

# The Lehigh Way

Volume 2 | Issue 1

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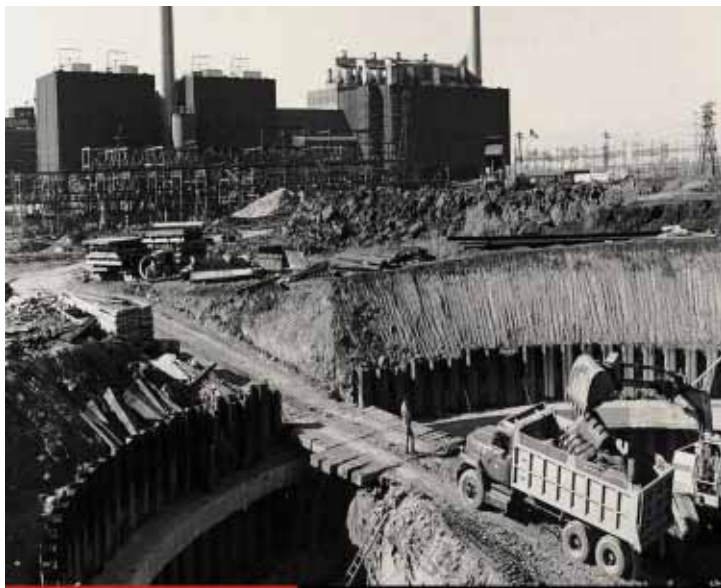
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# The Lehigh Way

A publication from



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# Welcome to The Lehigh Way



Well, what started as a “let’s give it a try” venture has become a great communication tool as we circulate the third issue of *The Lehigh Way* magazine.

Our goal with this publication is to provide trends, interesting facts and thought-compelling material focused on the Construction Industry. We hope you enjoy the variety of articles and the range of topics and invite you to submit your ideas for future issues.

This edition includes articles on wind energy, quick-response building repair, plant relocation and Lehigh’s perspective on “green” building, as well as several interesting sidebar stories.

This continues to be a challenging time for our industry so, now more than ever, I would like to thank our subcontractors, suppliers and partners for the advertising support they have provided to make this magazine possible.

To our clients, we love the challenges you throw our way—and it is always our quest to provide more value-added benefits from the Lehigh relationship. We wish you all the best in 2010—remember, prosperity has a trickle down effect. Let’s work together for the benefit of us all!

David E. Knauss  
President

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A scenic landscape photograph showing a gravel path leading through tall grass and trees under a blue sky. The path is in the foreground, leading towards a line of trees in the background. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

# Guardians of Energy

## Harvesting the wind

By Karrie Welborn

Sixty years ago, if you drove down Route 20A in Wyoming County, Western New York, you would see dairy farms, acre after acre of corn fields, hundred-year-old red barns (just like in the movies), rolling hills and quiet streams. Today, when you take that route, about ten miles east of the Village of East Aurora, 75 guardians of energy will greet you. These amazing structures are the wind turbines of High Sheldon Wind Farm, harvesting the wind for the energy grid. The turbines may seem like eerily overgrown windmills pulled from a science fiction novel, yet they are science, not fiction. Standing nearly 400 feet tall, these white machines, each with three 100-foot blades, are reapers of the wind, magnificent components in the production of electricity.

Change. It is both the constant and the dynamic of life and cultures. Without change, humanity stagnates. Yet when we embrace change, we open to the unexpected—discovering new options and attitudes. The transition between the bucolic drive down Route 20A sixty years ago and the view from today's travel is quite different. Why is it that America's farmlands are now sprinkled with large, utility-scale wind turbines? How did this change come to be?

### TAMING THE WIND

Using the wind as an energy tool is neither a new concept nor a lost cause. The search for a viable process to not only capture but store the power of the wind has been an erratic quest across the centuries. In 1860, during a lecture Abraham Lincoln called *Discoveries and Inventions*, he said, "I should think the wind contains the largest amount of motive power—that is, power to move things. ...the wind is an untamed, and unharnessed force; and quite possibly one of the greatest discoveries hereafter to be made, will be the taming, and harnessing of it."

When Thomas Alva Edison inaugurated the first power station on Pearl Street in Lower Manhattan in 1882, a paradigm shift in technological options and communication protocols occurred. By the mid-twentieth century, utility poles transferring electricity, not to mention voices, were ubiquitous along the highways and byways of America.

In 1888, in America, Lincoln's hope for taming wind and using it as a tool became a much greater reality. Charles F. Brush created a windmill able to generate electricity. In the century and a quarter since that first American wind-to-electricity use, the process of harnessing the wind and transforming it into electricity continues to be refined.

In the late sixties and early seventies of the 20th century, American “hippies” attempted to live without benefit of fossil fuels or modern conveniences. These groups, often seen as eccentric, did not have the technological knowledge to offer more than a personal retreat from their urban world. Instead, they harked back to the methods and processes of their pre-industrial ancestors. What they were missing was a technological breakthrough as strong as their mental attitude—a technology that was committed to the environment.

Today, the cleaner, greener “how” of obtaining electricity can no longer be simply a dream for idealists. It is instead, a necessity born of our culture’s propensity to waste rather than conserve. Moving away from fossil fuels is no longer a preference, it is a requirement. Humanity has depleted fossil fuels and perhaps harmed the planet in the process. Seeking technologically viable and renewable energy alternatives is a priority. As in Edison’s time, scientific and technological advances are initiating shifts in the literal methods used to produce the energy needed to help us with our modern tasks.

