

## Woods Basement Systems again wins Best Places to Work honor

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Woods Basement Systems tackles all kinds of home problems, but in its own house, things are going along splendidly.

The Collinsville-based firm is the repeat winner of the Illinois Business Journal's Best Places to Work in Southwestern Illinois.

The company was top vote-getter of the 2021 Best Places to Work reader poll, held this past month.

Rick and Anna Lee Woods literally started in the basement and worked their way to the top of their industry. They just celebrated their 35th year in business.

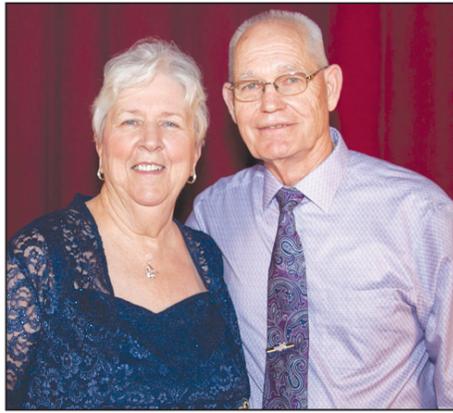
"Last year was our fifth record year in a row. This year is not bad either. I'm not sure it's going to be a record or not, but we're hitting our goal for the year," said Dave Thompson, marketing director for Woods, who has worked for the company more than 20 years.

Even a pandemic couldn't hold back the business, he said.

"The home improvement business has been huge," he said. A big part has been people wanting to get foundations fixed.

The company is filled with longtime employees and family members of the Woods', who came to Southwestern Illinois from Astoria, Ill., in 1986.

The couple, along with a partner, started a waterproofing company called Gateway Basement DeWatering. The couple operated from the upstairs of a four-room house that they rented across the street from their current loca-



Anna Lee and Rich Woods

tion, 524 Vandalia St. in Collinsville. In recent years, the façade of the current building has been totally redone.

In 1998, the business name was changed to Woods Basement Systems, Inc. and now has more than 200 employees, a 16,000-square-foot administrative office, and 20 acres at Fairmont Avenue and Interstate 255 where it houses fleet and inventory. Woods is the highest-rated and most-reviewed contractor in its industry, Thompson said.

Rick and Anna Lee Woods are semiretired and live in Greenville in Bond County. The day-to-day operations are now being handled by the general manager, son Wayne Woods, who began working with his father at age 16.

Susan Warchol, their daughter, is the office manager, and Tim Warchol leads the commercial division.

The Woods have nine grandchildren, almost all of whom have been subjected to the Woods' Way



Pictures of the main Collinsville location before and after recent façade renovation.

at some point in their lives.

Woods advertising likes to say the company takes care of "all things 'basementy'." Services include, among others, basement waterproofing, foundation repair, crawl space encapsulation and concrete leveling.

Woods Basement Systems has earned the Better Business Bureau Torch Award for marketplace ethics six times since 2005.

As Rick Woods said last year, during their first win of the award: "We are grateful for being recognized as a Best Workplace because we know that the best people work here."

As good as a Best Workplace is, even it deals with today's staffing challenges. Continued growth has made hiring a necessity.

"We're still looking for the right

person – career-minded individuals – to join the team," Thompson said. Cross training is an increasing emphasis, he said.

Customers, above all, want to protect their home, which is their biggest investment.

"If you suspect there is something is going on, it's always better and less expensive to get it fixed while it's a baby issue and not a big, grown-up headache," he said, adding there is peace of mind that comes along with the Woods warranty.

Waterproofing is done with a life-of-the-structure warranty and transfers on the home "again and again and again," he said.

Woods does jobs big and small, with the cost being relative to the size of the problem. Some one third of new customers are referrals, he said.

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