Rockford’s New Pedestrian Bridge Provides Mobility and Recreation

Just south of the new UW Sports Complex in downtown Rockford, Civil Constructors is in the process of creating a new pedestrian bridge. Uniting the west and east sides of Rockford, the new foot bridge will provide greater walkability for Rockford denizens and will be of particular use once the new UW Health Sports Factory opens for business.

The 928ft bridge is being constructed on an old Illinois Railway line that was first built in the 1920’s and will unite the path near the UW Sports facility with the path in Davis Park. A growing recreational presence in the city will usher in new tourists and visitors to the Rockford region, a welcome boom for the local economy. The city hopes to eventually open a whitewater kayak course in the river near the bridge as well as new recreational options as a part of Davis Park’s expansion. Opening up parts of the river that were previously inaccessible, the bridge will also offer a beautiful view of the city.

The city hopes to have the bridge completed this fall. Civil’s leadership on the project included carpenter foreman Mark Rice, ironworker foreman Ben Lipnitzky, project manager John Schneider, and superintendent Jerry Fye.

Photo: Sunny Strader, RRStar

Inside This Issue

- Message from the CEO ........................................2
- 2015 People Building Value Awards .................................3
- Orchard Hills: Hoosier Energy Plant ..............................4
- Morrison Water Treatment Plant ................................5
- Mechanical IT Center .................................................6
- Great Wolf Lodge CO Springs ..................................7
- Rock Island FarmAll Storage Tank ..............................7
- Internship Program ....................................................8
Why Freeport?

The Helm Group of today bears only a slight resemblance to our founding as Freeport Blacktop in 1946. Gone are the triangle logos with FBT in the middle and, with the exception of some seal coat projects each summer, the last 70 years have brought change after change in the type of work we do and the regions in which we work. I imagine many of our employees get the same question that I get, “Why keep your corporate offices in Freeport?” Sure, Freeport is part of the company history, but if we look at the revenue we earn, only about 5% of our volume is work completed in Stephenson County, which surrounds Freeport. That 5% even includes work in the Freeport fabrication shop, most of which is being sent outside of Freeport. If we look at the geographic center of our work, Civil’s center would probably be Sterling and Mechanical’s would be Schaumburg. Maybe DeKalb is a better place for our corporate offices if minimizing travel were the only issue.

So why do we stay in Freeport? What does it say about us as a company and what does it mean for our future? I think our tie to Freeport is a result of the extraordinary work ethic of people in the area, the recruiting of talent, and the ability for us to contribute to a community.

Starting with work ethic, this company was built by people with the same smart, honest-days-work attitude of the farmers and manufacturers that built Freeport. Our small-town work ethic has transferred to other big city offices also. When we’re hiring in Cleveland, Chicago, or Milwaukee, we know who will fit into the company based on whether they would fit in Freeport. The culture of working hard and smart is something that is hard to define, but you sure know it when you see it. An industry executive that knows our company very well recently visited our office in Freeport. Her comment to her peers was, “How do they get so many great employees…they’re in the middle of nowhere and I mean nowhere.” That’s just what we do, but we couldn’t do it without being in a community like Freeport.

When we combine being a good solid company with being in a small community, a town like Freeport also allows us to recruit very well. This may seem counter-intuitive because we don’t see the number of applicants that we’d like, but it is quick and easy to hire the best candidate available. The Helm Group is like a big fish in a small pond and everyone wants to work for the big fish. Our competitors in bigger markets don’t have nearly the percentage of hires that are still with us years later and that would be rated as A-players. We recruit well because we have a great reputation, but just as importantly, if we don’t know the applicant, we know someone who knows the applicant.

Finally, there is the idea of being a good corporate citizen. We *stay in business* because we get work at the right price and execute at the lowest cost, but we are *in business* for more than this. We want to provide good jobs to our employees, we want to have good relationships with our customers and partners, and we want to support the communities in which we work.

It is very fulfilling to be a part of a community like Freeport that has a lot of good people and needs the Helm Group as much or more than the Helm Group needs the town. If we were in Cook County, we would be in the top 1,000 employers. In Stephenson County, we are probably in the top 10. Being in the position as a major employer gives us a responsibility to give back to the community. When this contribution is recognized as it was this year as the Freeport Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year, it makes the responsibility even more apparent going forward.

One of our first decisions 70 years ago was where to start our business. As with every decision, it is worthwhile to question and evaluate whether we should continue doing what we are doing. We will probably continue to get the question “Why Freeport?” but for now, I think our reasons for staying are solid and our place in Freeport is safe.
2015 People Building Value Awards Announced

2015 was another successful year for the Helm Group. Each year, the People Building Value award ceremony honors some of the people who helped contribute to that success. Employees are nominated by their coworkers and were celebrated at this year’s luncheon. Four awards are presented. The top award, the People Building Value Award, is given to a nominee who excelled and contributed to success in that year. In addition to the award, the employee is given a voucher to be used on a vacation. This year’s People Building Value Award winner went to Civil Safety Director Shawn Meier. Congratulations to Shawn—enjoy your well-deserved vacation!

