A Company on the Go
A TRADITION OF CARING FOR PEOPLE

BUILDING FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Cloud-Based Safety and Security at Miss Porter's
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Stamford ABC Project Wins Another National Award
Then and now, the private school experience

Since this issue of our newsletter is devoted to independent schools, I thought I would relate to you my own experience at such schools, otherwise known as prep schools.

When I was fourteen I was a most unlikely candidate for prep school. I had never heard of one. All four of my grandparents, Italian immigrants, hadn’t gone much beyond maybe a first year in high school in the old country. Of the twelve children they raised (six on each side of my family), only two went to college. A prep school education was something that just wasn’t discussed at home.

Then things changed. My best friend convinced me that, for a number of reasons, we should both go to one and off we went – I to The Taft School in Watertown and my friend to The Gunnery in Washington.

What I remember most is how very structured and rigorous the education was. Classes were held six days a week. Study halls every evening were mandatory. In between class and study time, everyone was expected to participate in a sport at some level, or to demonstrate one’s talent in a drama production or in a singing group, or to provide a community service to a needy group. But perhaps the most significant opportunity was associating with students from almost every state in America and numerous foreign countries. It was a tremendously broadening experience.

One of the things that attracted me to Taft in the first place was the look of the campus with its brick buildings and stately architecture. Never did I expect in those early prep school days that O&G would have a chance to make a mark on that campus, but through a period of two decades, O&G built five major buildings for the school.

The company has gone on to do many major projects for independent schools: Miss Porter’s, The Hotchkiss School, The Gunnery, Kent School, Berkshire School, The Loomis Chaffee School, The Millbrook School, Canterbury School and Choate Rosemary Hall. The common feature of all of the projects, whether it be a dormitory or a hockey rink, a theater or a green biomass power plant, is the high quality of the design chosen by the schools. The architects have all been first class. Their buildings have been designed to last using materials of the highest quality. It has been a pleasure for O&G to have become a part of their community.

I now shift gears to the unusual reality we all find ourselves in as we confront the COVID-19 pandemic and ponder its implications, at least in the short term and for prep schools in particular. Until a vaccine is found for the disease, we know the most effective measure to prevent its spread is social distancing – a concept that is anathema to the prep school experience. As I described, all students are expected to go to class together, play sports together, or participate in other extracurricular activities together – indeed live in close proximity together all school year long.

These schools are run by talented administrators and faculty under the governance of very experienced men and women who sit on their boards. I am confident that they have figured out what is best for their institutions to insure the health and safety of their student populations so that those students may enjoy the same wonderful opportunities I had when it was my turn.

In the meantime, I want all of the private and public schools at which O&G now works to know that our company and workers are very sensitive to the COVID-19 situation, are trained in mitigation and exercise best practices at all times. We have the same concerns as you.

Stay safe.

Gregory Oneglia
Vice Chairman
It gets more personal when you are

Building for Independents

They could not have expected, in the spring of 1962 when O&G put the first shovel in the ground on its first school venture – a parochial grammar school in Torrington – that it would be the beginning of over 290 school projects completed since then. That makes O&G the state’s largest home-grown player in school construction – private and public, elementary through university.

Seventy-nine of those 290-plus school projects have been for prep schools, the independents. It is a notable accomplishment considering the numbers. In 2020, according to online “Boarding School Review,” there are just 24 top college-preparatory and junior boarding schools in Connecticut, compared to 1,179 public schools.

Projects performed for independents apply the same construction methods and build similar spaces as their public school counterparts, but at their heart they differ. Some of the differences are easy to see. Public schools, for instance, are sometimes razed and remade, or rebuilt in new locations in their communities; private schools almost exclusively rework their campuses, happily anchored to a space that tradition has defined for them.

Other differences in private school construction are not as obvious. We spoke about them with the owners of two current projects and the O&G staff building them: The Gunnery in Washington and Miss Porter’s in Farmington, and O&G’s Project Manager Stuart Wiley and Superintendent George Givens.

The money is hunted and gathered – manage it like it’s your own.

In the public arena, the monies for school projects are disbursed from town and city governments first, with large infusions granted from the State of Connecticut to bridge any gap, up to 80% of the cost depending on the particular town or city’s demographics.

