



PHOTOS: CRAIG VAN WIJEN



PHOTO: McCONOMY PHOTOGRAPHY



THE FOUNDATION, HISTORY AND TEAM

Philanthropy, pride and precast are the three “Ps” that make Kerkstra Precast what it is today — an innovative, growing, 50-year-old, family-owned company with over 120 employees.

The company’s early beginnings started with Larry Kerkstra’s sole proprietorship in 1962, when the company’s main purpose was to install septic systems for residential contractors. It was in the early 1960s that Larry discovered an opportunity to manufacture precast septic tank components. “We started installing septic tanks and drain fields. In the second year, we figured we might as well make them ourselves. That was the start of the precast business,” Kerkstra explained. “Then years later, a contractor came to me, asking if I wanted to buy manhole forms, storm sewer and sanitary sewer conduit.”

Over the past 50 years, Kerkstra Precast has grown into a full-service precast concrete supplier, assisting in the design, manufacturing and installation of precast concrete buildings and utility products. In the mid 1980s, the company added concrete hollow core flooring systems for use in residential garages. In the mid 1990s, Kerkstra Precast opened a new production facility in Grandville with the ability to produce precast/prestressed hollow core, beams, columns and wall panels. This allowed clients the added benefits in the design-build process, namely the speed in which it can be

designed, cast, delivered and erected, allowing projects to stay on schedule and meet tight deadlines. Precast components can be fabricated while foundation work is underway, providing contractors a head start before the site is even available.

By mid-2000, beams and columns, trusses, stadia and double tees were being manufactured by Kerkstra. Manufacturing precast in its indoor production facility enabled Kerkstra greater quality control than casting products onsite. The growth continues as the company continually strives to innovate and educate.

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Wishing you
continued success.



PHOTOS: CRAIG VAN WIJEN

The strong foundation and principles that Larry instilled in the company are being passed on to the second generation, including Greg Kerkstra, Larry's son and current president and CEO and Henry Hofman, Larry's son-in-law who manages the utility product division. Greg Kerkstra never forgets the company's humble beginnings. The growth could not have been possible without the effort of Kerkstra's strong team of employees who have helped make the company what it is today. "We're proud of our experienced sales team, responsive production employees and service oriented engineering & detailing department," says Greg. The Kerkstras beam with pride when they talk about the team behind it all. Greg

is optimistic about his team and the company's future. "What we've seen in the last year and going forward is a lot of renewed strength and opportunity out there. The biggest thing is flexibility," explained Greg. "We are developing into other markets, such as architectural precast and parking structures."

Kerkstra noted that, "while the prices of steel and other commodities have jumped in recent years, concrete prices have stayed relatively stable." While success is important to the Kerkstra family, it is equally important to remember to thank God and the community that made the company who it is today.

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Gordon Food Service



EDUCATION EQUALS OPPORTUNITY

Cutting-edge architects and general contractors in West Michigan “get it.” They have found that using precast concrete can speed up the building process, saving time and money and even equally important, producing an attractive facility that will remain a landmark in the community.

The Kent County Recycle Center, the David D. Hunting YMCA and Gordon Foods headquarters are all shining examples of precast concrete’s versatility. Precast concrete offers architects versatility in the design and can be smoothly integrated with glass and other materials to produce an appealing facility. This allows the architect to gain more versatility while minimizing the number of components in design.

While plenty of architects and engineers have taken advantage of precast for their building projects, precast concrete is relatively new and architecture and engineering schools often only touch on precast concrete. The staff at Kerkstra often works side-by-side with architects to help them better understand how precast concrete can be used to keep projects on time and budget. “We are investing in colleges and universities, (yet) there is still a gap in knowledge of what precast is and what it can do. We work there to bridge the gap in the offices,” Greg Kerkstra noted. “Precast concrete is pretty flexible; it is sometimes more art than science. We have to walk a contractor or architect through it the first time.” Kerkstra has partnered with the Precast/Pre-stressed Concrete Institute to educate the construction community about how precast concrete’s versatility can solve unique design challenges.

Conversations early in the design process pay dividends later on. Construction timelines in the current environment have collapsed



Thank you

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Heart of the City Health Center

PHOTO: HIGHER PHOTO



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PHOTO: BILL LINDHOUT



EDUCATION EQUALS OPPORTUNITY *Continued from page 16*

considerably, so when projects are green lighted, Kerkstra can help contractors stay on track. Kerkstra is committed to being a value-added partner in the design-build process. "It is important to be part of this early. We educate...and are reaching out to generate conversation," Greg said. "When people start to design with precast and become comfortable with it, they find it to be a simple process. We can also provide a great deal of sales, engineering, and pricing support. When companies are partnering with us, or considering precast, we will work together on the sales effort."

Tim Schowalter, president of Pioneer Construction, realizes that the construction industry requires an increasing amount of integration between architecture and construction management firms, and contractors. "The team-oriented approach at Kerkstra has proved valuable on major projects," noted Schowalter. "They are creative and are willing to solve problems that require a team approach." Schowalter added, "They bring a peace of mind that the

project will be done right. When a design-build or design assist project approach is required, Kerkstra adds value to that process because of their people and can-do attitude."

By staying closely connected to their customers, Kerkstra Precast helps national clients as they add new stores, explained Mike VanGessel, founding partner at Rockford Construction. As construction manager for Meijer Inc., Rockford turns to Kerkstra for customized solutions to design challenges as the company expands and rolls out new stores designs. "You want to get as much predictability in design and cost as early as possible. Once you know what the skin of the building is going to be, you can quickly begin to do a lot of other things," VanGessel said.

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TIM SCHOWALTER, PRESIDENT OF PIONEER CONSTRUCTION

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MIKE VANGESSEL, FOUNDED PARTNER AT ROCKFORD CONSTRUCTION

With Kerkstra, "there are a lot of advantages that quickly come together. There is a fair amount of customizing that goes on, having a professional there that understands the process, can communicate back to us quickly and advises us early on is a big advantage. I don't like getting to the end of the design process and saying, 'We can't do that.' We are very open-minded and appreciate the professionalism we get through Kerkstra."

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 ~ John and Colleen Timpson and Our Associates



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GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTED KERKSTRA PRECAST

It takes more than good business sense for a company to succeed — it takes employees with a strong work ethic, top-notch vendors, and the continued support of the community. The values instilled in Kerkstra Precast back in 1962 remain equally as strong 50 years later.

The Kerkstra family is grateful for the company's success and strives to make a difference in the community by giving back 10% of the company's profits to charitable organizations. "It is our core value to give away 10 percent of our profits. It is a great feeling of purpose for me personally, and for all that are here," said Greg Kerkstra. The family is thankful to God for the blessings that they have received over the years. Their giving assists many local and international faith based non profits that support the needy, the orphans, and those who do not know Christ.

Duke Suwyn, President & CEO for West Michigan at Colliers International, manages properties for Larry Kerkstra and counts Larry as a mentor in business.

"He is a guy of integrity, likes to have fun, banter and challenge. He is a guy that I will line up behind of any day of the week," Suwyn explained. "Their company is founded on the same principles that Larry started in the trenches. They've changed product lines when they've needed to; they've changed their business when they needed to. Their product fits with them; it is a solid product that will deliver great value. It might take more effort to do it right, and that makes all the difference."

As leaders change, new products are developed, and the community grows, one thing will remain constant – Kerkstra's commitment to community and giving. To ensure the continuation of philanthropy, the company includes giving back as part of their mission statement.

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DUKE SUWYN, PRESIDENT & CEO FOR WEST MICHIGAN AT COLLIERS INTERNATIONAL



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