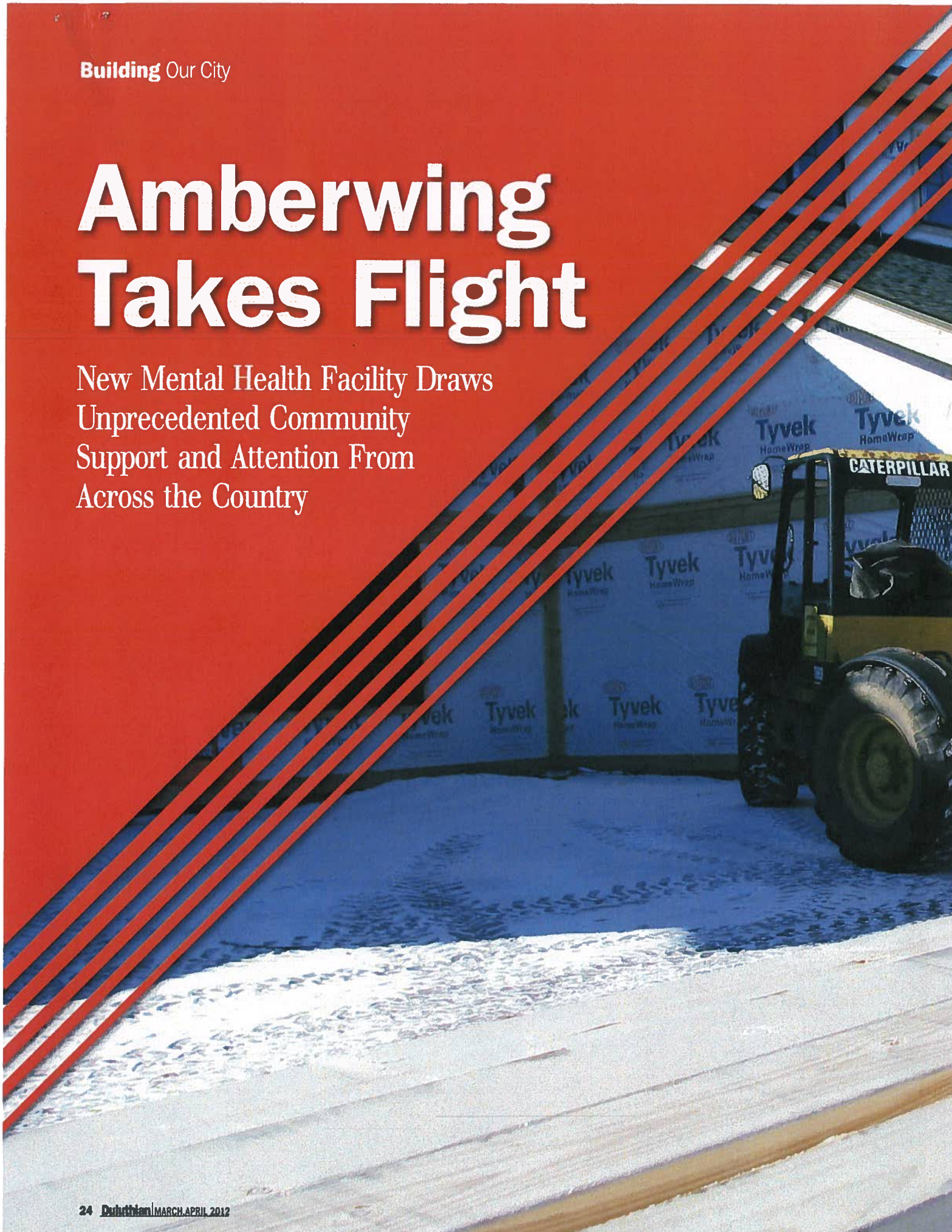


Building Our City

Amberwing Takes Flight

New Mental Health Facility Draws
Unprecedented Community
Support and Attention From
Across the Country





By Andy Greder

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rofessionals from the Vesper Society in California and academics from Yale University in Connecticut have asked the Miller-Dwan Foundation, “You are doing what in Duluth, Minn.?”