Not so in the world of independent schools. Typically a private school project must gestate until the right conditions bring it to life. After a vision begins taking shape, securing the funding becomes the driver. Drawing funds from tuition would be a long game. Sudden significant gifts from alumnae can kick-start a job but they are not the norm. So acquiring monies involves the creative art form of fundraising, which can make it a much longer process.

“By the time we get involved they’ve already been thinking about this project for years,” emphasizes Wiley. He’s sitting at a table in the foyer of the newly opened Thomas S. Perakos Arts and Community Center at The Gunnery he and Givens helped build. Both Wiley and Givens are chiseling down a punch list of final project details and transitioning to the Miss Porter’s building project for its June start. “It’s not like construction for a town
where you have people fighting for a project and others fighting against it. At a private school everyone is on board. It’s much more unified. It feels more personal.”

Unlike public projects, private construction isn’t automatically awarded to the lowest bidder. Matters of trust and reputation and relationship all factor into the choice of contractor. Wiley again: “They’re looking for personalities that fit who they are. ‘Who’s going to look out for our best interest, who’s going to save us dollars, who’s going to get it built on time?’ They don’t have state funding behind them. They only have so much.”

When an independent school selects a builder to oversee their project they look for people who will partner with their vision. They’ve been planning and raising monies, often for years. They are tremendously enthused about the project, and they want a builder on board who understands their culture, builds for lasting quality, and assigns the right personalities.

“I told Stu,” Givens relates, smiling across the table at Wiley, “you’ll build a relationship at Porter’s and that will come from managing their money. Making it like it’s your own. You do that and communicate that, that’s how you build a relationship.”

At The Gunnery, Michel Williams was hired to be the school’s project manager (and director of campus security – private school staff often have multiple assignments). He would be the school’s everyday interface with the builders and architects needed for the projects in mind. An agreeable man with wire-rim glasses and a Patagonia vibe, as well as a veteran of college campus work, Williams fits the setting. He talks about how he realized the importance the school placed on its finances in a public and unexpected way. When Head of School, Peter Becker, stood in the foyer of the brand new arts and community center to formally open the new space to a throng of staff and students, he asked Williams to come forward. “I’m used to being the guy in the wings,” he says, “but Mr. Becker introduced me and said, ‘This is the guy who watched the school’s money.’ And that has really stuck with me.”

The process is more streamlined – use it to everyone’s advantage.

Public school projects involve after-hours meetings with a committee of city employees and volunteers from a variety of backgrounds. They meet with representatives of the architect and builder, usually monthly on a given week night, for the duration. Reports are given, questions asked and decisions made at these monthly meetings.

At The Gunnery and Miss Porter’s, the schools are represented by a single staff person – an owner’s representative at The Gunnery and the CFO/COO at Miss Porter’s. They are immersed in its culture. They understand their school’s particularities and its history. They are present on campus most every day and that streamlines the process.

“There’s more flexibility working for a private school,” says Givens. “I’m dealing more one-on-one. If something isn’t right it’s a smaller world for me to deal with, once you build a relationship.” Wiley adds to it: “You don’t have to go before a committee on their timing. You talk to the school’s point person. He can make a decision on the spot, or make a call and involve the administration and ask what they’d like to do if that’s needed.” In either case, using Wiley’s favorite metaphor, the ball moves up the field.

For Givens and Wiley, the focus on proactivity and flexibility and
improving the job doesn’t waver. Sometimes that means tackling a lost-sheep detail themselves – like finding metal trim samples or caulking around some windows or hanging a weather vane, rather than waiting for resolution from a trade. “Schools don’t want to hear that you’re hung up on something small,” Wiley has seen. “They want to see that you care and are taking care of it.”

This kind of immediacy is fertile soil for a management methodology called Lean construction. The game of construction isn’t checkers, it’s chess,” says Givens. He has been a proponent of the Lean methodology for running a construction project and of all the advantages it brings. Winning managers like Givens and Wiley think multiple moves ahead, and they exploit Lean to that end.

Lean’s goal is to have a project diagrammed months out, visually, on 4x6 sheets of white Masonite board that represent the calendar of the project, hung against a wall in job trailers for every subcontractor to see. Color-coded Post-it notes – it might be blue for electrical work, for example, or yellow for excavation – spell out work packages. They are stuck to the board in sequence. They are there for various reasons but a primary one is to help the team spot new interactions for efficiency. One contractor might have a crane coming to the site, for example, which could prompt another contractor to “pull” (Lean terminology) their work ahead of schedule to piggyback that crane for a task that had been planned for a later date. A strength of the very visual Lean method encourages efficiencies like that. It’s a win-win for the O&G team on the ground and the owner whose project schedule is accelerated.

