

MASS SERVICE & SUPPLY, LLC

General contracting firm performs LEED projects for the federal government

BY JOHN BALLARD

AFTER YEARS IN THE SMALL BUSINESS Administration's 8(a) program for minority and women-owned businesses, Pueblo, CO-based Mass Service & Supply has reached a level of success where it could be considered a poster child for the SBA. Husband and wife Mo Ghamdi and Cathy Grasmick founded the small contracting firm in 1996. In 2008 ColoradoBiz Magazine named it #23 of the Top 100 Woman-Owned Businesses and #101 of the Top 250 Privately Owned Companies.

Mass has made its name by focusing on general contracting services, primarily for the federal government. Due to its proximity to several military bases, it specializes in construction and renovation projects for the Department of Defense, with much of its work coming through the Army Corps of Engineers. "We've built our company around federal government work," Grasmick says. "There are special requirements for paperwork, and safety and quality control are of the utmost importance. So our company has tailored itself to meet their requirements."

On average, Mass maintains a 30-employee workforce, though at times that figure can fluctuate up to 50. Field personnel include four project managers, eight site superintendents, carpenters, and general laborers. Most of the specialized labor is subcontracted to a core group of subcontractors. Revenues in 2008 were \$13.5 million—approximately a \$2 million increase over 2007—and Grasmick conservatively forecasts an increase to \$15 million in 2009, primarily due to the company's pursuit of larger design-build projects.

Because of the growing importance the Army Corps of Engineers has placed on



The rendering of the headquarters of a band training facility at Fort Carson, CO.

LEED certification, Mass has found itself becoming a greener company in terms of construction practices. One senior project manager, Don Owens, has already completed the LEED AP certification process, and Grasmick has plans for all her project managers to do the same over the next few years. Mass is currently working on two LEED Silver projects, both through the Corps of Engineers at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs. One, the Fort Carson Band Training Facility, is a 12,480-square-foot, \$6.2 million design-build that will serve as the Army band's division headquarters and includes training areas and sound studios. The other, the Soldier Family Assistance Center, is a 15,000-square-foot, \$8 million design-build community center for the transition of soldiers from war zones into the private sector.

Grasmick and Owens have an aggressive plan to reduce energy consumption and increase renewable energy at the Fort Carson project. "On the design-builds that are ongoing at Fort Carson right

now, the biggest portion of what we've done to achieve LEED is the energy systems," Owens says. "Most of the LEED points occur in either energy performance or the material and resources section. It's tough for these military bases to get LEED Silver—we're typically in the 36-38 credit range. But with the new, third version of LEED coming out, I think a lot more of the renovation projects of existing facilities at Fort Carson are going to be pushed towards that category."

Grasmick believes Mass' employees' commitment to working with customers and subcontractors separates them from the competition. "Being honest and fair with the government goes a long way," she says. "As a result of this philosophy and our stringent quality control and safety standards, the Army Corps of Engineers has awarded us several outstanding evaluations on our projects, which are not easy to come by. We were also named Fort Carson Small Business Contractor of the Year in 2007."

As for the future, Grasmick says she's committed to simply completing more quality projects. "We want to continue the responsible growth that we've had since the start," she says. "Our focus is probably changing from smaller projects under \$5 million to projects in the \$10-15 million range that are design-build projects. My goal would be to remain a small business but to move into doing larger projects while still taking the same care of our customers, meeting their needs and exceeding their expectations." GBQ

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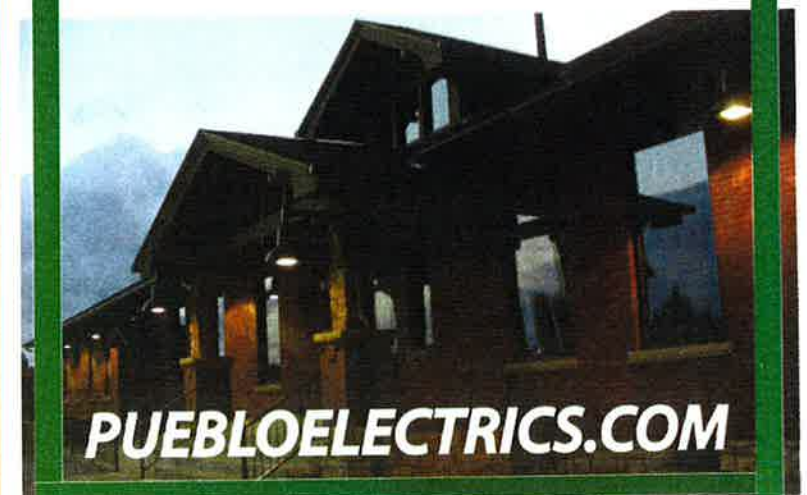


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AT A GLANCE

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AREA OF SPECIALTY:
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EMPLOYEES:
30