The “what” is Amberwing, an unprecedented, partial hospitalization center being built to help young people treat and overcome mental health issues. The 22,000-square-foot, log-cabin-style building set to open this fall

will be the daytime home for toddlers, teens, troubled young adults and their families.

“I think they are in awe,” Miller-Dwan Foundation President Pat Burns said of out-of-town experts. “We have seen an outpouring of support, and we are sharing how this really happened in our community.”

“SOME ARE DOING IT AT BREAK EVEN, SO IT’S PRETTY INCREDIBLE. WE HAVE BEEN AMAZED AT THE PARTICIPATION FROM OUR BUILDERS AND OUR SUBCONTRACTORS AND VENDORS.”

– PATRICIA BURNS, MILLER-DWAN FOUNDATION

Amberwing required \$6 million in fundraising and nearly every dime of that has been raised in the Northland. The giving continues as local construction firms lowered their bids – and therefore, their profit margins – to contribute resources and work for the greater cause.

“It’s a philanthropic project for us,” said Shane Johnson, president of Johnson Wilson Constructors. “We are really excited about something that is so good for the community and as a whole for the company.”

PROJECT

AMBERWING

General contractor: Johnson Wilson Constructors, Inc.

Architect: John Ivey Thomas Associates

Cost: \$6 million

- Features:**
- 22,000-square foot, log-cabin-style design
 - Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design principles
 - Serves toddlers, teens, troubled young adults and their families

Start date: Sept. 2011

Completion date: fall of 2012

Chamber-member companies involved:

- American Engineering Testing, Inc.
- API Electric Co. • Belanger, Inc.
- Duluth Stove & Fireplace • Jamar Co.
- Johnson Carpet One • Lipe Brothers Construction
- Northern Door & Hardware, Inc.
- Northland Constructors of Duluth, Inc.
- Short, Elliott Hendrickson, Inc.
- St. Germain's Cabinet, Inc. • St. Germain's Glass Co.
- Upper Lakes Foods, Inc.

The Impetus and The Impact

Soon after Miller-Dwan finished up the Solway Hospice House in 2007, its board of directors retreated to devise the next project for the community.

The reading material of community health statistics provided some grim pictures for board members, Burns said.

"IT'S A PHILANTHROPIC PROJECT FOR US. WE ARE REALLY EXCITED ABOUT SOMETHING THAT IS SO GOOD FOR THE COMMUNITY AND AS A WHOLE FOR THE COMPANY."

- SHANE JOHNSON, JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS

Mental health issues affect about one in five young people in Minnesota and wait times to see a psychologist or therapist in a nonemergency situation can take up to six months, she said.

"Out of that [retreat,] the board chose to tackle children's mental health," Burns said.

A list of goals was created for Amberwing: greater access to mental health care for people from birth to age 25; relieving the stigma around mental health issues; providing support to family members; increase the number of quality mental health professionals in the area.

"We spent two years really talking to people about what the needs and barriers were," Burns said. "Really, what's the struggle, what's the problem and trying to define it... Then, we design a project that we know meets all of those goals. That is what Amberwing will do."

Those same community health statistics gave credence to the out-of-town experts' query on "why Duluth?" by showing this disparity: About two-thirds of the young people suffering from mental health issues in Minnesota were in outstate areas, while outstate areas had only one-third of the state's population.

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Amberwing will look and feel like a resort lodge and is set in a wooded location at 615 Pecan Avenue in Duluth.



Burns added the issue is both deeper and simpler.

"We need to realize that this is like any other illness - like diabetes," Burns said. "It's simply an illness. It's treatable."

Amberwing will be nearly unprecedented. Rick Gertsema, a clinical supervisor for Miller-Dwan, said a Vesper Society member who visited has traveled to treatment centers across the world and she said only one place in Norway compares.

