

# Credo Construction believes in a fine future

Whatcom County company ventures into Northwestern Washington and beyond

By Elisa Claassen

**ALTHOUGH THE COMPANY'S** logo depicting the Greek Parthenon may convey a long history and tradition, the actual history is a shorter one for Credo Construction Inc. The company was incorporated formally in the United States in 2000.

President Todd Lapinsky, one of several owners in the team, had previously started Lapinsky Construction in the early 1990s in nearby British Columbia, and found that running a business in Canada was not as favorable for the profit margin because of the socialistic tax structure, and decided to move across the border.

Once in Washington – where he had spent time with cousins in his childhood while maintaining a home and later a poultry farm in Canada – he realized that he wanted to become more familiar with the local business community in Whatcom County and worked the first three years of the incorporation for another building

contractor before forming a management team and marketing Credo to clients mid-way through 2004.

“It’s not just me – it’s forming a team of people to function together, to adapt in order to meet the needs of the clients in whichever marketplace we are working in,” Lapinsky said.

Credo offers project management for commercial, light industrial, land development, residential, tenant improvements, multi-family dwellings, condominiums and remodels. Services include design work, consulting, site analysis and feasibility, surveying, engineering, project management, budget analysis and preparation, interior design, onsite supervision, sched-

uling, subcontractor management and the use of a licensed real estate agent.

Choosing Credo Construction (credo means “I believe” in Latin), Lapinsky, 46, Clarence Kobes and Harvey Pellebore came together first, with Arlene Sanders joining the group about six months later. Together they had 58 years of construction experience and Sanders brought an important element – a strong link to Whatcom County. (“It’s important to have someone familiar with the community,” Lapinsky said.) She was also part of the gravel industry, brought experience in interior design and was licensed in real estate.

## BUILDING A CUSTOMER BASE

The new group found space initially on the fifth floor of the Crown Plaza Building with Saratoga Property Management. They outgrew that one room with two desks to move to the Gateway Building off of Samish Way as five full-time employees were assembled within four months to form a firm that would provide concrete forming, foundations, wood framing, cement work and steel erection and framing.

The first set of projects consisted of restoration work on the triangle build-



Avenue Pita in Bellingham's Cordata area is a recent Credo project.

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ing across from Crown Plaza Building, a kitchen for the administration of Western Washington University, framing a large home and making tenant improvements in retail stores and offices.

“We did anything and everything,” Lapinsky said.

The projects increased in number and scope the first full year in 2005. Projects included a 7,000-square-foot building near the Blaine truck border crossing for a brokerage firm; Rader Farms office near Lynden; a steel building for truck inspection for the federal government; a 20,000-square-foot warehouse for local businessman Sam Boulos; a series of condo repairs; and structural repair for the Sequoia Building in Cordata – to name only a few.

Projects and clients in 2006-2007 continue to show the company’s versatility with projects from Blaine to Mount Vernon, including the remodel of entertainer Ryan Stiles’ home, a restaurant, a seed warehouse and a health clinic.

#### TEAM WITH DEPTH

As the company moves ahead, the initial five employees now work among a total of 36 (comprised of one estimator, the management team, book-

keeper, three sales staff, three project managers, four site superintendents and carpenters). The office has relocated to its third location since 2004 at the edge of Bellingham city limits just north of the new Fred Meyer, looking out from a wooded lot to the freeway.

The sales staff has obtained a contract as the primary contractor for the legislative building for San Juan County, a milestone for the company. Credo is also the sole representative in Oregon, Washington and Western

Canada for Tiger Turf, a product primarily used in sports fields, but also in other commercial settings and residences. Tiger Turf, based in New Zealand, has its U.S. headquarters in Dallas.

Newest management team member and Bellingham native Kevin Lynch, 27, who joined the company a year ago after completing his MBA at Western Washington University, has used his skills with finances and IT support to update the company’s Web site. He



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#### POWERFUL MENTORS

Todd Lapinsky’s mentors include his clients:

- Harold Walton of Walton Beverage
- Phil Isle of Walton Beverage
- Ken Kellar of Blaine
- Sam Boulos of Starvin’ Sams

“I learned from them how to manage and care for employees ... the attention to detail ... and a lot about finance and putting together joint venture products and networks to be successful through good and bad markets,” he said.

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**Credo President Todd Lapinsky demonstrates the use of insulated concrete forms, a popular green building technique.**

also was promoted to vice president within the year.

Lapinsky said that he likes the dynamic of his staff – the more experienced construction and sales team coupled with the youthful energy of

the younger employees.

Lapinsky is a grandfather as well as father of three and said that he enjoys the ideas from his children, like video clips from YouTube, which he passes on to younger employees. For example, he favors a video of geriatric musi-

cal group “The Zimmers” performing The Who’s “My Generation” – as a reminder that there is something to be gained from each generation and that even aging can be fun.

### PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

In addition to “being profitable” as a key and core goal of staying in business, Lapinsky and his managers conduct an informal roundtable-style chat of how to make that happen:

- Increase bonding capacity to bid on more public projects. Working on buildings for the border crossing, the U.S. Coast Guard and for Skagit County are only first steps toward this goal.

- Continue to add key people to take the company to \$30 million in sales in the next year.


- Estimate and sell more jobs in Hawaii and British Columbia, where they are also licensed to work. With the amount of building on golf and country clubs and resorts, there is additional need to build the infrastructure, Lapinsky said, such as schools and housing units.

- Promote the Built Green program features that they have been licensed two-and-a-half years to do. One component is the Insulated Concrete Forms Construction (ICF) using prefabricated pieces from Logix in Chilliwack, B.C.

“From a worker’s standpoint, you stay perfectly clean,” Lapinsky said, demonstrating the ease and cleanliness of working with a few concrete pieces. “It’s better for the environment.”


Credo so far has used ICF on both a larger-scale, high-end residence in British Columbia and a four-story condo project in Whatcom County, he said. They expect to use it much more in the coming years.

As they move ahead with these goals in mind Lapinsky knows there is more to be done. “You need to be constantly adapting ... it’s a dynamic business.” ■



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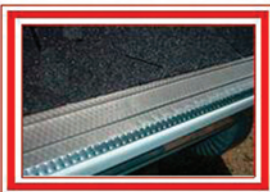


Stone deck with rail less railing

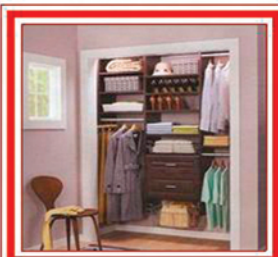
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