As the world enters the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Western culture is once again in the midst of a world-changing transformation. What at first seems strange, in time becomes the norm. When utility poles were first installed it was difficult to believe that they would ever become “invisible” to the eye—yet they did. Such is the case with the presence and use of utility-scale wind turbines in groups known as “wind farms.” They may seem odd and out of place, but in time they will simply blend with the environment.

There is much discussion these days about “sustainable” energy. Words like “clean” and “green” are prevalent in life, in power sources (water, wind, sun) and in the use of those clean energies for electricity. Using the earth’s natural, non-fossil fuel resources, such as wind, to generate electricity is one of the longest term—yet until recently, least used, of all intrinsic earth resources. Brush’s electricity-producing windmill notwithstanding, it has only been in the last several decades that an effective process for harvesting the wind was developed. To do so, intricate and massive technology had to be created and extensive research on how the wind works and where the best locations are for supporting wind turbines had to be understood.

## WHAT ABOUT THE COWS?

Wind turbines cannot be placed willy-nilly. There are calculations and research that must be done prior to choosing a site, most particularly if the project is a wind farm and not just one individual wind turbine.

The basic requirement is for flat land with nearby ridges or hills. Land that is hilly overall does not work well because rolling hills can block the wind speed. A wind farm site must be large enough to allow individual turbines to be spaced far enough apart so that they do not affect wind to nearby turbines. When turbines are too close together what is called “the wake effect” occurs. This effect blocks the very wind they are attempting to harvest.

Before a site is chosen, local winds are generally monitored for a year or more. Winds must consistently average at least 10 mph. Wind maps are created and locations for specific turbines are carefully reviewed. Wind Power Density (WPD) is a calculation that takes into account the force of the wind, elevation, velocity and mass. The National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) rates particular places based on their WPD. The larger the WPD calculation, the higher the score from NREL.

Oddly enough, according to James Gapinski, of wisegeek.com, “Domesticated animals, like cows, do not seem to be disrupted by wind turbines, so, many wind farm locations are deliberately placed

near land that has already been converted into grazing area for cattle.” Australia’s Waubra Wind Farms FAQs concur. The FAQs state: “Wind turbines do not have any noticeable impact on livestock. Animals such as cattle and sheep habitually graze around the wind turbines undisturbed.”

Finally, there must be an easily accessible power grid so that the electricity can be dispatched to homes and businesses. Without the grid availability, wind-harnessing becomes its own wasted energy.

## CHANGING WIND INTO ELECTRICITY

The process of changing wind into electricity is somewhat basic. The wind blows and hits the blades of the turbine; the angled blades transfer the linear motion of the wind into rotational motion in the turbine. The rotating blades and hub turn a shaft connected to a gear box, which in turn drives the generator to create electrical energy. Most of us learn these basics in high school physics.

Today’s wind turbines are intricate and mystifying, true technical marvels. There have been significant advances in technology advancing the process. Unlike a handheld pinwheel, high-tech wind turbines are amazing feats of engineering and technology. Each of the three blades is more than 100 feet long and they are mounted atop a tower that rises over 260 feet above the ground. The pitch of each blade is independently controlled to capture the maximum amount of wind as it passes through the blades, and the entire “pinwheel” is capable of 360 degrees in rotation around the base tower, which enables the turbine to be positioned exactly perpendicular to the direction of the oncoming breezes. And, just in case nature’s fury is too forceful, each turbine is outfitted with an aerodynamic breaking system and automatic shut-off valve to eliminate the potential for damage to the machinery.

All wind turbines have an anemometer and a wind vane, devices that measure wind speed and direction, which report back to the control system and position each wind turbine in its own unique ideal “wind catching” position. This completely automatic and integrated control means that each of the wind turbines on a wind farm is uniquely and independently positioned. Because wind changes direction many times as it traverses the landscape, it is possible, though unlikely, that at any given moment every one of the 75 turbines on the High Sheldon Wind Farm could be pointed in a different direction!

The turbines are each connected to a computerized network in the local Control Building, which continually monitors speed, direction, blade pitch, current energy output, total energy produced, and many other parameters. In turn, this information is transmitted from the local Control Building to remote monitoring centers across the country. From giant pinwheels above slumbering livestock, to the flip of a switch hundreds of miles away, the transformation of wind into electricity is no simple matter. It just looks that way.

## WINDY CONDITIONS AT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

Lehigh Construction Group, Inc., like many companies in this day and age, has become knowledgeable about renewable energy. In the winter of 2009, Lehigh worked with Invenergy, one of the leaders in wind farm development, construction and operation, on the High Sheldon Wind Farm project in Western New York.

Invenergy’s High Sheldon Wind Farm has all three requirements for a viable wind farm: wind, grid availability and land that can be leased. Lehigh Construction Group was contracted to build the control facility for the farm. This consisted of a single building that was 50 percent offices



and 50 percent shop services for the equipment needed at the wind farm. The office houses workstations for technicians, a breakroom, a conference room, a library of maintenance and equipment manuals and drawings, and a computer room for monitoring the farm and maintaining the wind logs.

According to Marty Knauss, Project Manager for Lehigh Construction Group, "In the general run of things this was not a particularly difficult build. There were no challenges in the actual process. The challenge, and it was an extremely intense one, was weather." Knauss explained that the build involved general construction, sitework, MEP (mechanical, electrical and plumbing), voice and data instruments, and a well and water treatment system. The project began in late fall/early winter of 2009. It was a particularly difficult winter with the added challenge that the building was at the center of 75 wind turbines and therefore in the midst of constant wind flow with a wind chill factor that was dangerous. To offset the weather challenges, Lehigh Construction Group built temporary enclosures of poly sheets, which trapped the heat so work could be done in a tolerable temperature. Also vital was monitoring the weather daily, as well as adjusting tasks and work objectives daily in order to maintain safety for everyone at the construction site.

