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Milwaukee contractor has diversity covered

By: Michaela Paukner July 24, 2019 5:00 pm



Thomas A. Mason Co. has a lot to celebrate. The full-service painting and flooring contractor is marking 107 years in business this year and welcoming its fourth generation into the ranks of the family-owned company.

It has grown from a horse-drawn wagon carrying painting supplies to a \$14 million company with offices in Milwaukee and Colorado. It also boasts a record of industry-leading diversity initiatives, putting the company in a prime position for continued growth, despite a shortage of workers in the construction industry.

Recruiting a diverse workforce has been a long-held goal. Over the past decade, Thomas A. Mason Co. has found many non-union workers and brought them on as union members.

Most were minority workers who went from making minimum wage to making \$32 an hour or more. The team now has more than 80 union painters and floor coverers.

“Utilizing a diverse workforce expands the selection of workers, giving our company the capacity to engage in large-scale construction projects without suffering a labor shortage,” said Steve Macaione, president of Thomas A. Mason Co. and a member of the third generation in the family business.

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Tom Mason, current CEO and third-generation owner, said the company believes strongly in a diverse workforce. Thomas A. Mason Co. exceeds Residents Preference Program participation requirements on every project it works on, not only those required by law. The requirements state RPP-certified workers living in Milwaukee must complete 40 percent of the total hours worked on public-works contracts. The company also exceeds this benchmark on private-sector projects such as the Northwestern Mutual Tower and Commons completed in 2017. A recent report from the project shows RPP-certified workers completed about 65 percent of Thomas A. Mason Co.'s work. Its Colorado team also has a 60-percent minority crew year-round, despite there being no legal requirements regarding minority workers.

"We're not a flash in the pan," said Mason. "We don't have a diverse workforce for one particular project. We have a diverse workforce all of the time, and we use it on both public and private sector work. To us, we don't see color; we just see workers."

Mason himself is Hispanic and has served on the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin's Board of Directors for more than 30 years. He takes great pride in helping other minority-owned businesses succeed.

"This is among the ultimate acts of diversity and inclusion," said Jorge Franco, chairman, president and chief executive of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin. "Minority-owned businesses are most likely to hire from within diverse communities, thus perpetuating a positive cycle of diversity and inclusion."