Lean is a strategic work flow tool but it’s axiomatic that the tool is only as useful as the user is adept, and that, in the world of construction, ties directly to experience. Superintendents and foremen with decades in the field have the upper hand. They use Lean to create opportunities. “Having experience,” the 45-year veteran Givens says simply, “you just think much further than the next move.”

Relationships underscore everything.

This is the greatest difference of all.

To begin with, relationships are the anchor of the private school experience for students and staff. It’s the norm to feel intense belonging and a life-long affiliation – a forever relationship with a prep school family and even the buildings and grounds themselves.

Michael Bergin wears two hats at Miss Porter’s, those of Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer. He talks about the project just underway with O&G to expand what the school calls Main, short for the Main building. Main is the picturesque, brick-and-white-columned building fronting Main Street most people associate with the school.

He talks about its history, how it was built in 1831 as the Union Hotel to service the construction of the Farmington Canal, while that lasted. In 1866 Sarah Porter purchased it, for $8,000 he points out, and moved in her growing boarding school. It is relationship to history, tradition and the Porter’s community that has motivated the expansion project.

“We considered building new elsewhere on campus,” says Bergin, “but we really preferred an adaptive re-use of Main. It’s a beloved space for everyone coming together for meals and special functions. The dining room is the heart and soul of a boarding school, the place where our girls and community gather multiple times a day. We’ve just outgrown it so we’re expanding it.” The main driver? Belonging. Ensuring that everyone can assemble in one common space with no one left out. Maintaining a look for the addition that returning ancients will still recognize is also important. ("Ancients" is the affectionate term alumna of Porter’s go by.) Bergin is clear: “We will honor the history of this place,” he says.

Relationship figures between prep schools as well. A close-knit group, they network and share information. The Gunny, for instance, contacted Miss Porter’s to talk about building their new center. More accurately, friends Christopher Cowell, The Gunnery’s CFO and Business Manager, and Michael Bergin had a talk. Bergin endorsed O&G given the earlier success of O&G’s conversion of a grist mill into an admissions center: on-time delivery, easy communication, quality work, fair price and “getting” the Porter culture. Givens was the superintendent on that job.

Unlike a public project, assembling a team of contractors is largely the purview of the project manager, which is to say that as Wiley and Givens assembled a team for the owner they were free from picking solely on lowest price. They solicited bids from contractors who would “fit,” whose work they knew and whom they trusted, companies with local ties and a team mindset.

During construction, Michel Williams appreciated how Givens and Wiley, unassuming and helpful by nature, were quick to give him an assist at The Gunnery. "If George or Stuart saw something of significance coming they’d pull me aside and say, ‘I want you to be aware of this’ and educate me so the project would stay on track.” They were strategic in asking for torque from the school. “We need to address this issue in a letter,” Givens would say on rare occasion. "If there was something I needed to get the administration in on for leverage I’d invite the CFO to a meeting. That was rare, which speaks to their effectiveness in getting things done,” says Williams. When an aspect of the project was new to Williams – site plans were, for instance – Givens and Wiley showed him all he needed to know. “What I’m really looking for is good, straight, honest communication. They always had a response that was appropriate to the situation and they didn’t coddle me. George was great at that and never condescending.”

For Bergin, relationship drove his decision to work with O&G again. “A builder’s reputation in the market is certainly important, but overriding that is the confidence we have in the ownership and the people of O&G,” he says. “This is a really huge job for Miss Porter’s and I was responsible for picking a firm that would be a partner. There was strong competition for this project and O&G was not the lowest bidder. But O&G has the bandwidth to resolve any challenge that comes along. We have an established relationship. They’re on our side and I trust O&G.”
Windburned face, calloused hands and a smile that breaks out guardedly. George Givens looks the part of a no-nonsense construction superintendent. It's when you spend time with him you understand there's more. There is a Zen-like intuition, a diplomatic reserve, and a straight-shooting approach to life that owners and contractors grow to appreciate.