The building and the 75 turbines became operational concurrently. It was a successful project for both Lehigh Construction Group and Invenergy. According to Mike Bessell, Project Manager for Invenergy at this wind farm, "High Sheldon Wind Farm generates about as much power as 25,000 average homes use annually."

## HARNESS VS. HARVEST

What is the difference between harnessing and harvesting the wind? In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wind was harnessed to mill lumber, grind grain, move a boat or a land vehicle, but when the wind was gone, so was the energy and power. Harvesting, on the other hand, means the energy is available beyond the immediate moment and location of the wind.

Today we use wind turbines to access the kinetic energy of earth's natural wind and transfer the resulting energy to an electrical grid that powers the many, many electronic devices of our culture. This is harvesting the wind—and yet, it remains a harvest that cannot be stored for a specific task or location nor can it be separated from the electricity that was derived from fossil fuels. Although electricity, once in the grid, can be used hundreds of miles from the source of its production, and in places where there is no wind at all, it still cannot be reserved as the power source for an exclusive destination or use.

For people who prefer to run their electronics exclusively on green energy, the process for receiving only green-derived energy has not yet been developed. Energy on the grid simply "is." Once in the mix, it stays in the mix. To use a very basic metaphor, storing electricity garnered from wind is akin to mixing several different flavors of Jell-O into one large container of boiling water. All of the powdered Jell-O enters the bowl, but once the powders have been blended into the water, there is no way to determine what particles came from which box of powdered Jell-O. The resulting liquid Jell-O can be poured into a variety of serving dishes, separated and dispersed to different locations, but once mixed, discerning what part of the jelled desert came from the red box and what came from green or orange is impossible. At this time in our technology, the same is true of electricity. It is simply not possible to determine if the electricity used to turn on any electronic device was derived from green sources or fossil fuels.



Photo by Mitchell Staskiewicz, Lehigh Construction Group, Inc. © 2010



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Green energy can be subsidized, but not actualized in terms of green or not-green energy. This means that those who want to encourage the use of green energy, and specifically wind energy, must actually pay more for their use of the grid. Clean energy, further research and the ultimate goal of being able to differentiate the energy source is one reason for a person/business to pay more to get what, as yet, cannot be determined to be strictly green-derived energy.

The U.S. Department of Energy states “Green pricing is an optional utility service that allows customers an opportunity to support a greater level of utility company investment in renewable energy technologies. Participating customers pay a premium on their electric bills to cover the incremental cost of the additional renewable energy. To date, more than 750 utilities, including investor-owned, municipal utilities and cooperatives, offer a green pricing option.”

Therefore, the reason an individual would request green energy is not to save on their electric bill, at least not in the short term, but to encourage and support the movement toward clean energy within our culture. With this support from individuals and businesses via the premium noted above, funding for research and new technology increases, with an aim toward improving efficiency, reducing costs and encouraging growth of clean, sustainable and reliable energy. Ultimately, our culture will gain a greater understanding of how harvesting wind and other renewable resources will work for everyone.

## THE NEXT STEP

One of the reasons wind farms, with their highly technical and powerful turbines, can exist is because local governments and landowners are willing to allow turbines to be built in the area or on leased private land. Bessell noted, “Without willing landowners and local governments who want to partner with us, we would not be able to build a wind farm. Our success in large part is due to participating landowners.” He added, “The wind farm industry is not a panacea, but it is part of the solution for a sustainable energy future. When we find a way to economically store wind and solar energy, we will be able to create a generating ‘fleet’ of

dispatchable, renewable energy.”

But that *is* the goal—for the technology to advance to the point where man can discern green energy from fossil fuel energy, even after it has been transformed into electricity.

In 1843, Henry Thoreau, who was a wind power advocate nearly 150 years ago, wrote in *Paradise (To Be) Regained*:

“First, there is the power of the Wind, constantly exerted over the globe.... Here is an almost incalculable power at our disposal, yet how trifling the use we make of it! It only serves to turn a few mills, blow a few vessels across the ocean, and a few trivial ends besides. What a poor compliment do we pay to our indefatigable and energetic servant.”

Thoreau would more than likely be pleased at the use now being made of that “indefatigable and energetic servant.” Wind farms, both on land and in the sea, in America and Europe now fund numerable grids with harvested electricity. In December 2009, led by Denmark and including Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Britain and Ireland, the “North Seas Countries’ Offshore Grid Initiative” was signed. The emerging reality of a powerful offshore wind power super grid in Europe indicates just how important wind power is seen across the world.

We may not, as yet, be able to delineate what is derived from green energy and what comes from fossil fuel once the electricity has entered a grid, but the potential is infinite, and the goal will ultimately be reached. Although the world as we know it may have a ways to go to this goal, the world of the future has a strong chance of being powered by green, clean, renewable resources. There was a time when the thought of flying in a metal machine seemed absurd to the people of the day, yet here we are, not only flying across country, oceans and around the world, but into the stars as well. What is new and amazing, or seems magical to one generation, may in fact, be a simple, taken-for-granted reality for another.

Wind—invisible except for its results, both good and disastrous—is a puzzle. Yet by turning the kaleidoscope of attitude and seeking knowledge in new ways, we enter a new phase in the ongoing technological revolution. ♦



# Charging the Future

## No need to tilt at windmills



Mary Ann and Earl Bartz

By Karrie Welborn

Who would have thought, back in the mid-1800s when the Bartz family first began dairy farming on their Western New York property, that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the ridge would hold an impressive 262-foot-high tower with blades of 123 feet? This amazing structure is not simply a “wind mill.” It is the modern equivalent—a wind turbine. Along with other landowners in the area, the Bartz’s have leased a spot of land to Invenergy as part of a 75 turbine, 112.5 MW wind farm in Sheldon, N.Y. They have one turbine on their property that has been in operation since March 2009.

