

SUMMER 2013

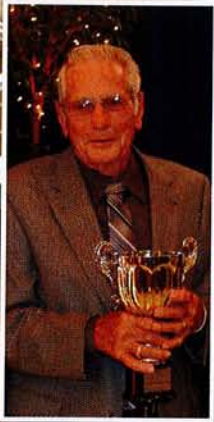
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Greater Bartow



Q U A R T E R L Y

Larry Madrid The Earth Is His Business



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Larry Madrid: A man with a passion for growing green

LARRY MADRID ENJOYS THE GARDEN AT THE FRONT OF MADRID ENGINEERING'S GREEN OFFICE BUILDING AT 2030 STATE ROAD 60 EAST. COLORS INSIDE AND OUT ARE EARTH AND WOOD TONES, AND NATURE'S TREES AND PLANTS COMPLEMENT THE COMPLEX.

— PHOTO BY PEGGY KEHOE

By Peggy Kehoe

Larry Madrid is a man with a passion for growing things: business, the economy and the earth.

Beginning with a ninth grade report on civil engineering as a career, Madrid now is celebrating the 20th anniversary of his company, Madrid Engineering Group (MEG).

As the company grew, a new facility was needed. Madrid and his wife, Connie, bought property at 2030 State Road 60 East in Bartow and were able to make their new office a green building. Later they installed solar panels and now the facility is a net zero energy building.

That experience led to the formation of Greenovative Design & Engineering, a consulting company, and Greenovative Homes, a construction company, and Greenstar Panels, which markets "hyper-insulation."

Born and raised in Colorado, Madrid grew up under the shadow of Pikes Peak, and Garden of the Gods, an uplifted sandstone formation, which he says is one of the most beautiful places on earth.

"I fell in love with the mountains and nature," he said. "That followed me to Florida." Although it's much hotter here, Madrid loves the lakes and loves to be outdoors. He and Connie often visit Circle B Bar Reserve and photograph the natural beauty there.

Madrid came to Florida in 1984, after earning his master's degree, to work for a company that was involved in the planning for the Polk Parkway. His introduction to Florida soils came from doing test borings and laboratory testing to find the best alignment for the highway. He worked there eight years, starting MEG in 1992.

Over the last 10 years Madrid Engineering has concentrated on sinkhole subsidence testing for insurance companies and has become one of the best companies in the state at that, he said. Subsidence is the term used for when the ground drops in a concave, bowl-shaped feature at the surface. While many are slow-moving, the

recent sinkhole in Seffner, which killed a man, was a collapse feature. Madrid was the expert called out to the site and said the experience was both emotionally and physically draining, as the man's family went through such a shocking experience.

"There was nothing that could be done," he said.

DIVERSIFYING

Sinkholes had been the company's primary income with the economy down, but now that the economy is coming back up, Madrid is trying to diversify and make sure they have a good mixture of general geotechnical projects, sinkhole projects, and also a new area of construction inspection of projects.

"We're interested in designing, also in construction and monitoring construction, and see that as a growing area of our company," Madrid explained.

His interest in green building and technology began when he was in engineering school. On a field trip to the solar research center at Colorado State University, he was impressed by a house using a passive solar system (before there were solar panels). Not only was it energy efficient, but also beautiful, Madrid said.

"I thought if I ever get a chance to build my own building, I want it to be energy efficient and beautiful," he recalled.

Twenty-five years later, when MEG needed a new facility, "those promises I'd made to myself flooded back to my brain and I said 'I'm going to build an energy efficient building, and I want it to also be beautiful.' I think we've accomplished that."

Lots of wood on the interior brings nature from the outside in. Colors are earth and wood tones, showing the play between earth and water. Even the concrete is stained to look like rock. Everything in the building was intentionally designed to be natural looking. All the exterior rooms have windows to bring in natural sunlight.

Out of constructing their own green building, Madrid "decided to try to see if we could help

other people to be green by designing things for them, by proposing solar farms and things like that, and by building new buildings or renovating."

In the process of learning what a green building was, they started Greenovative Homes, which has expanded beyond the installation of windows, doors and Greenstar insulation panels to building and renovating homes. The company is working on one now that will be in the Polk County Parade of Homes. Last fall another Greenovative won first place in the Parade's green home category.