Having just finished building the Thomas S. Perakos Arts and Community Center at The Gunnery in Washington, with O&G Project Manager Stuart Wiley, he is returning to Miss Porter's School in Farmington, this time with Wiley, to begin his second extensive building renovation there. They'll be enlarging and modernizing the “Main building” which is Porter’s historic, brick-and-column signature structure fronting Main Street. The contract requires it all be done in ten months. Learning the schedule he must meet, and how the scope of work had even grown some since he’d reviewed the available drawings, Givens’ reply was vintage understatement: “Wow.”

Believing that he can build anything, and build it faster and better, is his trademark. “I can set the pace better than anyone,” he says, matter-of-factly. That’s how, employed by a smaller contractor, he was made a superintendent at age 23. And although he was trained as a carpenter, over the next twenty-plus years the company encouraged him to operate equipment, excavate, frame, plumb, trim and pour concrete “with a very good level of quality.” He knows how things should be built, which isn’t the same as claiming to know everything. While many superintendents are rightly satisfied driving manpower – that’s their job – Givens still wants to know more. “George doesn’t want to be stagnant,” Wiley has learned. “He pushes himself to ask and understand the science or the process behind something that’s new to him.”

Givens the man is constructed on an old-school foundation. He grew up an Army brat. Born in Kentucky, raised in Texas and Germany, his early immersion in “a life of military rank and file” defined his character and modeled the discipline he brings to work. He recalls it as “a good solid structure.” That same character and discipline transformed him from a green arm wrestler everyone wanted to take on in the late ’70s, into the U.S. middle-weight arm wrestling champion wrestlers avoided, reigning for eight consecutive years. On the job, today, his character and discipline translate into accountability, managing a project like it’s his own investment, communicating honestly, sacrificing personal time when a project requires it, and not walking away until a job is 100 percent done.

Consider this. Almost immediately after O&G set up at Miss Porter's in 2015 to renovate an historic gristmill into their new admissions offices, a significant issue with the site’s zoning compliance arose. It threatened not just to delay the work but just as critically it threatened to discolor the working relationship between Miss Porter’s and the O&G-led team. Superintendent Givens was right on it, and once the issue was on its way to resolution, he scheduled a sit-down with Michael Bergin, the school’s CFO/COO. “I wanted him to know exactly what went wrong. I wanted him to know that he didn’t have to doubt that I’m giving him 110 percent. That fifteen-minute meeting with Mr. Bergin changed everything.” The two became friends.

Trust is something you gain and are not handed, he understands. “It’s a very bad feeling that anyone would think less of me.” Building for Givens is nuts and bolts but it’s also relationship and it’s a very personal thing.
It’s a high-end venue unusual for a school, more the caliber of a theater like the Bushnell or the Shubert. The Tisch Family Auditorium at the Thomas S. Perakos Arts and Community Center, built by O&G and opened this past January, seats 430 in amphitheater style – steeper rows so every seat in the house has a clear view of the stage. Architect The S/L/A/M Collaborative, with other theaters to its credit, called in a trio of experts from across the country to consult on sound and acoustics, lighting design and controls, and rigging for stagecraft essentials like curtains, scenery and props.
S/L/A/M’s design is rich, using an abundance of Gunnery crimson on stage curtains and plush seats, cherry wood panels and wall baffling to balance sound reflection and absorption, and large, angular fenestration that permits natural light for certain daytime uses without the need for additional lighting.

The auditorium, the heart of the Center, is a high-caliber demonstration of The Gunnery’s avowed commitment to connect with the community through art. The Center is in the process of qualifying as a LEED (for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver certified building.
Safety at The Gunnery’s New Arts and Community Center

The building is stunning. Getting there, however, presented some hurdles for the entire O&G/contractor team, including the company’s newest safety manager assigned to the project, PETE MARCUcio.

Pete, this was your first project with O&G. Tell us about that. Being new I wanted to earn the respect of the workers. That was the first thing. If you want safety to be successful on any site, there has to be a trust on both sides, workers and managers. My attitude is ‘give respect to gain respect.’ I also want to give a lot of credit to all the O&G team for the great support from the moment I stepped onto the job. It felt like a team which is what you need for safety to work: I’m not on the site every day so you need the support of the team that is there every day to maintain that safety awareness.