For more than 150 years, down through the generations, the Bartz family has maintained their dairy farm. The current generation, Earl and Mary Ann Bartz, have a herd of 65 Guernsey dairy cattle and continue to work the farm.

They feel the wind farm is a boon to the Town of Sheldon. “It pays the town’s taxes,” said Mary Ann. “It’s a good thing.” In fact, the presence of Invenergy’s wind farm, and the resulting income to the township means not only that the town’s taxes are paid, but funds are directed to the fire departments, the schools, the School House Museum and the town park.

According to Earl, the process from initial, informational meetings to the actuality of the wind farm took about six years. It was not an easy decision for the town to make. The years between first concept and final reality at any proposed wind farm location means intense dialogue and differences of opinion among a town’s constituents. In the case of the Town of Sheldon, the final decision was in favor of building the wind farm.

When asked, the Bartz’s said they have not experienced any negative effects from “their” turbine. Negatives often noted in regards to wind turbines are noise, flickering and shadows accompanied by balance or inner ear difficulties. “No,” said Mary Ann, firmly. “No, we have not experienced any negatives.”

In fact, the wind turbine inspired Mary Ann to write a song. In the song, she sings of the “peace of its perpetually moving blades.” Although, she added, laughing, “We don’t often have time to sit and enjoy that peace!”

If Don Quixote were to attempt to engage

the “giant” residing on their land’s ridge, he would be waving his sword against the sweep of a vertical airspace with a base diameter of about 15 feet. But there is no need to tilt at windmills in Sheldon. Earl and Mary Ann, along with the majority of their neighbors, are pleased to be a part of a renewable energy project that brings benefits not only to their own farm and the town as a whole, but to unknown others who receive electricity harvested at the Sheldon Wind Farm.

To read the full lyrics of Mary Ann’s song, go to [www.LehighConstructionGroup.com](http://www.LehighConstructionGroup.com). ♦



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# These Guys Are Good!

## Lehigh's PRO Team knows their stuff

By Carrie Bui

Imagine calling for a repair and receiving a return call and estimate within 24 hours, then having the repairs completed as soon as possible. This is why businesses across multiple industries rely on LehighPRO, a quick-response specialty division of Lehigh Construction Group. The PRO division consistently responds to construction maintenance requests and solves building repair issues in a manner that is both prompt and professional.

LehighPRO grew out of the need to provide repair and maintenance services to commercial clients. The division is comprised of highly skilled technicians with extensive field experience. It's hard to fix a problem if you don't know how to build the building in the first place. That's what makes LehighPRO so unique—all of the mechanics know how to build buildings. The mechanics in Lehigh's PRO division worked on construction job sites prior to being promoted to the PRO team, giving them the experience necessary to resolve building issues promptly and correctly. Clients who work with the service frequently compliment the quick response times, the knowledgeable technicians and the professionalism.

### LEHIGH PRO TO THE RESCUE

The Ronald McDonald House Charities of Western New York began working with LehighPRO approximately two years ago. "Their timely response to my initial call and the PRO mechanics' ability to meet our tight deadline was impressive," said Sally Vincent, Executive Director of

the Ronald McDonald House (pictured above). "Lehigh answered my call for help in less than 24 hours and the mechanics finished the repairs within two days!"

The first project that LehighPRO was summoned to resolve at the Ronald McDonald House involved rebuilding the exterior trim on the building and replacing the gutters. "Because the structure is 150 years old, it was important to maintain the integrity of the original architecture," explained Vincent. "It might seem minor to some people, but it was important to me and Lehigh's PRO team took the small details very seriously." The catch, however, was that Lehigh needed to finish the project quickly so that the painters could begin their work on the building. "They were very good about getting it done in a timely fashion and keeping it within our timeline," said Vincent.

That successful first job with the Ronald McDonald House led to another job when the charity needed to repair the facility's kitchen countertops. Vincent called LehighPRO to come in after a hot pan cracked the Corian countertops. Another seemingly simple problem, but the countertop was custom-designed for the space and was comprised of one continuous piece of material. In order to avoid the cost of completely replacing the entire countertop, the PRO team went above and beyond—just like they always do. After some intense research on the Corian material, Lehigh was able to find an adhesive filler that seamlessly fused the Corian back together and made the

countertop look brand new. “They provide excellent service and workmanship. They’re knowledgeable and very professional about everything they do,” Vincent complimented.

### ALL IN A DAY’S WORK

Reliability is a vital component to any successful business relationship. “In today’s world, it’s just nice to call and know that someone will be there when they say they’re going to be there,” said Mark Seaner, Director of Construction with Sonwil Distribution. Sonwil provides office and warehouse commercial space to tenants. Timeliness is one of the reasons Seaner continues to call on LehighPRO when he needs to resolve building problems for Sonwil Distribution and its tenants.

Seaner commended the mechanics’ consistent professionalism, a necessary trait especially when working in front of Sonwil’s clients. “They look good, act professional, and they get the jobs done,” he said. “The feedback I get from my tenants is that Lehigh’s PRO mechanics’ appearances are better than what they have seen in the past. Our tenants like that (Lehigh’s) service vans are clean and well maintained. All the little stuff adds up, especially in our environment.”

The mechanics are incredibly versatile in their abilities and comfortable in a variety of settings. Clients especially appreciate the fact that Lehigh PRO’s versatility requires no sacrifice on quality. They recognize and respect the mechanics’ adaptability and extensive knowledge.

