

Family is the key to this business

KEE Construction builds reputation through brotherly cooperation

By Stephanie M. Mangino
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Winchester — The three McKee brothers see virtue in being able to handle almost any construction job put before them.

“We kind of do a little bit of everything,” said Daniel McKee, operations manager and co-owner of KEE Construction Services LLC.

The year-old company’s repertoire includes not only new residential and commercial construction, but also renovations. Its avoidance of a niche seems to have worked, with the company posting more than \$3.6 million in sales since it began operations in spring 2005.

While the company is fairly new, the business is anything but for the McKee brothers. Daniel and older siblings Kenneth and Timothy grew up working on construction projects with their father.

Kenneth, the oldest, has been in the construction trade his entire life, having served as senior superintendent for the James G. Davis Construction Corp. of Rockville, Md. from 1979-2005, according to his resume.

Timothy went on to become a master electrician who worked for Columbia Gas in Strasburg for more than 10 years before joining forces with his brothers.



McKee brothers Kenneth (left), Daniel (center), and Timothy stand in front of a new home their company, KEE Construction Services LLC, is building in the Roscommon subdivision in Frederick County.
(Photo by Jeff Taylor)

The youngest, Daniel, earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from James Madison University in 1997 and a master’s in Business Administration from Shenandoah University this May, according to his resume. He also spent an 8-year stretch at Winchester-based American Woodmark Corp., where he managed computer developers dealing with internal software.

But the brothers never lost their passion for construction, and around 2002, they built a home on Washington Street — mostly with their own hands and a bit of help from some

subcontractors, Daniel said.

Soon, they were squeezing in evening and weekend work, and after a couple of years, the idea of starting their own business just seemed right.

Since then, the brothers, along with their project superintendent Melvin Payne, have taken on a wide variety of jobs, ranging from home building to a commercial project at 805 N. Loudoun St. that involved the demolition of warehouse space and the reconstruction of the front of a 12,000-square-foot building.

They've also handled home additions and renovations, Daniel said.

KEE Construction hasn't advertised much, but word of mouth has kept them busy. With a large family that lives locally, "word tends to travel fast," Daniel said.

Now the company — which has a Class A contracting license, an electrical masters designation, and about 15 employees — is usually working on four to six projects at a time, and it tends to take on work with a dollar value of \$30,000 or more, Daniel said.

However, the company isn't trying to target a particular type of customer, he said. KEE has a \$1.1 million spec house for sale in the Roscommon development in Frederick County, but a few years ago, the brothers also built a place for \$150,000.

Since the company is so diversified, the softening housing market hasn't hurt it much, said Kenneth, KEE's co-owner and build manager.

"We have a few things sitting, that we would like to see gone," he admitted of their housing stock. Still, the company builds homes in relatively small volume, so the downturn in prices hasn't affected KEE as much as it has larger builders, Daniel and Kenneth said.

But both brothers are convinced that the housing market will grow stronger again as people continue to move to the Winchester area and purchase homes currently on the market.

Daniel said renovation and commercial work has also picked up — which is fine for the company hoping to generate a reputation for quality construction.

Carolyn Williams of Frederick County was so impressed by the brothers' construction prowess — the company is currently building a new home for her in the western part of the county — that she came to work for KEE as its office manager.

In KEE's small office at 420 W. Jubal Early Dr., Kenny looked over at Williams and said she has been a big help to the fledgling company.

Williams responded that she loves her work.

So do the brothers. Daniel said he truly enjoys driving past a place they've built knowing that the company has created "something that's going to stand the test of time."

And even though the brothers are still learning the ins and outs of running their own business, they're enjoying the new experience.

"I love it," Kenneth said.

Daniel said he feels like they've done pretty well in their first year, and he's positive about the future. "It's only going to get better."



The owners of KEE Construction Services LLC from left: Timothy McKee, Daniel McKee, and Kenneth McKee. The brothers are pictured in a home their company is building in the Roscommon subdivision in Frederick County. In its first year, KEE Construction posted \$3.6 million in sales, according to company literature. *(Photo by Jeff Taylor)*