The site is pretty compact and O&G was working within an occupied campus. Yes and those were the two main concerns we had. For the majority of the job the campus was active with a lot of pedestrian traffic around the site. Then on either side of the site less than thirty feet away were dormitories. We were always aware of that. Things like scheduling cranes, deliveries of material, moving heavy equipment all had to be scheduled in a way that would ensure the safety of students and staff with little or no disruption of campus activities. As for the limited working area, especially where the theater was going, it increased the risk of struck-by and caught-in-between hazards so we were vigilant on that. The tight space also made it difficult to find places for laydown and dumpsters and things like that. We also had to protect excavations, which cut into the work area, or backfill them at the end of every day. Remember that we would leave the site for the day but the Gunnery community was still there and active.

How would you say safety went? I did a lot of training and reminding around the use of lifts, ladders and scaffolding. There were a lot of them in use here. Again I attribute the overall success we had dealing with the site conditions and mitigating risk to the veteran management team. They were on board with safety and knew what to anticipate. They were the ones who were there day in and day out and reinforced the message. Safety was a team effort which is what it should always be.

Cloud-based job site safety coming to Miss Porter’s

When construction gets underway at Miss Porter’s Main building this summer, a new tool for job site safety and security will be in play. The Spot-r System, developed by Norwalk-based Triax Technologies, will automatically collect and transmit real-time worker time, attendance and location data as well as worker falls and push-button alerts. Inconspicuous “nodes” — each a small plastic box with antenna, shown here — will be positioned in and around the job site. Anyone working the project will wear their own unique clip-on sensor, about the size of a small pager, that communicates with the nodes. Sensors will go onto any wheeled or tracked equipment on the site as well. Alerts — someone falls or is injured or ends up outside the work area — go instantly to project managers. All the data can be monitored on phones, tablets and computers by O&G using Triax’s cloud-based, data-rich platform.

With the project located at the Miss Porter’s busy hub, safety for Porter’s students is essential and the system will be a safeguard to that end.

Safety Manager Tim Barbiere, assigned to the project, is looking forward to the enhanced safety the system will deliver. “This is a great opportunity for O&G to continue to embrace new tech in our industry. I’m looking forward to this technology’s ability to give us real time info from the users and alert us to emergency situations.”

#THiNK SAFETY
A Cu LTure OF SAF eTY

10 ON THE GO | V30 ISSUE 1
The thousands of types of stone and brick that O&G supplies to construction projects beautifies all kinds of places – hospitals, estates, hardscapes, retail locations, municipal buildings, office parks. The list goes on and on, and, over the years, it’s included numerous universities and schools, both public and private.

At The Gunnery, an independent prep school in Washington, Connecticut (see the lead article), stonework figured prominently in the exterior walls and the grand foyer of the brand new Thomas S. Perakos Arts and Community Center that O&G recently completed.

The process of getting the right stone for the Center began with the company’s Masonry Division and Sales Representative Scott Lockwood. Through meetings with project architect The S/L/A/M Collaborative, he was able to develop stone sample boards showing different blends of stone finishes, colors and shapes. The boards had been built by project mason, Midstate Masons, and O&G’s Marc Greco. These boards, each about three by three feet, let S/L/A/M see and touch actual stone layups. The stone selected was indigenous to Connecticut to look “in place” when installed. There was, as Masonry Division Assistant Vice President Bob Rizzo puts it, some back and forth with the architect over the colors and cuts. With “a pinch of this, a pinch of that,” says Rizzo, they hit the architect’s mark.

O&G then shifted attention to the quarries and a stone finisher, Getty Granite, to cut and supply stone in the time frame and quantities needed – about 7,000SF that included square, rectangular and ashlar cuts of full bed and thin stone.

O&G’s Wayne Zagrodnik, Facility Manager in the Torrington Mason Store, coordinated deliveries to the job site. The few issues surfacing with the product were resolved quickly, without the fuss of chasing down a web of suppliers and subcontractors. O&G’s Project Superintendent at The Gunnery, George Givens, appreciated that O&G was in the driver’s seat in stone supply. “We were able to give the project the benefit of a unified front,” he says.

In Farmington, O&G is back at Miss Porter’s this spring and will be using brick facing on their new “Main building” addition, with some Connecticut brownstone that was popular when the building was first constructed as a hotel in the middle 1800s. Teamed with Centerbrook Architects & Planners, care is being taken to source new brick that blends with Main’s existing walls, and brownstone that is colored, cut and finished like the original.