Seaner offered another example of why LehighPRO was the team to call and how easy it is to continue working when the mechanics are around. “We had a bunch of problems with windows where water was leaking through, and (the LehighPRO mechanics) had to come in while the tenant was in the office. It was like they weren’t even there. They were so quiet and efficient. I think that’s what separates them from everyone else.”

### EXPERIENCED IN FOOD PROCESSING FACILITIES

Lehigh PRO’s team members are seen as exceptional mechanics, able to handle many types of service—not just competently, but with ingenuity as well as quality. This adaptability is particularly notable when working in

sensitive facilities with clients such as Carriage House-Fredonia.

When a problem occurs within the building of a business, it’s important to owners to have the problem fixed as soon as possible with as little disruption to their business and production processes as possible. They need a reliable, knowledgeable construction mechanic who understands the needs of their business and respects those needs. LehighPRO consistently offers just that. Paul Zebraski, Plant Engineer with Carriage House-Fredonia said, “They know the task at hand and they get it done in a prompt, professional manner.”

The Carriage House Company is a manufacturer of private label foods, including jellies, peanut butter, barbecue sauce and syrups. “In a food facility, especially in an old facility,” said Zebraski, “it’s very important we have quick responses to issues that may impact product safety and product quality. When we find something, we get it addressed as quickly as we can, and they provide that service.”

Working with Lehigh’s PRO team also offers owners a peace of mind that they do not need to constantly oversee and monitor the mechanics. “From a building repair and building maintenance perspective, they’re prompt and skilled, well-versed in a multitude of disciplines,” said Zebraski. He added, “The PRO mechanics work with little or no direct supervision. They’re very goal-oriented.”

### IT ALL ADDS UP

Whether a business needs a quick response, an ingenious resolution to an unexpected problem, a positive response to a small but vital issue, or just quality service any time, anywhere—LehighPRO is the answer. The PRO team’s commitment to the client is evident not only in their quality of work, but also in the time they spend on a job. They truly care about each task, and work to make sure the customer is happy.

Lehigh PRO thrives on small, unique and difficult jobs that no one else will consider. Not only do they search for these types of work, they do it all well—quickly, cleanly and to the clients’ satisfaction. The Lehigh PRO team is the “go to” service for all of the small construction jobs in any industry—from banking to pharmaceutical production, retail mini-marts to industrial plants, food processing to churches and institutions. Simply put—These Guys are Good! ♦



Lehigh PRO frequently provides maintenance and repair services to food processing plants like Carriage House in Fredonia, N.Y.



Mark Seaner of Sonwil Distribution regularly calls on the experience of Lehigh’s PRO team for warehouse and office repairs.





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# Where are all the LEEDers in Green Building?

LEED is not the only shade of “green”

By Carrie Bui

Photo by Al Zamorski, Studio Z Photography © 2010

“The smart money thinks of green as more than just a buzzword that people use when they want to persuade someone to jump onto their environmental bandwagon,” says Marty Knauss, Project Manager and LEED AP for Lehigh Construction Group, Inc. After all, green is also the color of money.

Knauss likes to remind anyone who’s considering the construction of a new building that it’s profitable to think about how “green” connects those two ideas. “Property owners who are getting ready to build often assume that green construction means they’d have to lay out more green to get their building. They should think again,” Knauss says.

## THE COST OF “GOING GREEN”

Building sustainably does not necessarily mean more money. Lehigh Construction Group Project Manager John Rupp notes that while there might be fewer owners choosing LEED in today’s strained economy, it doesn’t mean they aren’t choosing greener products or methods. “I think you see more people going green. It’s the LEED part of things that is lagging behind, and I think it’s mainly because of the additional cost,” said Rupp.

Rupp believes that LEED can be credited with increasing owners’ awareness of sustainable building practices, and the LEED guidelines can continue to serve as a resource for owners to learn about green options for new and existing buildings. However, the process of LEED certification is an expensive one that many owners think of as unnecessary in today’s financially strapped economy. “With things a little bit tighter, I think the building probably gets designed the same without the plaque on the wall,” he said.

Lehigh Construction Group’s client, Saratoga Eagle Sales & Service, found themselves in this situation last year when building their new beverage distribution facility. They researched the requirements for applying for LEED certification, but decided the additional cost could not be justified and wasn’t

necessary to achieve the required effectiveness for the facility. However, not going for LEED certification didn’t stop Saratoga from implementing sustainable methods at the facility. Saratoga chose to use a number of high-efficiency options that would pay back within five years or less of installation. Although an insulated roof, insulated windows and high-efficiency equipment raised upfront initial costs, they will reduce heating and cooling costs over the long-term. And, as an added “green” bonus, this facility even touts a truck wash system with 100 percent water reclamation.

## SENSIBLE DECISIONS ON SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

Cost aside, the downfall of LEED certification occurs when an owner becomes more concerned with earning certification points than with sustainability. Considering whether or not a method or product actually makes the building more sustainable is as important as choosing green in the first place. Rupp explained, “For instance, you can get a point for a bike rack, but if you’re in the middle of nowhere and no one’s going to ride their bike to work, is it really helping? The cost of making it, shipping it and installing it just to get the certification flies in the face of the intent of the LEED system.”

When it comes to the actual cost of building green, Knauss points out that the perception of cost in sustainable construction is influenced by media portrayals, and it doesn’t take into account either value or potential return on investment. Building with sustainability in mind may cost more to start with, but it can save on future energy bills and increase the building’s marketability, which in turn has a bearing on its return on investment.