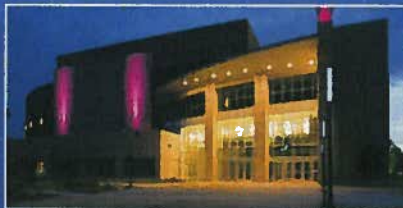
Fundraising and Discounting

The start of fundraising efforts for Amberwing coincided with economic recession, leading to consternation from Miller-Dwan.

"There was an, 'oh, my, goodness' reaction," Burns said. "We are going out with a campaign at the worst possible economic time that we've seen in a long time."

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT FERN, JOHN IVELY THOMAS ASSOCIATES

Fortunately, the economic recession didn't leave Amberwing behind.

"The fact that we've raised nearly all of our goal in our time frame really speaks loudly to our community response," Burns said. "We saw some unprecedented generosity. It was really outstanding and it speaks a lot to this community. They understood the problem, the need, and they understood the value it could bring."

"WE LOOKED AT ... THE COST OF DIFFERENT SYSTEMS AND WHAT THE BUDGETS WERE AND PRICED IT TO GET MAXIMUM BENEFIT FOR THE END USER."

- SCOTT TORVINEN, JAMAR CO.

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The construction community was asked to look at the value they could add and where they could skimp on profits in order to make the project work.

"Some are doing it at break even, so it's pretty incredible," Burns said. "We have been amazed at the participation from our builders and our subcontractors and vendors. That saves us pretty significant money when you add it all together."

For Johnson, the experience of working with Miller-Dwan and the lasting community impact of Amberwing were selling points.

"It's one of the things that is now in the community and will be for many, many years to come," Johnson said of Solway Hospice House, a project Johnson Wilson and Miller-Dwan previously worked together on. "And we feel like this is another one of those projects."

"We want to do the construction, obviously, but it's more important to support a project because it's never been done before," Johnson added. "It's something that is significant to the United States."

Johnson mentioned APi Electric, Jamar, Northland Constructors and Harbor City Masonry as a few of the contractors and subcontractors who have stepped up.

"There are other contractors that

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have come in with pretty low pricing, so they might be doing the work at cost or less than cost because they wanted to be on the project," Johnson said.

Discounting went from bidding to purchasing. Since Miller-Dwan is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization, it was able to buy some supplies such as lumber, windows, equipment and trusses directly from wholesalers.

"ALL OF THIS WAS BUILT WITH MONEY THAT WAS DONATED BY THE CITIZENS OF DULUTH, SO WE HAD TO BE VERY CAREFUL WITH HOW WE SPENT."

— JOHN THOMAS, JOHN IVEY THOMAS ASSOCIATES

Scott Torvinen of Jamar handled the plumbing and air control systems through communications between Miller-Dwan, its parent organization, Essentia Health, and the architect, John Ivey Thomas Associates.

"We looked at different systems and the cost of different systems and what the budgets were and priced it to get maximum benefit for the end user," Torvinen said. "On our side of it, the project has been budgeted very tightly. We've worked together with the owner on the selection of the equipment."

John Thomas, the CEO of John Ivey Thomas Associates, said the cost-conscious planning derived from a sense of personal responsibility to the donors.

"All of this was built with money that was donated by the citizens of Duluth, so we had to be very careful with how we spent," Thomas said. "We followed those guidelines as well for operational costs."

Not 'the Third Floor of a Hospital'

Amberwing is different, and the building design will display its uniqueness. Instead of a sterile hospital environment, Amberwing will look and feel like a resort lodge set in the forest.

Thomas said the design was to be "playful" and not "institutional" or "too imposing as a hospital might be."

Johnson said the 16-acre wooded location was left as natural as possible.

"It's set in such a nice site," he said.

"It's a wooded lot and they've been working to retain as many trees as possible to keep that feel."

Amberwing might function like a hospital with its programming, but it is intended to feel welcoming.

