

Engineering firm attributes success to staff, diversification

By James Pletcher Jr., HeraldStandard.com
Posted: Sunday, May 6, 2012



Robert Sleighter owner of Sleighter Engineering is pictured in front of Lafayette Elementary and Middle School which currently undergoing reconstruction and renovation by his firm.
Photo by Roberto M. Esquivel/HeraldStandard.com

The thing that stands out most about Robert Sleighter are his piercing blue eyes, a possible metaphor for a far-reaching vision for his company, Sleighter Engineering Inc.

Founded in 1995, Sleighter Engineering today is a one-stop shop offering services ranging from the client's basic idea for a project to its ultimate construction.

In between, Sleighter Engineering provides dozens of services, including site planning, facility design, land development, grading, landscape planning, architectural design, mechanical, electrical and plumbing design, bid and contractual support services and construction inspection and management.

And, through his subsidiary company, Golden Rock Construction, Sleighter can build the facility for his clients.

With sales reaching about \$1 million annually, Sleighter said success in a difficult economic environment comes "when you do the right thing. Sooner or later, people will recognize what you do."

A Uniontown native and 1979 graduate of Uniontown Area High School, Sleighter knew early on he wanted to be an engineer. He studied for two years at Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus to get a degree in architecture before going to the University of Pittsburgh, where he received his bachelor's degree in civil engineering.

"Engineering and architecture have a certain amount of creativity to them. I also have a lot of family in this area and I wanted to open my business here," he said.

"When I walked onto the Pitt campus, I knew I wanted to work for myself and have an engineering business," he said.

He also "wanted to do something to make my community better. So, I put a lot of effort into our projects."

In order to become a civil engineer, a person must have a four-year degree and then work in engineering for four years before taking a licensing test. Course for study includes math, chemistry, physics and then a series of graduate level courses.

"There are a million different things an engineer can do," Sleighter said, adding that work could be in structural engineering, environmental engineering, bridge construction and many other areas.

"My focus is more on supporting traditional engineering venues," he said.

"We do a lot of federal work, multi-family housing. We have a half-dozen long-term contracts for just that. Over the last few years we have expanded into architectural and site planning, surveying building design and overseeing construction on projects.

"Our diversification is one reason for our success," he said.

"We also have a great staff. We have all worked in an office setting and we know who gets the work done and pushes it out the door. The people here love their job and are good at it."

The Pittsburgh Business Time recognized Sleighter Engineering's success, naming it one of the top 100 fastest growing companies in the area in 2011.

With a dozen employees and a list of completed and ongoing projects that would be the envy of any engineering company, Sleighter continues to look to the future. Located in an extensively remodeled house on Connellsville Road, Uniontown, Sleighter said he plans to build a new facility on a two-acre parcel for his businesses in the University Technology Park on Route 119 north, next to Penn State Fayette.

Another development Sleighter noted is in the natural gas industry, especially the work being done in extracting gas from the Marcellus Shale.

"This has created some excitement in the region. It's not just the gas business but related business. We see it in the industries that support gas exploration. With us having engineers and architects, we are positioned for growth.

"I think that as an industry (natural gas) is here to stay," he said.

"My whole life I have looked for a spark like this to bring this area back."

Sleighter Engineering has a wide range of clients, including architects, redevelopment authorities, housing authorities, schools, developers, and private commercial/residential clients.

The client list includes the following:

- Public housing: Fayette County Housing Authority, Connellsville Housing Authority, McKeesport Housing Authority, Housing Authority of the County of Green, Elk County Housing Authority, Allegheny County Housing Authority and Threshold Housing Development.

- Non-profits and educational: Uniontown Area School District, Preston County School District, W. Va., Greensburg Salem School District, Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette County, Laurel Hills Foundation, Fayette County Community Action, New Stanton Assembly of God, Perryopolis Catholic Sokol Club, Hopwood Village, Port Marion Fire Department, Laurel Highlands School District, Geibel Catholic High School, Bentworth School District, Fayette County Emergency Management Agency, Faith Benedict Parish Center, Free Methodist Church of McClellandtown and Highlands Hospital.



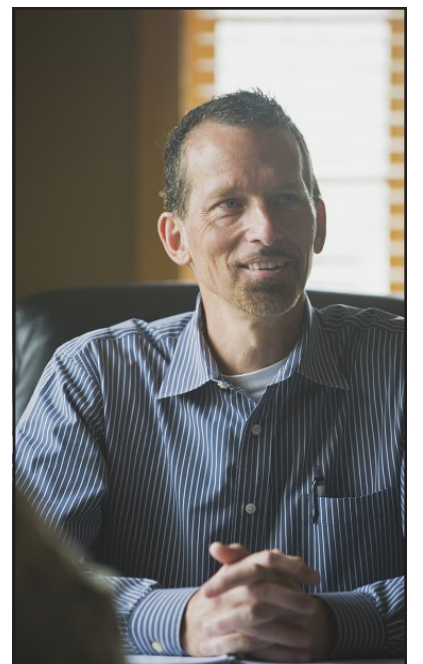
Robert Sleighter points out the design of the new building that will house his firm.
Photo by Roberto M. Esquivel/HeraldStandard.com

- Commercial: Mount Pleasant Dairy Queen, Uniontown Dairy Queen, Cranberry Dairy Queen, Waynesburg Dairy Queen, American Broadband National Headquarters, Mountain Spring Medical Building, Seven Springs Post Office, Cedar Tree Plaza and Nickman Plaza.

- Residential: Northview Manor, Mountainview Estates, Crucible II Development, Jacob Street Townhouses, James Street Lot Plan and Keystone Square I & II.

Sleighter Engineering is broken up into five departments. In its architecture department, Kenneth F. Schrock is director of architecture, Karissa Pytlak is an architect intern and Dan Hennessey is architectural designer. In the engineering department, Derrick W. Crane is director of engineering, Benjamin Walls is project manager and Calvin Clair is a civil designer. In administration, Mary Greg is office manager and Cindy Guadeloupe is administrative assistant. In construction inspection and field survey, John P. Logan heads up survey and Nathan Utz is construction inspector. The marketing department includes James E. Laero, director of marketing and business development and Nicole Sleighter, one of Sleighter's four children, marketing specialist.

For more information, call Sleighter Engineering at 724-438-4010 or go online to www.sleighterengineering.com



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