“A lot of an owner’s decisions are based on what energy costs right now. What happens if the price of oil goes up and the price of gasoline goes up?” Knauss points out. “Then the time frame of the return on investment becomes a lot quicker. Businesses and individuals have to take that into account as well.”



## ADAPTIVE RE-USE AND RENOVATION

This applies even for projects that start with sites whose existing structures were constructed without even a thought that some day the planet might run low on oil. One way to put a greener building on that site would be to tear down the old one and put up something new, but sometimes renovating it instead saves on the costs of clearing the site and buying all new materials. Adaptive reuse and renovation, in which an existing building is renovated or repurposed with existing materials, can be both cost-effective and a sustainable construction practice. Knauss believes that every owner thinking about demolition should consider whether it might be more feasible to save the cost of new materials by renovating instead. Lehigh Construction Group is a regional leader for adaptive reuse and renovation projects, and for good reason. Lehigh often collaborates with architects to choose recycled, reused or repurposed materials for projects. "Saving a building from the landfill is one of the greenest things you can do," Knauss says.

Lehigh Construction Group encourages the idea that with a little creative thought and ingenuity, salvaged materials such as masonry, stone, windows, doors, concrete, brick and more can be repurposed for new construction. Concrete from a structure's foundation can be crushed and used as back-fill. Brick or masonry formerly used for structural reasons can be added into a new building for decorative purposes, and salvaged wood or timber can be re-crafted into trim or flooring.

As an example, Knauss points to Lehigh's role in saving the Asbury Methodist Church on Delaware Avenue in the city of Buffalo, now known as "Babeville." Lehigh Construction Group was the Construction Manager/General Contractor that turned an old church into the headquarters for Righteous Babe Records, the recording home of

singer/musician Ani DiFranco and manager Scott Fisher; a concert hall and a contemporary art center. "They [DiFranco and Fisher] decided to save an old church in downtown Buffalo from the wrecking ball. It was a noble, but formidable task," Knauss says.


To preserve the architectural beauty of the church, DiFranco and Fisher wanted to avoid installing large mechanical equipment that would mar the exterior appearance of the building. Instead of a conventional HVAC system, Lehigh installed a geothermal well system to heat and cool the building, a choice that not only maintained the visual aesthetic of the structure, but was also eco-friendly. The geothermal wells are located underneath the parking lot and act as a heat exchanger with the earth itself. "Geothermal wells harness the consistent temperature of the earth in order to efficiently cool and heat buildings," Knauss explains.

He goes on to point out that the geothermal wells for Babeville, other efficient HVAC systems, better insulation systems and simple practices like designing more natural lighting and passive solar design into the building help reduce energy costs by using electricity more efficiently. Knauss suggests that this kind of energy efficiency begets other efficiencies too. "You're creating a more efficient business by the way you run your building," he says.

## FROM BOWLING ALLEY TO CLASSROOM

Knauss has other examples of adaptive reuse projects in which Lehigh Construction has helped owners save money by incorporating sustainable building methods into their renovations. For Buffalo United Charter School, Lehigh transformed a derelict bowling alley into a two-story charter school.

When Jack Bouquin, Lehigh's Superintendent on the project, first saw the building, it was extremely dilapidated. Massive amounts of debris and



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garbage were strewn around the exterior. Within six months, Lehigh and its subcontractors gutted the interior, keeping the foundation and exterior masonry walls; replaced the roof; and readied the building for classroom use. Salvaging the foundation and exterior masonry walls saved much of the cost of replacing them, and eliminated hundreds of tons of material from being trucked off to the landfill.

Both of these projects exemplify the way that a building can be preserved as a valuable part of a community's history while also becoming a vital part of its future. "Another thing that gets glossed over is that buildings are sustainable if people like them, if people love them. An intrinsic part of sustainability is creating good buildings—buildings that people appreciate," Knauss says. "If you can reuse a building as opposed to tearing it down to build a new one, it can be a smart thing for your community and the environment."

### GO GREEN... IT'S THE LAW!

These practices are more than just smart—they're also becoming the law, with the federal government and some states already leading the way. "As more municipalities and governments adopt sustainable design and building practices, it's inevitable that building codes will change to adopt green building practice. I can't predict how soon or how far away that may be, but I certainly think it's going to happen within my business lifetime," Knauss says. For example, the state of California recently adopted a mandatory new green building code, effective January 2011, considered to be the nation's greenest, strictest code. While it may be too soon to judge, California's new code could be a glimpse into the future for other states and cities.

As governments implement more stringent building codes, the codes

and LEED requirements will begin to intersect. For example, Lehigh's Rupp noted that New York's energy code already comes close to meeting LEED certification. "As energy codes become more efficient, maybe there'd be a chance LEED would go by the wayside or as the energy code becomes more stringent, maybe LEED would become more stringent just so you'd be the upper echelon," he suggested.

But for Knauss, LEED certification, legal mandates and even cost-efficiencies aren't the best reasons for adopting sustainable building practices sooner rather than later.

"I like sustainable building practices, materials and methods. It's interesting, and I think it's here to stay," he says. "The environment we are providing for our children could be cleaner and safer. It's up to everyone—governments, businesses and individuals—to do their part to reduce waste and start making decisions based on sustainability."

Knauss wants to make sure that the world his children will inherit still has the environmental resources to sustain them. His part in that, he thinks, is to build structures that will place no lien on the future of those resources. "I'd like to think that people, at least as individuals, care about the world we're creating and leaving behind for the next generation," he says. "For the ones that don't, it's a pretty grim way to go through life."

