

Part of the process

Allegheny Construction makes sure nothing gets missed



Photo by D.M. Scott

STAYING BUSY: Laura Deklewa of Allegheny Construction Group offers a simple gauge of her company's success: "We're busy, so we're happy."

That Laura Deklewa would one day make a name for herself in the construction industry comes as little surprise. After all, this is a woman who within five days of her wedding was on a building site for a wastewater treatment facility with her new spouse, watching workers drive piles into the Allegheny River. It was simply a matter of when.

For the first 20 years of her career, Ms. Deklewa — who holds a degree in economics and business management — worked for her husband's family's construction company. But she was always imagining what she could do if she were her own boss.

In 1998, she got that chance when she purchased 2-year-old Allegheny Construction Group, a commercial contractor. In 2000, her husband Richard, himself a veteran builder, joined the company as a vice president/construction executive.

"Having been involved in a family company, but also being an outsider, I learned all aspects of the business — estimating, project management, all forms of administration," said Ms. Deklewa. "It was really an advantage."

According to Ms. Deklewa, Allegheny Construction's impressive growth of 184 percent in the last three years is the simple result of providing complete customer satisfaction. That means watching each and every project, no matter what its size, to make sure nothing gets missed.

It also involves listening to her customers and encouraging them to be part of the process so they understand what, exactly, they're buying.

"People want to be the most important person in your life while you're constructing their building," she said. "So you have to be there for them."

Key in that process is hiring the best the area has to offer. Though initially she ran an open shop, Ms. Deklewa quickly decided that employing nonunion workers was not the way she wanted to do business. Today, the company's workers come from several trade unions through the Master Builders' Association of Western Pennsylvania.

REAL ESTATE/CONSTRUCTION/DEVELOPMENT

1. Allegheny Construction Group Inc.
2. Reginella Construction Co. Inc.
3. American Boiler & Chimney Co.
4. Landau Building Co.
5. FLYNN Construction
6. LLI Technologies Inc.
7. Vista Resources Inc.
8. Renaissance 3 Architects PC
9. Workscape Inc.
10. Joseph B. Fay Co.
11. C.H. & D. Enterprises Inc.
12. Hanna Holdings Inc.
13. Marshall Elevator Co.
14. The Kachele Group
15. Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann Associates
16. Mongiovi & Son Excavating Inc. & Affiliates

"It's a much better labor pool, and they have marvelous training programs, both for men and women," she said.

Along with site excavation and demolition work, the firm does concrete/masonry work, rough and finished carpentry, and interior finish work. Specialty areas include fine millwork installation and pre-engineered buildings, an option that allows clients to cut down on costs.

"In a competitive market, where everyone is trying to make the numbers work, that's a definite opportunity," said Ms. Deklewa.

One of the company's most high-profile projects was a 100,000-square-foot indoor training center on the South Side for UPMC.

"We're busy," said Ms. Deklewa, "so we're happy."

— Gretchen McKay