

Time to say thank you

Melloul-Blamey Construction grateful for 25 years in business

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Melloul-Blamey Construction signs have been posted on job sites throughout Waterloo Region for the past 25 years.

The company is celebrating its milestone anniversary this month, and to mark the occasion they're going to take the time to say "thank you."

"The two most appreciated words in business are thank you. And the most unused words in business are thank you. So we're going to spend a lot of money this year saying thank you," said Neil Aitchison, the company's senior manager of market development.

Making it to 25 years is a significant achievement in an industry in which most companies don't stay in business that long, he said.

"That's a statistic in itself."

The company's co-founder Bernie Melloul agrees that it's a "tremendous accomplishment."

"However, this milestone would never have been realized if it were not for the creative, innovative people in this community who dared to dream and channel a distinct vision."

Melloul and his business partner David Blamey met when they were enrolled in Conestoga College's construction technology program many years ago.

After graduating at the top of their class, they worked for a local construction company for about a decade before starting their own.

They began building homes in upper Beechwood out of their little shop on Borden Avenue in Kitchener.



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From left, Jeff Heimpel, Steve Hanley, Joel Melloul and Jeff Shantz are taking over ownership of Melloul-Blamey Construction.



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The NorthBridge Business Centre is one of Melloul-Blamey Construction's many local projects. It is at the corner of Northfield Drive and Bridge Street.

Now, the company, which employs 50 people, has completed more than 500 building projects across the province.

And they've gone international, with offices in Barrie and South Carolina.

The company constructs \$100 million worth of buildings each year, and in 2007 Aitchison is expecting they'll exceed that figure.

"We've just signed some huge new projects."

They currently have 22 on the go.

Past projects include the new building at Renison College, the co-op building at the University of Waterloo, B-K Motors, the Home Hardware complex in St. Jacobs and KidsAbility -- Centre for Child Development, among many more.

To celebrate their 25th anniversary, Aitchison said a tent will be erected in their parking lot this spring for the public to come, enjoy food and drinks, and hear about the company's past as well as where it's going.

They've also just finished renovating their Rupert Street office.

Now, customers can tour the building and see some of the possibilities for their own projects.

A quick look around the office reveals a variety of textures, flooring, metals, glasses and fabrics, as well as different lighting options, including skylights.

Melloul-Blamey will also participate in the City of Waterloo's 150th anniversary celebrations, with Aitchison being "donated" to host various events, among other initiatives.

"We want to build something with them for the city."

With so many new projects planned throughout Waterloo -- like the joint library and recreation complex on the city's west side -- Aitchison said this is an exciting time to be in this field.

Especially since Melloul-Blamey is on the "threshold" of a whole new way of doing business, he said.

"The construction business, for years, was not that consumer friendly.

"Many times contractors ended up with 'We'll see you in court' as a parting phrase.

"But this company is invited to the ribbon cuttings (of its completed projects)," he said, adding that's a testament to the north Waterloo Mennonite work ethic they bring to their job sites.

Throughout the next quarter century the focus will be on "green" construction, which, for example, can involve installing green

roofs or using glass that prevents heat loss.

"These guys have been aware of that and waiting for the world to catch up. They're ready to go."

And they work with real-estate agents, architects and developers who also value this approach.

As well, future construction in Waterloo will involve intensification -- building higher -- and redeveloping older properties because of the city's dwindling land supply.

The coming years will also see Melloul-Blamey's ownership change hands.

Steve Hanley, Jeff Heimpel, Joel Melloul and Jeff Shantz are taking over the business through a 10-year succession plan that will end in 2010, at which time they'll own the company.

"They are bright, with-it young guys," said Aitchison, who feels like the "grey hair" in the boardroom.

"These guys are good friends, and they need each other."