Yet many people do care, and they are doing what they can to implement the brightest shade of green possible for their company. Although many owners choose to forego the costly endeavor and paperwork maze required by the U.S. Green Building Council for LEED certification, they do take our world's environment to heart by implementing sustainable building practices that are realistic and affordable. Society may no longer be striving for a heart of "gold;" instead, it is a heart of green that is the goal. ♦



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# May Old Acquaintance Be Remembered

Local relationships provide far-reaching benefits By Karrie Welborn

Over the past several decades, Buffalo, N.Y. has witnessed an ever-growing outflow of businesses and workforce. It is not uncommon to read newspaper stories telling of yet another company that has packed its bags and moved out of town. Frankly, it's depressing. How then, does a Buffalo-based business make "lemonade out of lemons?" It's a matter of not sitting idly by and watching. With a little ingenuity, some creative thinking and a lot of hard work, it's possible to find a silver lining in just about every cloud!

## THE VALUE OF LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

When business organizations move operations from one region to another, opportunities for business-to-business growth are revealed through unexpected pathways. As these previously unseen or unused avenues for partnership become visible, they lead to stronger, not weaker, interactions between companies. Although the loss of an important employer is an unfortunate event for a city, it does not necessarily follow that vendors in that city must also feel loss. In today's culture, geographic distance is less important for a General Contractor than the fact that they can provide value engineering to the project as well as quality in communication, cost-effectiveness and expertise in task assignments.

A case in point is certainly Lehigh Construction Group's relationship with Henkel North America. Once relocation from Buffalo, N. Y. to Greenville, S.C. was finalized for Henkel's Dualite™ manufacturing

plant, Lehigh entered a competitive bid to perform the structural and fire-proofing work for the new manufacturing location in Greenville. Stephen Zavodny, Process Engineering Director for Henkel, said he was initially surprised that Lehigh opted to bid on the project since it was out of Lehigh's general locale and the bid would necessarily include costs for travel and housing. That Lehigh was ultimately invited to bid, said Zavodny, was in part influenced by the fact that Lehigh built the Buffalo plant years ago and had been responsible for maintenance on the building for some time. "This meant," said Zavodny, "that Lehigh personnel not only knew the building, they knew the personnel working in the building."

The project was comprised of two distinct phases, the initial structural phase, and a secondary mechanical/electrical (M/E) phase that encompassed moving Henkel's Dualite™ equipment from Buffalo to Greenville. Zavodny said it was his plan to identify a General Contractor to do the first part of the project, re-fitting of the existing Greenville building, and then request competitive bids from subcontractors for piping and ventilation. In spite of the geographical challenges, Lehigh came in with the best competitive bid for Phase 1 and was awarded a \$1,245,000 contract for the structural portion of the project. Because their work on Phase 1 was excellent, Zavodny offered them a first option in offering a competitive bid for the M/E phase, the relocation of production equipment from Buffalo to Greenville. Lehigh was awarded the bid for Phase 2.

An open book contract means all documents are accessible to the owner. Owners are able to be involved from pre-construction and trade subcontractor choices all the way through construction and closeout.



Photo by Al Zamorski, Studio Z Photography © 2010

## Value Engineering

“An experienced general contractor/construction manager, with their vast experience, brings value thinking to a project. Value thinking is the foundation for value engineering, which refers to determining the best, most useful and cost-effective solution for the life cycle of a building. Value engineering is not about the lowest construction cost, it is about the most effective and efficient approach to a construction project.” Joseph P. Hogan, CDT, Vice President - Building Services AGC NYS, LLC

### OTHER RESOURCES:

Value Engineering, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and posted on the White House website in Circular No. A-131 is: An organized effort directed at analyzing the functions of systems, equipment, facilities, services, and supplies for the purpose of achieving the essential functions at the lowest life-cycle cost consistent with required performance, reliability, quality, and safety. These organized efforts can be performed by both in-house agency personnel and by contractor personnel. [www.whitehouse.gov/omb/rewrite/circulars/a131/a131.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/rewrite/circulars/a131/a131.html)

[Value engineering] ... is an organized approach to the identification and elimination of unnecessary cost. [www.misronet.com/valueeng.htm](http://www.misronet.com/valueeng.htm)

### VALUE IS NOT THE LOWEST PRICE

Any project, regardless of location, begins with the bidding process. To bid wisely does not necessarily mean to bid low. A wise bid takes into consideration all ramifications of the project and determines options that will lower cost while maintaining quality. How did Lehigh, an out-of-state general contractor, prepare bid amounts for Henkel that were more successful than local contractors? John Rupp, Project Manager for Lehigh Construction Group, clarified, “Although Lehigh was somewhat disadvantaged because we were not acquainted with Greenville subcontractors or the area, we were highly advantaged in our willingness to ‘think out of the box.’”

Price is always important, but knowledge about a product is equally important. Rupp added, “Our painting subcontractor, in particular, N. Choops Painting, Inc., was able to cut their cost substantially.” This was due to knowledge—not only Lehigh’s knowledge of their vendors, but the vendor’s knowledge of the product to be purchased, a required fire-retardant (intumescent) paint. Although the paint was available from vendors in Greenville and Buffalo, the knowledge of how to use the paint was immediately available only from Buffalo. Choops’ knowledge regarding the application of the specialized paint clinched the savings potential.

“The fireproofing process,” explained Chris Reichert, Lehigh Superintendent for the Henkel project, “took two weeks. They had to coat in three phases to make it fireproof. Then they put a final coat of paint over that, which made the project messy, but in the end, it turned out very well. Special inspectors had to come out and test the thickness to verify all the steel was properly coated. Every piece of steel had to be painted with the fireproof coating.”

