



Alums "Making a Difference"

Kate Dwyer

Rosary

Class of 1976

I am one of four Rosary High School grads in our family: sister Mary in '75, brother Dan in '78, sister Ann in '80. All of us ended up in design and construction related degree programs: Mary, Interior Design, me, Architecture, Dan, Construction Management, and Ann, Engineering Management.

- I learned to love design and construction through drafting and architectural design with Mr. Schnell. As one of the few females in the program in those 'early days', it was important to me that he treated the women and men in his classes with dignity, equality, tact, good humor, and professionalism. That management style has stayed with me as I've managed project development teams around the country and internationally.

I graduated from the University of Kansas Architecture program in the first 5-year bachelor's degree class and I did my internship with the Sverdrup Corp.

Upon graduation from college, I decided to move to one coast or the other, to enjoy life near an ocean. I landed a job with a small design firm in Newport, RI and packed, moved, in time to enjoy the last run of the America's Cup in Newport. Then the proprietor of the firm closed up shop to move to Texas and laid everyone off in one fell swoop.

So, needing a job, I worked the next 3 years for General Dynamics Quincy Shipbuilding, drafting and working my way to become a manager of their CAD/CAM (computer-aided design, computer-aided manufacturing) department. At the time, I loved working with such massive building elements - great huge plates of steel, automatic plasma cutters, cranes of every shape and size, including the largest one in the western hemisphere - to build ships from nothing to floating LNG tankers 900 feet long! I did not know until much later, after I had moved to New York and was working on other big construction projects, how much I had learned about construction techniques, logistics, and scheduling.

I worked for the City of New York for a few years, reviewing large public construction projects, everything from expanding the Aquarium to a library expansion under a city park, to a prefabricated modular prison, to a methane collection system at the city's landfill, to renovations at 3 of the city's zoos.

I now have worked for the past 15+ years in construction management and contracting - managing new construction and renovations projects like airports, courthouses, and highrises. Some of my most recent projects have been the expansion of Terminal C at Newark Airport,



which included airside work, new Immigration and Customs halls, reconfiguring the departures and arrivals halls, new baggage handling system and parking garage, and rerouting the roadway system - all while maintaining full operation of the terminal; and construction of the new Whitman College at Princeton University, which was designed after Oxford University in the UK, to look as though it had been there for 300 years, with stone walls, slate roofs, leaded glass windows, and a “Hogwarts” dining hall!

I now am the Architectural Trades Coordinator for the construction of One World Trade Center, which will be the country’s tallest skyscraper when it is finished in 2013, with 105 floors topped by a 400’ tall antenna. Having lived through the horror of 9/11, it is a meaningful assignment to me and many of my coworkers. Many people don’t realize that the WTC site is 16 acres and originally contained a hotel and 3 other office towers in addition to the twin towers, as well as several basement levels, all of which were destroyed on 9/11. The new plan contains 4 office towers, a transit center, and the Memorial, also with several basement levels, and a future performing arts center. As all of the office towers, the transit hub, and the Memorial are now in various stages of construction in lower Manhattan, the construction logistics are ‘intense’. Check it out at www.panynj.gov/wtcprogress.

I decided some years ago that it was time to “pay it back, pay it forward” for the next generation of THS-based architects, engineers, and builders, so have returned periodically to THS to talk with the students about careers in design and construction. They are an inquisitive and eager audience! This past January, four seniors who are excelling in advanced architecture and engineering courses joined Mr. Schnell for a four day A&E tour of New York City, including an inside look at the WTC construction.

I encourage other alums to open their doors to the next generation, either by participating in the school’s annual Career Day, or by visiting the school and talking with classes about their careers, or by hosting a group to their job site for an hour, a day, or a long weekend. The pay-back... is the future.