The process of moving from vision to application is like a track and field relay race. That’s how Rizzo sees it. “The architect starts with a vision for the stone. They pass that baton to us and we source the stone and supply it to the site, and we pass the baton to the mason. The mason installs and passes the baton to the owner for the final leg – a finished project that fits the look they imagined.”
For the love of what they do, for wanting kids to discover an interest in some aspect of building, for years, decades even, the men and women who have run school construction projects for O&G have gone further than their assignment.

They’ve taken it upon themselves to involve the students – usually middle school age through high school and their teachers – in their projects. Doing so has turned construction into a teaching opportunity and has given direction to youth who were either adrift or tuned out.

It was in 2014, as the four-year Orville H. Platt High School project got underway in Meriden, that then Project Manager Dave Cravanzola, with Superintendent Steve Baranello, saw an opportunity to formalize a program and, as Cravanzola puts it, “give people outside our industry a view inside.” They teamed with Platt’s Guidance Department and STEM teachers and developed a curriculum with monthly sessions that would pull back the curtain on all the pieces that go into building a new school. It would be called Platt Builds. Members of the design team, project management team and the building trades council would be invited to speak on their specialties. The curriculum would recycle every year, repeating the same core topics but with new students and often different presenters. Students would earn credits. Staff would attend regularly. The year of learning would culminate with a recap that involved lunch, certificates of completion and branded team t-shirts. Says Platt’s College and Career Coordinator, Abby Marcantonio, “I can’t say enough about how that program opened our kids’ eyes and gave them an outstanding educational opportunity.”

After Platt the program broadened its name to O&G Builds. In the six years the program has been running, O&G Builds has been rolled out and well received at schools ranging from elementary school through high school, led by project teams who are enthused to share and see students’ horizons open up.

At Shepaug Valley School where O&G Builds ran from January to May of 2019, Special Education Teacher Jim McDonough was especially pleased at O&G Build’s influence on teens who were unsure what their work futures could look like. (In a prior incarnation, McDonough had worked in construction and has a real affinity for the program.) “It showed them that there are good career and lifestyle options in the trades. You could see the evolution of their thinking. They were starting to see options and feeling validated and respected.” Tim Chan, Project Manager at Shepaug, agrees: “It was great to connect with the students, see them engage with the program and see teachers excited at the kids’ interest.”

David Mierzejewski, who left Platt to become an Assistant Principal at the Woodrow Wilson Middle School in Middletown, jumped at the opportunity for O&G Builds to be run at his school as it undergoes major construction. “It’s awesome. I love it,” he says. “We wanted the kids, as they’re thinking about high school next year and their futures, to see these options. I wish I knew more about the options when I went to school.”

Superintendent Brian Pracuta at Wilson relates. He was a teen who took the trade school route. He now runs projects in the field. “Some of these kids are really embracing construction, asking lots of good questions when we meet. It’s really a crossroads for them.” O&G Builds opens vistas and helps point the way.
SmartDrive’s Friendly Competition

It didn’t take long after the company-wide adoption of the SmartDrive system for Tom Halpin, O&G’s Fleet Safety Manager, to challenge the drivers at every facility to see whose year-end collective driving performance, as tallied by SmartDrive, proved them the safest.

With some 130 drivers operating 230 over-the-road vehicles equipped with the system, the 2019 winning team was from Danbury, closely followed by Stamford in second place. To the winners of the good-natured rivalry go bragging rights, the chance to repeat their title in 2020 and an embroidered O&G golf shirt as a token of appreciation.

Danbury 2019 SmartDrive Champs

TOP: Mixer drivers (left to right) Matt Haig, Scott Renner, Tom Halpin, Mark Warner and Jovan Karanxha. BOTTOM LEFT: Bob Campbell with Halpin. BOTTOM RIGHT: Block truck drivers Ed Hardswick (in cap) and Chuck Shackett, with Halpin. Not pictured: George Molina. Also not shown but part of the winning team are since-retired triaxle drivers Richard Authelet and Kevin Newell.