The Chairman’s Award is presented to the most outstanding project over $1 million. Joliet Bulk Barge and Rail project was selected for this year’s award. The contract value of the project was $6.09 million. Project manager Ed Flynn (not pictured), foreman Tim Rowell, and vice president Dale Cox accepted the award on behalf of everyone on the project.

The President’s Award goes to the most outstanding project under $1 million. This year, that the Presidents Award went to the Dubuque Mississippi River Bridge Platforms for its performance and its safety record. Project manager Eric Loomis and foreman Don Goodrich (not pictured) accepted the award on behalf of all those involved in this project’s success.

The Safety Award this year went to Civil Roads for working 125,000 man hours with no accidents. In addition, this included zero at-fault vehicle accidents. Steve Rhode, Roger Kruse, and Mark Helm accepted the award.
Mechanical: Hoosier Energy Power Plant Turns Landfill Gasses into Electricity

Orchard Hills Landfill in Davis Junction, IL is the location of Hoosier Energy’s new 16 megawatt power plant. Methane gas originates from decomposing material in the landfill and is then harvested by the power plant, generating electricity from the waste. The $3.4 million project includes plumbing, HVAC, landfill gas piping, structural steel and pipe fabrication, and installation of pipe racks. Bob Johnson provided the estimating with assistance from John Shumaker in Freeport’s fabrication shop. Fabricating the exhaust stacks in Freeport and then transporting them to be installed in the field contributed to the success of the project. Leadership includes project manager Kent Seuring, project assistant Michelle Stephan, and foreman Mike McGlinn.
Adjacent to Morrison Institute of Technology in Morrison, IL is the location of a new water treatment plant. Mechanical is responsible for the interior process piping and equipment, HVAC duct and equipment, and all pipe and duct work. Leander Construction is the general contractor. The treatment plant includes a 96ft round by 35ft deep pump station and will improve the municipality’s ability to handle excess rainwater safely. Thanks to estimating by Warren Neubauer, and the leadership of project manager Brian Statdfield and foreman Tyler Norberg the $2.3 million project is off to a great start and is scheduled to wrap up in fall of 2017.
Mechanical Starts New IT Center

New spaces are creating new opportunities at Mechanical. This Spring, Mechanical broke ground at its Freeport campus on a new VDC (Virtual Design and Construction)/IT Center. The estimated $1.4 million new building will house Mechanical Freeport’s VDC department as well as IT department. Having a centrally located tech facility benefits the company as it expands its VDC department and develops new jobsite technology. The new facility will allow 10 new entry level CAD Technician jobs.

The Helm Group’s IT staff will also move into this new facility. The concrete walls and flexicore floor slab will help prevent a fire or tornado from disrupting the Helm Group’s computer network. The new space will also provide more room for computer servers that store the company’s data.
Great Wolf Lodge Colorado Springs

Wisconsin based Great Wolf Resorts is building a new hotel waterpark in Colorado Springs featuring a wave pool, children’s pool, activity pool, wet deck, and multiple slides. The waterpark is being built in an existing hotel that was never finished and has since been purchased by Great Wolf.

As part of the hotel, Mechanical’s $2.4 million water park project consists of installing pool piping, filters, UV units, chemical treatment, HVAC piping, water park play features, and deck drains. Project manager Brian Statdfield and foreman Glen Robison are the leaders on the project and Justin Frautschy did the estimating. The hotel and park are slated to open in September.

Rock Island: Farmall Storage Tank Nears Completion

Since fall of 2015, Civil Constructors has been working on a new underground storm water retention basin. Located in the heart of downtown Rock Island next to the old International Farmall Tractor factory, the new tank is a part of the City of Rock Island’s long term combined sewer overflow plan. Working closely with the owner, value engineering in the initial stages of the job allowed Civil to change from the planned pre-cast tank to a cast-in-place concrete tank providing the owner a better product at a better cost. The $4.3 million dollar project will be completely finished by mid-summer. Congratulations to project manager Clint Zimmerman, carpenter foreman Frank Emry, and laborer foreman Jesse Roe on a successful project.
Helm Group’s Internship Program Expands

Both Mechanical and Civil will feature interns this summer as part of Helm Group’s expanding internship program. Students from Purdue University, University of Michigan, Iowa State, UW Platteville, Morrison Institute of Technology, Freeport High School and others will get real world, hands-on experience working both in the field and as support for projects. While internships are full for this summer, interested applicants can contact hr@helmggroup.com for more info on future opportunities.

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy

It is the policy of the Helm Group to ensure that all employees and applicants have an equal opportunity for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability or reprisal. All employees are entitled to work in an environment free from harassment. All employees are encouraged to actively recruit and support a diverse workforce, including women and minorities. Encourage interested applicants to apply in our main office.