



County Materials Corporation *Special Award - Bridging the Skills Gap*

Successful multi-generational family businesses have several things in common: they have strong core values that never waver; they are committed to doing their best for both employees and customers; they maintain the highest standards for a quality product; and they generously give back to the community. County Materials Corporation is no exception.

In 1946, Merlin Sonnentag began making concrete masonry with a single block machine. In the post-war years, demand for concrete construction products quickly increased, and he added ready-mix and excavation services in 1960. The company continued to grow, producing precast concrete products in the 1970s, concrete pipe products in the 1980s, and specialty concrete products in the 1990s. In the 2000s, the company began manufacturing products for higher profile projects – much higher profile.

When you think of concrete, you might think of concrete blocks, septic tanks, catch basins or storm manholes. County Materials makes all of these things and much more. They manufactured precast concrete segments used to construct a **one million square foot** underground library archive at the University of Minnesota. They manufactured 21,000 precast tunnel segments and more than 200 arched wall and ceiling panels to build the Minnesota Hiawatha Light Rail Tunnel in Minneapolis/St. Paul. And as early as the 1980s, they established an operation in Orlando, Florida, to supply great quantities of concrete pipe for the growth of Disney World.

From its modest beginnings, County Materials now operates more than 40 locations in six states, and employs more than 1,500 dedicated team members. In 1966, founder Merlin Sonnentag's oldest son John joined the company and in 1982 became its president. In 2003, John's oldest son Tim became president and his son William was named vice president. Through the three generations of leadership, employees have received competitive benefits and opportunities that recognize the need for work/life balance and professional development. Because working around massive amounts of concrete can be hazardous, employee safety is emphasized in every part of the operation.

There isn't room here to list all of the contributions County Materials makes and has made to the communities where its operations are located. The Sonnentag Foundation has donated more than half a million dollars to organizations that provide youth mentoring, education and advocacy services for domestic violence victims, housing and training for veterans, and more. The foundation also awards scholarships to graduating high school students whose parents work for the company.

The judges made special note of the company's strong support of industry education, its in-kind donations to youth facilities, its charitable foundation, and its robust youth mentoring activities.

The judges named this Special Award "Bridging the Skills Gap", and it goes to County Materials Corporation, of Marathon.

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