

75 years



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At Friede & Associates, the excitement has been building for 75 years

Although Friede & Associates is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, it in fact traces its roots to around the Turn of the Century.

At its start, William A Friede & Sons was primarily a residential contractor and material supplier that began operations in the early 1900s. The company continued to build homes around the Reedsburg area until they, like many other businesses, closed their doors during World War II. After the war ended and the boys all returned home, the company reopened under the name Friede Brothers Construction. With the new name, the company moved from residential to commercial and industrial projects.

At first, the work tended to be on warehouses, factories, government buildings, schools and churches. But by the end of the 1990s, the company had begun to move away from bid work and instead to concentrate on design-build work, which allows designers and engineers to start working together while projects are still in their earliest stages.

By 1998, the company was a full-on professional service provider. With all the “brothers” long since retired, company president Roger Friede – whose great-grandfather had founded the company and whose father had run it until 1987 – decided to change the name to Friede & Associates. Not long afterward, Roger brought Scott Truehl in as a partner to help to continue the transformation of the company from a bid



contractor to one which offers value-added services to its clients, including site selection and assistance with project financing.

These changes also came at a time when the Wisconsin Dells was becoming the “Waterpark Capital of the World.” New indoor waterparks and extensive hospitality improvements helped turn a place long known as a summer resort into a year-round playground. Friede & Associates played a big part in that new construction in the early 2000s and has continued to do so to the present.

Friede’s design-build expertise has proved invaluable on some of the largest projects in the area, including the recent 125,000-square-foot addition to the Kalahari Convention Center, a project Friede completed last year.

“We were brought in very early as a construction manager and we were able to work in con-

cert with their architect and give them real-time updates of their budget,” Friede said. “As a result, this \$30 million project, with its many different elements, was able to be delivered on time and under budget.”

Truehl said the company’s expertise does not end with design-build.

“We try to deliver the whole solution,” he said. “So we get involved in helping to put projects together, finding land and finding communities and finding owners. Both Roger and I have an economic-development background, so we’ll work with TIF programs and the like and with assisting clients with banking and financing packages.”

Truehl said Friede & Associates has had, by necessity, to become an expert at odd jobs. It’s rare for any two projects in the Wisconsin Dells – with all of its hotels, theme parks, restaurants and

other attractions each seeking to distinguish itself from the competition – to be the same. The recognition that owners in the Dells, and throughout southern Wisconsin, are building ever more challenging projects prompted Friede in 2017 to trademark a new slogan: “We Do Weird Well.”

That the company has succeeded at what it set out to do is evident not only in its long list of repeat customers, but also its many awards. Over the past five years, Friede & Associates has been the most-honored contractor at the Associated Builders and Contractors’ annual Projects of Distinction awards program.

Besides the Kalahari addition, its many noteworthy projects include Vintage Brewing’s tap room on Madison’s east side, the adoration chapel at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Reedsburg, the Balanced Rock Winery in Baraboo, a 66-room Sleep Inn & Suites in Oregon, and the Oakstone Recreational center in Cottage Grove.

Friede said the company employs slightly more than 40 people. It began subcontracting out masonry a few years ago but still performs its own concrete and carpentry work.

“One of the nice things is that we’ve been slow to hire to make sure the work is there,” Truehl



said. “As a result, the vast majority of our employees end up sticking with us, even in time when people change jobs quickly.”

Friede said it’s not uncommon for employees to be with the company for decades. In 2019, for instance, a long-serving general superintendent Terry Greenwood, retired after 46 years.

With its small staff and a wide variety of projects, Friede & Associates puts great emphasis on finding people who can adapt to whatever tasks they are given.

“It’s not as if our guys are going to go out and do 67 Subway restaurants,” Truehl said. “Each project is going to be different. So we have attracted people from diverse backgrounds and have them both in the office and out in the field, and we try to match up the appropriate project team for each one. We don’t always have the same

superintendent with the same project manager. It’s always about putting together the best possible project team.”

The diversity also helps with retention by preventing anyone from getting bored. And then there are the many opportunities for advancement.

“About five or six years ago, we had quite a few folks who were close to retirement age,” Truehl noted. “And Roger and I decided that we wanted to continue to operate with our own crews as opposed to just becoming solely a construction management firm. Since then, we’ve brought in a lot of new people and promoted a number of guys in the field. The result is that we think we are positioned to grow and function well into the future.”

— Dan Shaw