"I feel really good about what we've been doing," Madrid said, "taking older homes that are kind of in dilapidated condition and buying them on foreclosure or short sale and turning them into something that's new and fresh and beautiful."

Paul White is the contractor for Greenovative Homes, Madrid is the "technical guy" and Bill Mutz is in charge of sales.

PERSONAL REWARDS

Madrid met his wife, Connie Bogner in Colorado Springs, when her father was stationed there with the Air Force.

They have three sons: Andrew, a chemical engineer in North Dakota; Philip, a civil engineer who is now working with Crew, a campus ministry, at the University of Paris in France; and Danny, who graduates this summer from Auburn with a major in Spanish and a minor in business.

The Madrids live in Bartow and are active in Fellowship Baptist Church in Lakeland. He has been choir director and worship leader for most of the past 30 years.

"I love the aspect and posture of worship," he said, "and the knowledge that there's something bigger than yourself; giving honor where honor is due.

Music and engineering is not as odd a combination as one might think. Madrid has come across a lot of engineers with musical capabilities, and thinks the mathematical component of music is appealing to an engineer who likes order and structure.

He comes from a musical family and has written 25 to 30 songs himself.

On the engineering side, Madrid has recently been awarded the annual GMEC Award from the Florida Geotechnical & Materials Engineering Council, part of the Florida Engineering Society. The award for outstanding contributions to the geotechnical engineering profession and to technical societies is especially meaningful because it comes from his peers.

Madrid is a D.G.E, a diplomate of geotechnical engineering conferred by the Academy of Geo-Professionals.

In 2008 Madrid Engineering Co. received the 2008 Diversity Award from Bartow Community Relations Committee, which for him celebrated his heritage, job creation and opportunities for success

"Nobody ever gets there on their own," Madrid noted. "I want to be an encourager, and help other people be successful. I had a lot of mentors, people who uplifted me and helped me through hard

times. Not everything is a success, but you "just keep getting up and trying again."

POLK'S TIME IS COMING

Madrid also has a passion for local businesses to be successful. "I think Polk County's time is coming," he says. "It may be right around the corner and we need to position ourselves for that kind of success that can happen when you're at the right place at the right time."

He cites the construction of the CSX Intermodal Rail Terminal, Florida Polytechnic University, and Polk State College Advanced Technology Center, which will offer training with nation-wide appeal.

"You start getting all these things together and you can really create some opportunities for jobs. And that's really what starting a business and growing it is about, which is why I joined the Chamber."

He found out there are many business benefits to joining the Greater Bartow Chamber of Commerce, but also "friendships that last a lifetime." Madrid served as president of the Chamber in 2011 and is currently on the board of the Central Florida Development Council.

"We're trying to come up with ways to market Polk County as a great place for living and a great place for business," Madrid said. "My vision of the future is that we have high technical expertise jobs that can help us have a nicer lifestyle and also that there is a green component, a sustainability component so that we can enjoy the natural part of Polk County, as well, and the fact that we're Floridians."

Madrid says he's lived in two of the most beautiful states and we need to preserve and protect them.

"We need a vision of what Polk County could be," he said. "If we say we want to be green, we need to make a commitment now."

Using his training, Madrid wants to help do that. Green houses would save money monthly, creating wealth for the community and improving quality of life.

"We need to develop and create business responsibly, including a healthy respect for the environment.

"Even if somebody's trying to be a champion of the economy and jobs, no one person can do it," he said. "You have to look for these opportunities, and when you find an opportunity, you look for people around you that you can take with you and give them an opportunity to succeed. That's my philosophy on running a business."

"The economy doesn't always cooperate; sometimes you're met with hardship and difficulty. It's not always easy but it is worthwhile."



MADRID ENGINEERING'S CURVING ENTRANCE HALL DESIGN BRINGS THE OUTDOORS IN, WITH A WOOD CEILING AND A WALL DESIGN THAT EVOKES THE EARTH'S GEOLOGY.

— PHOTO BY PEGGY KEHOE