in December.

"Sherman Associates' interest in developments like 800 W. Broadway and NorShor is uncommon because it is fueled by a long-term vision," explains company president and CEO George Sherman.

"Structuring developments like these is challenging, but Sherman has transformed city blocks into vibrant neighborhoods. The transformation keeps us motivated during the challenging phases. It's a rewarding, long-term commitment," he said.

The Minneapolis educational facility and workforce center are open now. NorthPoint Health and Wellness plans to open a medical, dental and behavioral health clinic later this year. Retail outlets are also under construction.

Cooperating on the theater project are Sherman Associates, the city of Duluth and the Duluth Playhouse using tax increment financing, federal and state tax credits and grants, a deferred development fee and fundraising.

—Betsy Carlson

BUSINESS:

Commercial development

BASED:

Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 1979

CEO AND PRESIDENT:

George Sherman

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 407

WEBSITE:

sherman-associates.com



Tech Dump recycles, repairs and refurbishes computers, monitors, printers and other equipment.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

TECH DUMP AND TECH DISCOUNTS

Tech Dump is a triple bottom-line business. It employs people who have served time in the justice system or suffered addiction. It recycles, repairs and refurbishes computers, monitors, printers and other equipment, giving technology a second life at heavily discounted prices.

Business is booming. This year revenue will jump to \$3.3 million, up from \$2.8 million. Staff will grow from 47 last year to at least 55 employees. “We expect to continue to grow in terms of revenue and employees,” LaGrange said. “We just hired three more people this quarter.”

Tech Dump serves as a first job for employees looking to rebuild their lives despite hardships. “They have gaps on their resumes that can make it a little uncomfortable for more traditional employers to hire – so our role is to provide that great work experience so they can earn a reputation as a great employee,” she said.

What’s been gratifying over the past year is that the labor shortage has elevated the hourly pay of employees who go on to better positions at other companies. Tech Dump pays from \$9.50 to \$11.50 an hour. Trained employees get offers for as high as \$19 an hour with benefits.

“Much of what we do is to build confidence so each person sees his contribution to our organization,” LaGrange said. “Too often people are defined by their worst day. At Tech Dump we show that giving people a chance to try again can pay off in a big way.”

—Frank Jossi

BUSINESS:

Electronics recycler creating jobs for people with employment barriers

BASED:

