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Blue martinis top off celebration for Waterloo construction firm

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WATERLOO

Melloul-Blamey Construction, one of the Kitchener-Waterloo region's largest and most diversified construction firms, recently celebrated its 25th anniversary with some 300 guests — and blue martinis.

"We're having a great time," co-founder and president Bernie Melloul told *Daily Commercial News*. "The industry has been wonderful to us. The business keeps growing exponentially year after year."

The company, which has a total of 130 employees in Canada and the United States, now completes construction volumes of more than \$150 million per annum in Ontario and another \$50 million (US) a year south of the border.

"They're carving out a niche in the U.S. in much the same way as they did in Ontario," said Neil Aitchison, senior manager of market development.

The success story took root in 1982, when Melloul and David Blamey, classmates from Conestoga College, started living their dream with a humble office on Borden Avenue in Kitchener.



Seen from left are David Blamey and Bernie Melloul of Melloul-Blamey Construction.

In the beginning, projects were primarily acquired through fixed-price bidding of public and private work.

"Dave and I have known each other since 1969," said Melloul, a past chair of the Ontario General Contractors Association. "We've been great friends basically all our adult lives. It's been a great relationship."

Fast forward 25 years to the present: Melloul-Blamey has expanded to construct more 500 institutional, recreational, commercial and industrial projects across the entire province, while approaching a cumulative \$750 million in completed projects.

Diversification played an integral role in this success, with Blamey and a team of Canadians setting up an American branch in Greenville, S.C in 2000. An office in Barrie was added in 2003 to better service the Ontario market north of Toronto.

"When we first started out, we thought we'd be happy doing \$5 million a year," said Blamey who flew up specifically to attend the celebration. "We flew by that so quickly."

As the company looks to the future, a succession plan has been implemented under the stewardship of Jeff Shantz, vice-president, project development, Joel Melloul, vice-president, estimating, Steve Hanley, vice-president, construction management and Jeff Heimpel, vice-president, business development.

"Celebrating 25 years is a tremendous accomplishment in our industry," said the senior Melloul.

At last week's event, the company presented a cheque for \$25,000 to a local charity, Ray of Hope. The funds will be used to help finance construction of a 40-bed centre to house teenagers who suffer from drug and alcohol addictions.

"We're proud to be a part of that," said Melloul, whose firm will also construct the estimated \$12 million facility.

In attendance at the event were local consultants, architects, clients and politicians.

The company hosted a second celebration the following day for its subtrades, field workers and spouses.

Those blue martinis were Heimpel's brainchild. Joel Melloul was the mixologist.

"We tried different concoctions at quitting time for three or four nights in a row until we got the right mixture," Aitchison said. "They were a huge hit. We've had several people ask for the recipe."
