

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jessica Kirby, Partners in Progress

Phone: 250-816-3671

Email: press@pinpmagazine.org

SMART and SMACNA go beyond construction expertise to volunteer in their communities

This summer, partnerships between members of the Sheet Metal Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) and Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association's (SMACNA) have gone beyond good business to benefit the greater good.

Local 83 in Malta, New York, and SMACNA Capital District partnered to build a Veteran's Memorial at the entrance of the town hall to honor those who have paid the ultimate price for America.

The memorial included a piece of the steel from the fallen Twin Towers, a memorial walk way, benches, and a fountain area, enclosed by fencing and adorned by signage created through Local 83 and SMACNA Capital District's partnership.

Local 83 organizer Phil Stenglein says he was asked to oversee all signatory trades on the project, including three trades and four contractors in the sheet metal, ironwork, painting, and masonry trades.

"I received a rough sketch, a due date of June 6, and some old wrought iron fencing from the old town cemetery, which dated back to just after the Civil War," he says. "We had to trudge through over a foot of snow to look at it. Let me tell you, it was in rough shape. I picked out some sections of fence and the two or three finials or posts on the end, though no two pieces were the same or fully intact."

Stenglein approached Josh Monahan, vice president with SMACNA Capital District member Monahan Metals, to complete the wording on the entrance way gate, and Monahan did not hesitate to get involved, Stenglein says. "He donated the material and labor for the sign that would be attached to the fencing plus all the wording."

"We feel it's important to help support the community and people we share a home with," Monahan says. "Everyday we send our products all over the country trying to make an impact on our market. However, more importantly, everyday our team members are part of a sports team, a fire department, or a veterans program. It's important to support and build those organizations up when possible because they bring purpose and unity to a diverse group of people."

When the deadline is tight, emotion is high, and several trades are working together, strong partnerships truly shine. "Labor-management partnerships diversify and broaden your reach," Monahan says. "We wouldn't have known about this if it weren't for Phil. He has a different agenda than I do, and that's helpful in understanding our market."

Stenglein agrees. "As a union, most of our participation in these projects comes by the way of volunteer labor. When we need material, equipment, and product, we have to reach out to our contractors for all of or most of that."

“Because of our partnerships, I can pick up the phone and ask our contractors, who are already busy enough, to volunteer their time and resources in order to make the project a success.”

In Fort Wayne, Indiana, the new Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall at the Veterans National Memorial Shrine has a special meaning for veterans in that state and is a source of pride for SMACNA member Morris Sheet Metal Corp and Local 20 Fort Wayne SMART Army, who pooled their resources to turn this long-awaited project into reality.

“It first came on our radar in December 2020, when it was announced that a replica of the wall would be erected in Fort Wayne,” recalls Darryl Esterline, business representative for Local 20. “Given the importance of the project to so many families, we told the organizers that SMART Army would volunteer our services to honor our fallen heroes.”

Thomas Laubhan, president at Morris Sheet Metal, says to say both parties enjoy a close working relationship in Fort Wayne would be an understatement. “We’ve never dwelled on any division between labor and management because we both want the industry to grow and give employees a good living wage,” he says.

Esterline agrees. “If we’ve ever had a problem or issue between us that lasted more than a day or so, I’d be surprised,” he says, adding that this bond exists throughout the Local’s 275-strong building trades membership, which covers 16 counties in Northeast Indiana. “It helps that I worked for most of the owners of companies in the Fort Wayne area until I became a business representative in 2013. So, when I’m approached with problems, I can propose solutions based on practical experience.”

The International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors’ National Association (SMACNA) have a labor management partnership that is more than 75 years old. The goal of these Partners in Progress is to maintain an effective cooperative effort that demonstrates their expertise in the heating ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC), architectural metal, and industrial sheet metal markets. For additional information, visit pinp.org.