

Spotlight on Southwestern Illinois: Commercial Contractors

Contra Construction grows its national presence

By JIM MUNDY

You know what they say about "best laid plans" especially in a challenging year like this one. But challenge can also validate the foundation of "best laid plans." Such is the case for Contra Construction's 17th year of operation. When Contra was founded in 2004, we had a growth model in mind built on professionals who excel at developing trusted relationships by truly listening to customer needs. Those needs evolve constantly, but never more so in the past five years.

Contra's start up initially focused on local projects, but with an eye toward growing a national practice. Today, we serve clients in Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Texas, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Virginia, Florida, Arizona, Ohio and other states. Many are with repeat customers because we've listened to help them respond quickly to their growth needs by building optimal functionality in their facilities.

In the industrial sector, Contra has more than \$100 million in projects in the pipeline. This work responds to a new era in distribution facilities driven by evolving e-commerce needs that the current pandemic has only accelerated. The terms "last mile logistics" and "ultra fast fresh" describe the mission of companies and their logistic partners to fortify their distribution to doorstep service to customers.

Our work in this realm includes new distribution facilities ranging from 200,000 square feet to more than one million square feet, including tenant finish. We are also repurposing space and retrofitting facilities by replacing racking, creating narrow aisle racking, improving infrastructure such as

battery charging stations for forklifts and more.

At Gateway Tradeport in Pontoon Beach, we are building a 544,000-square-foot distribution facility and associated infrastructure improvements. It is our second project for developer Northpoint Development at its new 600-acre master planned industrial park. Earlier this year, we completed a 544,000-square-foot warehouse, designed with flexibility to serve the region's distribution market. Both are ideally suited to meet e-commerce needs as are our other projects nationally, including:

- A more than one million-square-foot new distribution facility and a 425,000-square-foot retrofit in Pennsylvania.
- A 798,000-square-foot distribution facility in Virginia.
- A 408,000-square-foot distribution facility in Kansas City, Kan.

Meanwhile, Contra is building a 126,350-square-foot facility for Jung Warehousing Inc. in Mount Vernon, Ill., and a water reclamation project for biosolids in Wentzville, Mo. We are also advancing improvements to facilities and infrastructure at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport. On the office side, we are building a new 40,000-square-foot headquarters for icon Mechanical in Granite City.

All of this is only possible with a great staff of professionals. We've been strategically adding to our project management, engineering and marketing teams over the past 12 months. Everyone has embraced the foundation of our "best laid plans" no matter what the challenge.

Jim Munday is chief operating officer, Contra Construction Co.

IMPACT Strategies wraps facility for use by plumbers and pipefitters

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Several construction aspects went into the new Local 562 Plumbers & Pipefitters Training Facility Center that was wrapped up this summer by IMPACT Strategies.

The facility in Earth City, Mo., will serve the union's current 4,500 members, 400 apprentices and future workers. The owner of the building is the union's Welfare Educational Fund.

Mike Voss, senior project manager for Fairview Heights-based IMPACT Strategies, said the company took a five-acre greenspace adjacent to the union's headquarters and constructed a two-story, 89,000-square-foot facility. Work began in late 2018 and wrapped up in June.

The complex has energy-efficient electrical and lighting systems, a water-efficient plumbing system, and technologically advanced HVAC and dust collection systems.

"What intrigued me about this project was how it combined training aspects, industrial aspects, and administrative aspects," Voss said. Various types and methods of construction were melded into one project.

Some 50, one-man, fabricated welding booths were installed, along with several technology-equipped classrooms for continued education. There is also an auditorium-style lecture hall, office and conference areas, and fabrication and assembly areas with an overhead crane.

Highlights of the construction include aggregate piers, concrete footings and foundation, 32-foot and 34-foot concrete tilt walls, structural steel and masonry.



The new Local 562 Plumbers & Pipefitters Training Facility.

Within the structure is a second-floor mezzanine on the north third of the building and a mezzanine on the south third, with the middle of the building being clear space from ground to roof.

The building contains separate areas for pipefitter and plumbing training, including structures for mockups.

There is also an exterior gas storage shelter and metal recycling storage in the mechanical yard.

IMPACT Strategies worked with Ahal Pre-Construction Services, architects from M+H Architects, MEPF engineers from SSC, and civil engineers from Cole & Associates on the project.

One unexpected challenge came with COVID-19's arrival, which prompted construction crews in March to change their workweek to four, 10-hour days to help limit risk. Extraordinary cleaning and safety precautions and regular COVID-19 specific meetings became a part of the daily routine, Voss said.

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