

30 years and growing

JK2 Construction & Scenic finds success through perseverance



As JK2 Construction & Scenic celebrates three decades in business, the award-winning Apopka-based company enters 2017 with a multi-million-dollar roster of ongoing regional and national projects and 12 percent growth over last year.

But that hasn't always been the story. The general contractor's path to success has been paved with commitment and perseverance. Founder Paul R. Holmes recalls leaner times when the focus was on survival. At the height of the Great Recession, the principals all took pay cuts down to minimum wage and were forced to let go of most employees and support staff.

"We all took turns doing whatever was needed to keep the business afloat, including cleaning the bathrooms," Holmes recalls. "Fortunately, we kept cash reserves in the business from the days when we were making money. With no work but reserve money in the bank, we basically had to start building the business over, however, this time we had a track record of building quality projects and providing dependable general contracting services."

That's when employee Tim Bartell, in an effort to save his job in 2008, convinced the principals to offer in-house theming and custom fabrication services. It was an aspect of general contracting JK2 had previously subcontracted to other firms.

Lab, Universal Studio Store in CityWalk, and various common area millwork projects in the Cabana Bay Beach Resort Hotel. The company has also been named among the 2016 GrowFL Florida Companies to Watch and the Gator100.

It's a far cry from the business' humble beginnings in 1987, when Holmes was the only employee. "And my wife Joan kept the books, but we couldn't afford to pay her."



Universal Studios Archway & Hardscape

Now JK2 has more than 40 employees and revenues over \$10 million.

Holmes started the business because "I always wanted to control my own career path and create a business that would be multigenerational." He has grown the business with longtime partners, Rick Amundson and his brother Michael Holmes. A second generation has entered the business, with daughter Julie Holmes as a principal and Vice President of the Scenic Division and nephews Tucker and Garrett in the Construction Division.

Because of its humble roots, Holmes says JK2 truly understands the importance of giving back. Holmes was on the founding Board of Directors for Habitat for Humanity of Greater Apopka, and over the years, JK2 has provided over tens of thousands of dollars' worth of pro bono construction services for groups such as SafeHouse of Seminole, Lighthouse Central Florida, Diocese of Orlando Mission Office, and the Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida. Staff members also racked up over 200 hours of volunteer time last year, and the company has given generously to many community organizations.

In addition to perseverance, Holmes says that attitude is a big part of JK2's values. As for a business philosophy, he says actions speak louder than words.

"Maybe we haven't always formalized and expressed how we like to do business, but we've lived those values," Holmes says. "With everyone we come across in our business — from our customers to our subcontractors to our supplier bases — we deal with them in the kind of way that we ourselves would want to be treated. We've done it that way since day one."

It's working, 30 years and growing. ■



Sapphire Falls Retail Store

The move paid off big time. JK2 Scenic has grown revenues by over 1,000% since 2013, and Tim Bartell is now a principal, leading an entire staff of talented artisans and carpentry craftsmen.

"It's ironic that in 2004 we invested money to build a Scenic Division that failed and generated zero work," Holmes says. "We gave it one more try with Tim and it took off. Perseverance is definitely one of the key factors in JK2's success."

Sticking with the business has rewarded JK2 with a loyal client base, including such heavy hitters as Trammel Webb Partners; Pulte Homes; Clifton, Ezell and Clifton; and Universal Studios — Universal's iconic entrance arch was a JK2 project.

JK2 has received several Excellence in Construction ABC Eagle Awards for Universal projects, including the NBC Media