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A Decade of Industry Excellence

DeStefano & Chamberlain Inc.

The Art of Structural Design

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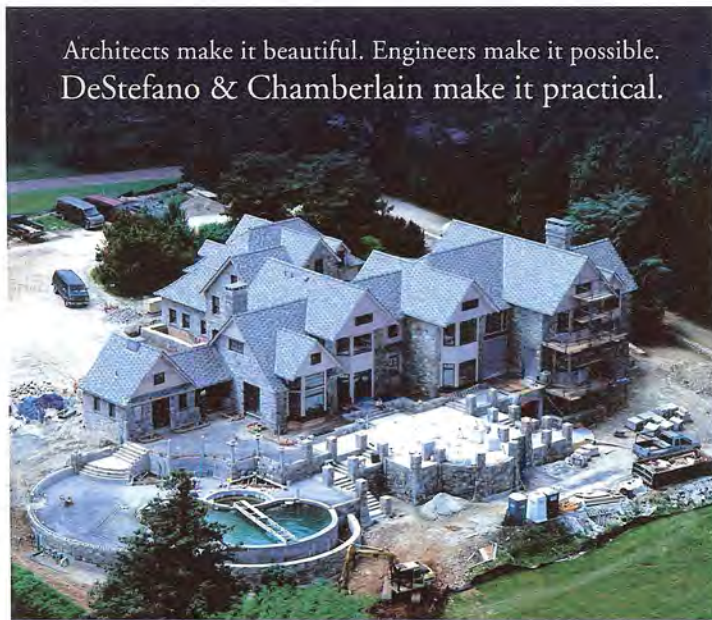
DeStefano & Chamberlain Inc. (D&C) is a structural and architectural engineering firm in Fairfield, Conn. Jim DeStefano, president of D&C, has never been interested in growing the company into the largest or the most accessible firm in the state. Instead, his company has always focused on providing its clients with superior design solutions for complex projects.

“We are small boutique firm,” says DeStefano. “Along with my business partner, Kevin Chamberlain, we have seven employees

and we concentrate on high-quality work at respectable fees. We’re not all things for all people, we focus on a target niche market, where the more mundane firms don’t have the level of expertise that we do.”

The company was founded in 1981 and has since amassed a client roster that its competitors cannot match. DeStefano explains that D&C prefers to work on projects that incorporate timber-framing, architecturally exposed structures, historic preservation and waterfront properties. “These types of projects





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require a special knowledge and hold a lot more interest for us," he says.

The company's team of engineers and architects work on projects all across the country; D&C holds licenses for mountain states and almost all of the states east of the Mississippi River.

Adhere to the Tenants of Edward Deming

DeStefano also points to the firm's quality of work as one of many things that set D&C apart from its competitors. Quality is taken very seriously at the company and D&C's management style is inspired by Edward Deming, American statistician, author, consultant and professor who introduced Japan and the United States to product quality management.

D&C has worked on numerous high-profile projects since its founding 30 years ago due to its notable reputation. The firm is currently constructing what will be one of only three LEED-certified biomass power plants for the prestigious Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Conn. D&C's engineers coordinated closely with Centerbook Architects in Essex, Conn., the architects on the project, to design the innovative project.

The biomass boiler will replace an oil burner, which replaced a coal-burning boiler, and will reduce the school's greenhouse gas emissions by up to half. The 16,500-square foot facility will have two biomass boilers capable of heating the entire campus with steam piping.

The designs call for two Messersmith biomass boilers, both which will operate at roughly 80-percent efficiency off of wood that is harvested locally from a sustainable forest. The efficient and environmentally friendly power plant will replace the school's consumption of 150,000 gallons of fuel annually and reduce its carbon dioxide output by more than 90 percent.

D&C is also currently working a sustainable design for another member of the Eight Schools Association at Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, Conn. When completed, the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC) will be separate from the rest of the school's campus and will be geared toward environmental studies. The facilities are designed to be a net zero energy project, which means it will not draw off of the grid for its power needs.

Building Will Achieve LEED Platinum Certification

The center is located on 260 acres and was designed by Robert A.M. Stern Architects. The project is being built to achieve LEED Platinum certification. The project also incorporates two miles of geothermal wells for heating and cooling, a solar-



powered domestic hot water system, and photovoltaic (PV) panels to harvest and convert sunlight into energy.

The firm's designs have earned it many awards over the years. Recently, D&C won the Overall Competition Winner Award from the Structural Insulated Panel Association in 2009 for its partnership with Panelwrights on the Cherokee School. D&C also won the Design Award in 2008 from the Connecticut branch of the American Institute of Architects for its Interstate Lumber project in Greenwich, Conn., where D&C collaborated with Halper Owens Architects.

DeStefano avers that while the company's small size and expansive client roster has helped it navigate the economic slowdown, he has no plans to increase the firm's size when things pick up again. "Our strategy has always been to remain small," he says. "We'd rather refer business that doesn't interest us to our colleagues. We've invested a lot of time and money in the employees that we have, and we're on solid enough ground that we will still be here when business returns to normal."

The excitement and passion for his work is apparent in DeStefano's voice even after 30 years of designing and building structures. "There's nothing like building buildings," he beams. "The thrill associated with designing a building and seeing it built is nothing like you could experience in any other line of work. It's certainly not the fast track to becoming rich, but the reward it does give you makes it worth it."

The expression may be trite, but like so many others it's based in truth: Jim DeStefano and Kevin Chamberlain's DeStefano & Chamberlain Inc. may not be large, but good things are found in small packages. •



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