"It's certainly much easier for kids to go to a building that has that lodge feel and is comfortable," Gertsema said. "It will feel much different than being on the third floor of a hospital building. We won't have any locked doors. It's a total transformation in environment from where we are now into a much more healing building that is going to have much more of a home feel."


The children would be at their second home about the same hours as a typical school day, from about 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. They will have five hours of

clinical time and two hours of school lessons before returning to their families at home. It will contrast day treatment programs in the amount of time for lessons and therapy and differ from hospitalization in that no one will stay overnight. Amberwing will provide programs tailored for children of elementary age, middle school age and teenagers as well as an outpatient chemical dependency program for those 18-25.

In Miller-Dwan's current setup there are about a dozen kids in a child and teen program and about eight in the chemical dependency program. Once Amberwing opens, the goal is to start with more than 30 young people, and over time, have the ability to care for 60.


Young people will receive a diagnosis and a treatment plan that

Proud to serve as architects for this important project




amberwing

John Ivey Thomas Associates AIA Architects
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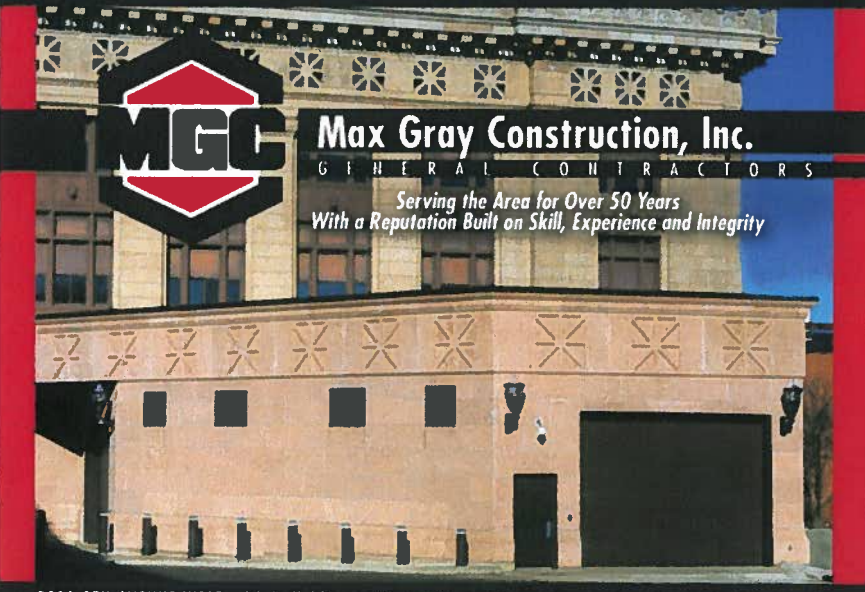


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PHOTO BY ADMAX

Construction of Amberwing began in September and is slated for completion this fall.



might include recreational therapy, occupational therapy, music therapy, therapy with dogs, a room for yoga and body movements and art studio programs.

"It's not a blanket program where children will be doing everything," Gertsema said. "It's individually driven by each child's needs."

Added Burns, "We don't just live in one part of ourselves. There is an integration of who we are as people so we find different ways to express ourselves, and also find different ways to relieve stress and find ways to create better health."

"IT'S A TOTAL TRANSFORMATION IN ENVIRONMENT FROM WHERE WE ARE NOW INTO A MUCH MORE HEALING BUILDING THAT IS GOING TO HAVE MUCH MORE OF A HOME FEEL."