825 Boone Ave. N.,
No. 100, Golden Valley

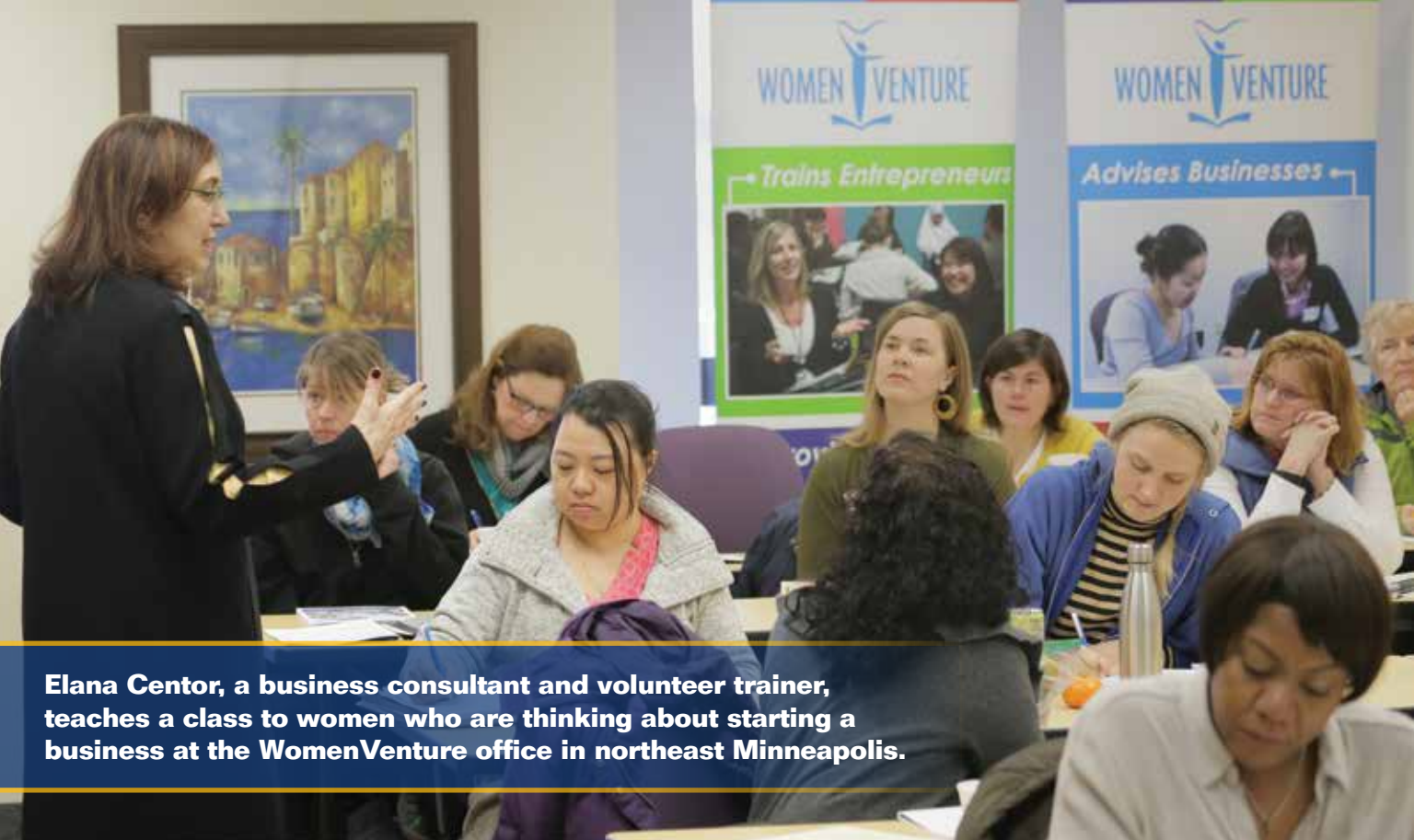
FOUNDED: 2011

CEO: Amanda LaGrange

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 50

WEBSITE:

techdump.org



Elana Centor, a business consultant and volunteer trainer, teaches a class to women who are thinking about starting a business at the WomenVenture office in northeast Minneapolis.

STAFF PHOTO: BILL KLOTZ

WOMEN VENTURE

*I*n 2016, WomenVenture helped women launch or strengthen more than 600 businesses, producing \$47.5 million in gross sales and creating or retaining more than 1,300 jobs.

Perhaps the most significant number is the median wage of more than \$27 an hour that those jobs paid, Women Venture executive director Elaine Wyatt said.

“The wages that the women are paying themselves and their employees, that’s one of the places where we feel like we really stand out in the market,” Wyatt said. “Our goal for every woman that comes to us — no matter what her business idea, her education or her income level — is that whatever business that she creates really is going to pay her a living wage.”

With a view of “using business ownership as a pathway to wealth,” WomenVenture offers classes, consultation and networking opportunities. WomenVenture in particular aims to serve low-income women and women of color, who have accounted for 60 percent and 40 percent of clients, respectively, so far in 2017, Wyatt said.

WomenVenture also provides access to capital. Last year it lent nearly \$600,000 to 20 new business clients and partnered with local banks to help clients access more than \$5 million in capital. A special interest is helping women who have had credit problems or lack assets to obtain financing, Wyatt said.

“They may be struggling because they need some capital to hire an employee, buy a piece of equipment or go into a space, whatever it is that’s holding their business back,” Wyatt said.

— Todd Nelson

MISSION:

Nonprofit helps women attain economic self-sufficiency through the creation and growth of profitable and sustainable businesses

BASED:

2021 E. Hennepin Ave.,
Suite 200, Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 1977

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Elaine Wyatt

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 16

WEBSITE:

womenventure.org

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Community solar gardens, like the Novel Solar Garden on the roof of Faircon Service Co. & Commercial Kitchen Services at 764 Vandalia St. in St. Paul, create jobs for solar developers, financiers, installers, tradespeople and professional service providers.

SUBMITTED PHOTO: XCEL ENERGY

XCEL ENERGY

Xcel Energy's footprint of economic activity goes far beyond the electricity it produces that powers the businesses and homes of millions of customers in eight Midwest and Western states.

The state's aggressive policy of promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy, buttressed by Xcel's many programs, have led to many jobs in ancillary businesses, said regional Vice President Laura McCarten.

Xcel's employee count has been flat, she said, but its demand-side energy efficiency efforts have led to "many opportunities" for businesses offering energy audits and analysis and retrofits, McCarten said.

The utility's ongoing Clean Energy Partnership with the city of Minneapolis and CenterPoint Energy offers efficiency programs for businesses and homeowners, McCarten said. "These programs reduce carbon emissions and help residents save money," she said.

In addition, the state's community solar garden program created jobs for solar developers, financiers, installers, tradespeople and professional service providers, McCarten said.

"As of today we have 57 megawatts of community solar gardens producing energy at 17 projects," she said. "Every one of those projects employed people in construction and now for ongoing operations."

Xcel Energy's foundation also provides a boost to the economy. In 2015 the foundation awarded \$3.8 million in grants to nearly 430 nonprofits which are focused in four areas: economic sustainability, environmental stewardship, arts and culture access and science, technology, engineering and math education.

"It's in our DNA to give back to the communities we serve," McCarten said.

— *Frank Jossi*

BUSINESS:

Electric utility operating in eight states

BASED:

401 Nicollet Mall,
Minneapolis

FOUNDED: 1998

**CEO/PRESIDENT/BOARD
CHAIRMAN:** Ben Fowke

EMPLOYEE COUNT: 11,992
5,408 in Minnesota

WEBSITE:

xcelenergy.com

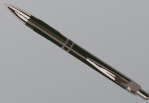
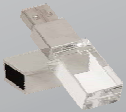
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- 3rd Best State (U.S. News & World Report, 2017)
- 5th in Economic Climate (Forbes, 2016)

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Joe King
King Technology
Owner & CEO



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