Another vendor brought to the project from Buffalo, according to Rupp, was Buffalo Materials Handling Corp. (BMH). BMH suggested the use of a “materials lift” rather than an elevator for the build process. Although this suggested change created some inconveniences and meant people were not allowed to ride on the lift, it also meant that costs were considerably less—enough to offset the inconveniences while using alternative methods to move people within the structure.

When a General Contractor is able to determine which local subcontractors are the best choice, yet can—in a cost-effective manner—also bring in vendors from their home region, they facilitate an operation that brings prosperity to the home terrain as well as to the build-site. It is also possible, as it was in this situation, to provide a solution that actually saves the owner money.

An important factor in working outside the home region is being up to date on that area’s local Building Code. Knowing both current and pending Codes means the building will be completed up to Code and prepared for future requirements. The life cycle of the building is as important as the initial build in terms of safety and cost. If pending Codes are known ahead of time, the General Contractor can include them in the cost of the project and save the owner future expenditure.

One particular challenge specific to being out of the home territory is the need to forestall negative feelings from local businesses. Positive communication techniques, along with the use of construction best practices, facilitate the resolution of any regional differences and quell potential negativity.

Reichert, who was on-site in Greenville for four and a half months overseeing the structural phase of the project, said, “As far as the local (Greenville) Building Codes, they were not much different from Buffalo. The real out-of-town challenge was making sure we developed



relationships with the local people to build their trust in Lehigh.” He added, “We were able to build a relationship with [local] contractors. Everything was on a really tight deadline, and we worked long hours, but they were able to keep up the pace. This project probably had one of the tightest schedules I’ve ever worked on at Lehigh but, all in all, they cooperated quite well. They went out of their way to make sure things were done. Omni Construction made sure our needs were taken care of.” Reichert pointed out, “The key is being able to handle certain personalities and certain attitudes, negative and positive reactions. In my opinion, the contractors did what they had to do, and everybody worked well to get the project done on time.”

## THE PROJECT—TEAMWORK IN ACTION

### *Phase 1 – Structural*

The structural phase of the project began on July 1, 2009 and set in motion an aggressive schedule that would continue into Phase 2. It included 100 tons of erected steel, 250 linear feet of fire separator walls, fireproofing of steel, material lifts and other ancillary items. Timing was imperative, specifically since Dualite™ production needed to be in place at the Greenville plant by the end of November 2009.

“It was a five-and-a-half month contract encompassing 20,000 man hours—a very fast project,” said Zavodny. “Lehigh’s work on Phase 1,” he added, “was excellent. Not only did Lehigh keep on schedule, but by September 1, 2009 all the construction work was complete for the phase, with very few change orders.” Overall, according to Zavodny, the sum total of change orders was less than the spread of the bid.

### *Phase 2 – Mechanical/Electrical (M/E)*

According to Rupp, Phase 2 of the project entailed disconnecting equipment in Buffalo, packing it into crates, trucking it to Greenville, setting it into place, and connecting all M/E components of the equipment. Based on the value Lehigh brought to the structural portion of the work, the M/E phase was awarded to them on an “open book” basis.

“For this phase,” said Rupp, “we hired MLP Contracting, a Buffalo-based heating and plumbing company, as a consultant. Together we researched reputable M/E contractors, administered the bid process, interviewed all of the bidders, and managed the project. The owner was present and involved in the subcontractor selection process, but Lehigh ‘steered the ship.’” Reichert added, “Mike Liakos of MLP led the interviews. We all asked questions, but in my eyes, Mike picked the best bidders, the best contractors.”

Reichert also noted, “This phase was a challenge because it required a lot of detailed coordination with Henkel and the outgoing personnel at the Buffalo plant. Communication through e-mail and phone calls were important in making sure we were all on the same track. George Willard, Superintendent for MLP supervised all the M/E tasks for Phase 2. George was up in Buffalo, tagging and labeling all the equipment. It took about three days to transport the equipment to South Carolina. Once the equipment got to Henkel, the rigging went well when we off-loaded it. Everything was hooked up by the end of November.”

## SUCCESS KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

Going beyond a company’s founding region, although at times problematic, more often than not is a gateway to greater success. To expand beyond known boundaries—literal or symbolic—is an indication that growth is not just at hand, but is overflowing. Lehigh, in expanding

its services beyond Western New York, is serving notice that it has reached a level of competence that is national in nature.

Expansion speaks not only to the tasks accomplished over time with consistent quality, but to the ingenuity and wisdom of the personnel who take on those tasks. Maintaining a professional reputation requires an ongoing consistency in work ethics as well as beyond-standard quality—regardless of the projects. Extending beyond local borders means all of the above, plus being able to think outside normal parameters and quickly adjusting to differing circumstances. The ability to work within a different cultural base is also important.

When Henkel North America chose to relocate the Dualite™ manufacturing plant from Buffalo, N. Y. to Greenville, S. C. it was a blow to the city—but a trigger of expansion for Lehigh Construction Group. Because Lehigh could stand firmly upon their history of excellent work, knowledge of local vendors and belief in the integrity of its personnel, they were able to bid and win two diverse projects beyond not only the city of Buffalo, but the state of New York. In spite of the initial surprise from Henkel, Lehigh’s ability to think beyond the city, even while using some of that very city’s vendors to complete the project, exemplifies the ability to know not only when, but how to effect such an expansion. The success of Lehigh in this Henkel relocation not only awarded Lehigh the chance to expand their boundaries, it allowed them to recoup some of the finances lost to the city caused by the relocation. Lehigh Construction Group was chosen because they are competitive, cost-effective, hard-working, knowledgeable, willing to research the details, to communicate with grace in an unfamiliar city and work in harmony with those hired in Greenville. ♦



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