- RICK GERTSEMA, ESSENTIA HEALTH

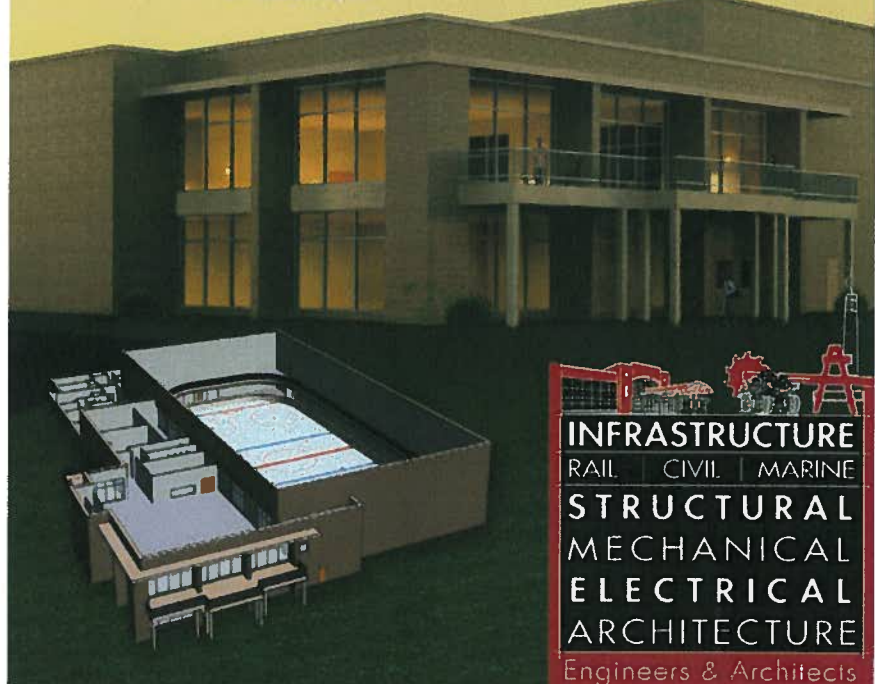
Hard Hat Headlines

Duluth Under Construction

Projects currently in the construction phase:

- Amberwing
- Anytime Fitness
- City of Duluth street improvement project
- Duluth International Airport – new terminal
- Fannie Rose building renovations
- Involta data center
- ISD #709 Long-Range Facilities Plan school remodeling and construction
- ME Electmetal expansion
- Rohlifing of Duluth, Inc. warehouse expansion

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At the center of the wings within Amberwing will be a family resource center because “when there is a child in crisis, there is a family in crisis,” Gertsema said.

During its assessment in 2007, the Miller-Dwan board said families stressed their need for help.

“We see the parent resource center as a place for mental health professionals working there and for it to be immediately available to families,” Burns said.

The Building's Specs

Amberwing has all the makings of earning a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, but it will forgo the accreditation due to cost.

“It’s a function of dollars being spent,” Johnson said, “but it still has LEED principles involved and those aspects are definitely left in the design.

“There are a lot of things with LEED that cost money and you weigh them out, but it’s really tough to raise

any more money than they already have,” he added. “They would rather keep the money and put it into the building than to spend it on something that may not be necessary.”

The green-friendly design elements include efficient lighting, above-standard levels of insulation and high-quality windows.

“Most of the construction is very high energy conserving,” Thomas said.

Jamar installed in-floor heating on the first floor and zone controls based on occupancy, high filtration air-handling units and low volatile organic compounds. The boilers it installed are 90 percent efficient.

All of the work was coordinated with the folks at Essentia to ensure that systems are available for monitoring from other locations. Some of the purchasing was specific to maintain uniformity across other Essentia properties.

“It really was a collaboration of quite a number of people,” Torvinen said.

The Woman Behind It All

All construction representatives agree there are a lot of people involved in the project, but no one was more integral than Pat Burns.

Torvinen said she was hands-on with an attention to details, from purchasing agreements to color choices. Johnson said her work produces the “highest quality projects in the area.” Thomas said she is “very lovely to work with.”

At weekly meetings, there are no crises to overcome, Johnson said.

“You just sit there and enjoy yourself and talk among yourselves because everything is running so smoothly,” he said. “It’s amazing – and hopefully this isn’t her last project. We want to see more and be involved in them.” **D**

Andy Greder is a freelance writer based in Pine City, Minn. He can be reached at andygreder@gmail.com.

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