

DOOR SPECIALTIES INC.

Hearing opportunity knock in Western New York

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The door to a better Buffalo seems to be opening, and brothers-in-law Kevin Dikeman and Tony Genovese have their hands on the knob—literally and figuratively.

Respectively, president and vice president of Door Specialties Inc. in nearby Tonawanda, the two men have seen indications aplenty of an urban renaissance at Western New York's largest city, with positive implications for the suburbs and rural areas.

"We're really humming along," Dikeman says, noting the public and private investment that is putting a shine to the city fast-shedding its Rust Belt reputation. "Buffalo is really on the rebound, and we're proud to be part of it."

Especially in the downtown where, come fall, one of the nation's oldest medical schools, the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, is expected to complete its move from the University of Buffalo's south campus to the western edge of the 120-acre Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.



Comprising eight stories with a seven-story glass atrium and enough square feet to pack in 11 football fields, the new \$375 million facility should further enhance what's already a world-class Buffalo medical community, as well as bring an additional 17,000 people within walking distance of an exciting central business district.

And that medical school will need lots of doors in place by the time the staff comes aboard in September and the students in January. Hollow metal doors and frames, overhead doors, wood and factory-finished doors. All those state-of-the-art doors and the many accessories needed for peak efficiency and security.

Buffalo-based construction manager LPCiminelli Inc. knew who to call.

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Answering the doorbell

Just how many doors it'll take to satisfy the new medical school, Dikeman wasn't saying during a friendly phone chat in May, but his company is well-versed in supplying large volumes of inventory, having been a fixture in the regional construction industry since its 1975 founding by his father, Thomas Dikeman.

The go-to supplier of its kind for general contractors and developers, Door Specialties' product line includes such reputable manufacturers as Ceco, Sargent, Corbin, Russwin, Yale, Precision, Best, Marshfield, Mohawk, Graham and Hadrian, and is also a Stanley Best Preferred Distributor that stocks keys and cores with locksmith capabilities for end users.

Although Door Specialties is only acting as a supplier for the medical school, it also installs and services its wares with a hard-working crew of 26 that Dikeman says prides itself on reliability.

"It may be a tight job market, but we look for—and find—knowledgeable, honest employees," Dikeman says. "People with good character, those who build trust with our customers and keep them coming back."



A family-run supplier and installer of doors does its part to open the Buffalo area to an economic rebirth.

Entrance to prosperity

Western New York's economic revival should have customers coming back to Door Specialties and other such companies. The region is reaping early dividends from the so-called Buffalo Billion—Gov. Andrew Cuomo's long-term investment in a part of the state that too often seemed to have its interests put behind those of the big city 370 miles to the southeast.

But no more.

Buffalo Business First reports close to \$8 billion in construction projects has either been wrapped up or gotten underway since 2013—a figure that increases to over \$19 billion when including work from the region as a whole.

Possibly before this summer's first heat wave, a massive solar panel production facility operated by SolarCity and called RiverBend, is expected to be humming and providing permanent jobs for 3,000 upstate New Yorkers.

Boosted by \$750 million in state funding that augments a private investment of \$5 billion, it's Cuomo's signature project, but is far from being the only one. IBM plans another 500 jobs at a new state-owned computer info-tech center in Buffalo.

As these companies prosper and generate economic spinoffs, there should be more need for doors and related products, and their servicing. Dikeman and Genovese say Door Specialties is ready.





If it's general door repair and service that's needed, their crew can remove and install doors, frames and hardware or pre-install hardware on doors prior to on-site delivery. Full-shop fabrication of hollow metal frames is another service offered.

Locksmithing is a necessity, and Door Specialties can key and master existing systems or put a new system in place. With electronic access control becoming par for the modern construction course, the crew can supply and install a new system or embellish an existing one with locks, electronic strikes, card readers and cameras.

Should the architectural hardware need specification writing, Door Specialties will do it for finished hardware, hollow metal and wooden doors. The company will also inspect doors, frames and hardware to ensure compliance with fire and safety codes.

In a wistful mood, Dikeman laments how his father, who died at the age of 76 in 2012, did so much for his family, his company and the greater Buffalo region, never losing faith, even as the so-called Great Recession put builders out of business.

That kind of resiliency can be part of a Buffalo resident's DNA.

“Here, we really didn’t experience the highs other regions did, so when the recession hit, we didn’t have far to fall,” Dikeman says while remembering the hard times of a decade ago. “We were chugging along, even though few people were noticing. Now word’s out about Buffalo: we’ve got affordable housing, four seasons, a reasonable cost of living, the people are great and so are the restaurants, the amenities and the area’s culture.”

Had the elder Dikeman been blessed with just a few more years of life, he would have relished Buffalo’s new progress, his son says.

“He represented the pride of Buffalo and that continues under us,” Dikeman says. “This is where our families always wanted to be, and we’ve always believed in this area.”





That founding father will be especially remembered this fall when Door Specialties celebrates its 43rd anniversary, an occasion that will be extra special with a third generation aboard.

Garrett Genovese, Tony's son and Kevin's nephew, has been with Door Specialties for nine years, the past five as project manager. Kevin's son, Adam, has been a project manager for the past year, while his youngest daughter, Ali, joined the crew in early 2017. All the youngsters are helping grow the business for future generations.

"My father wasn't able to see it [the Buffalo renaissance] happen, but I'm glad that my children and I can witness it," Kevin Dikeman says.

And, of course, do their part in helping to build better times in that proud old city on the eastern shore of Lake Erie. •