

Through Thick and Thin, Contractor Does it 'the Fahey Way'

Joe Fahey was in the Navy in 1971 when he received a call from his dad and brother back home in Kansas City. How would he like to go into the construction business when his tour ended?

Forty years later, J.M. Fahey Construction Co. has grown to be one of the strongest family-owned heavy construction businesses in Kansas City, with Joe Fahey the CEO and his brother, Kevin, the president. Their youngest sister, Bridget Fahey, manages the office and Kevin's son, Andrew Fahey, joined the company in 2000.

Joe and Kevin have never regretted entering the heavy construction field, despite periods of lean times, such as now.

"We enjoy the diversity of what we do," Joe Fahey said. "There's a new challenge ... a new opportunity ... every day. Kevin and I get a real kick out of looking at work we did 30 or 40 years ago. It provides a tremendous sense of accomplishment. You also develop a healthy respect for your competition. There's even a friendship, especially in the Kansas City area, because we've known many of our competitors almost our entire lives."

Founded in 1971 by their father, Joseph M. Fahey, J. M. Fahey Construction Co. specializes in the design and reconstruction of urban roadways along with producing asphalt from its two plants. Most of Fahey's work is on public projects, both in Missouri and Kansas. Its main office has been in Grandview, Mo., for more than 35 years.

The recent recession has taken a significant toll on funding for road construction. Kevin Fahey said business is slower than at any time since the early 1980s as governments lack money for road projects. Private business is also down due to less commercial and residential development, he said.

"I don't see much change in 2012," Fahey said. "If anything ... even more belt-tightening may be required."

J.M. Fahey has weathered this recent downturn with minimal cuts to its permanent staff but has been unable to keep as many union personnel employed as in prior years. Some contractors have closed shop or tried to move into different types of construction to get more work during this period, the Faheys said.

Current projects for J.M. Fahey include design-builds on 63rd Street from Prospect to Jackson and Troost Avenue from 89th to Bannister for the City of Kansas City, Mo., improvements to both Donahoo Road and 78th Street for KDOT in Kansas City, Kan., and a recently awarded project for the KCMO Parks and Recreation Department in Penn Valley Park.

The Faheys have tried to not only run a solid business, but also be active in civic and nonprofit activities, as well as industry associations such as the Heavy Constructors. In good times or bad, J.M. Fahey still tries to live by the high business standards Joseph M. Fahey envisioned 40 years ago.

"I remember our dad telling us early on how important it was to pay the bills first so you didn't think the money in your account was all yours," Joe Fahey said.

Another timeless lesson, Kevin Fahey said, "was to hire the best people possible. That's accomplished not only by paying them fairly, but making the company a place where they are proud to work. You are only as good as your people. Find the best people and create a quality place to work that is an asset to the community."

The company has a term, the "Fahey Way," to describe its approach to employees and clients.

"It's very simple," Kevin and Joe said. "Treat people as you want to be treated. That hasn't changed since 1971 ... and won't change over the next 40 years." ■



The Fahey brothers haven't changed much at the company since 1971. It's the Fahey way.



J.M. FAHEY
Construction Company

BUILDING FOR OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1971



A Fahey track hoe gets down to business at Penn Valley Park.