Weighing in on drones

MaryAnn Haverstock directs The Gunnery’s IDEAS Lab, short for Innovation, Design, Engineering and Applied Scholarship, teaching STEM curriculum in a brightly lit space that has the feel of an inventor’s workshop. This winter, when her students were applying drone imagery to a variety of self-directed projects, she invited both Vice President T.J. O’neill and Facilities Manager Richard Warren (shown here) to visit and talk about O&G’s use of drones: O’neill on drones as a tool in mining operations and Warren on how drones can complement the construction of schools.
Recognized

1. **Rehabilitation of US RT1 Over I-95 Bridge No. 00037** earned further recognition, this time garnering a 2020 CRP Build America Award from the Associated General Contractors of America/Construction Risk Partners in the Highway and Transportation Renovation category. Competing with applicants from across the country, the project was selected for the teamwork and skill of O&G’s Heavy Civil Division, its specialty subcontractors, CTDOT personnel, Connecticut State Police and City of Stamford municipal authorities. This accelerated bridge construction (ABC) project reduced cost, enhanced safety and dramatically relieved congestion for the motoring public. The bridge was prebuilt in two sections, each approximately two million pounds, and successfully replaced over two consecutive weekends of round-the-clock work that saw both Route 1 and I-95 reopened well ahead of schedule.

2. **O&G’s Building Group** was recognized for its consistently safe work with a Zero Incident Rate Award by the AGC of America. The award recognizes O&G’s participation in the program for the last three consecutive years and the attainment of a work year with no OSHA-recordable incidents. The award was presented this past fall at the Associated General Contractors of Connecticut’s award dinner. Shown: Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority Bus Lifts Project

3. **Chief Safety Officer Mike Ferry** was named Safety Professional of the Year by the Associated General Contractors of Connecticut. Ferry leads an eight-person Safety Department responsible for safety at all of O&G’s facilities and projects. The award recognized his educational and on-the-job skill set, judgment, understanding of construction practices and his high level of leadership. "It was an honor to be recognized but the award is really a tribute to the dedicated Safety Department team members and all O&G employees who commit to working safely every day," says Ferry.

4. **For its construction management of the Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy Renovation in New London, O&G’s Building Group** received a 2020 Build Connecticut Award in the small renovation category from the Associated General Contractors of Connecticut. Jack Cross, Director of Innovation and Development for client LEARN, described O&G as “facile” and “accommodating” in the conversion of a synogogue into an educational facility for special needs students. “We couldn’t be more pleased with the design, the delivery and the final product,” said Cross. The award was presented at the AGC/CT awards dinner in February.
Improvements to I-84 in West Hartford

O&G’s Heavy Civil Division has mobilized in West Hartford on ConnDOT’s Project 0155-0171 to enhance and repair approximately two miles of the interstate. Work includes adding a travel lane in the westbound direction, an eastbound auxiliary lane, installing a noise barrier, and replacing one bridge and widening and replacing superstructure on a second. The 38-month project, valued at $54.6M, got underway in March and is scheduled for completion in May of 2023.

Miss Porter’s School Main Building Dining Room Renovation

Beginning this June O&G will return to historic Miss Porter’s in Farmington, this time to remove select areas of its iconic “Main” building and construct, among other features, a larger dining hall, servery, kitchen, storage area, bathrooms, elevator and mail room, as well as renovate the offices and dormitory spaces that share the street side of Main. The 37,300SF, $16M project is fast paced and will be completed in ten months, in March of 2021. The project is O&G’s second for Miss Porter’s, following the successful repurposing of a seventeenth-century grist mill for admissions offices in 2016.

EXPANDING ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY’S O’CONNELL ATHLETIC CENTER

Serving as construction manager, O&G broke ground in January on the 40,000SF expansion to the University’s O’Connell Athletic Center. The two-level building, designed by JCI Architecture, will add a new gymnasium, a multipurpose classroom, student health services, a student-athlete training suite with a nutrition center, a hydrotherapy area, and other features. It is slated to open in the spring of 2021.

SPECIAL PROJECTS GROUP: LAZ Parking Offices

When Shelbourne Global Solutions and LAZ Investments, a partner of Hartford-based parking giant LAZ Parking, purchased the landmark “Gold Building” in downtown Hartford last spring, they selected O&G to renovate the 13th and 14th floors to create new corporate office space for LAZ Parking. O&G is construction manager, working with Connecticut companies Tecton Architects, VanZelm Engineers and owner’s representative InnoConn Construction Management. Work which began in the fall of 2019 is scheduled for completion in April.
Heroes use what they've got to help, to overcome adversity and to thrive in the midst of chaos like the current COVID-19 pandemic.

We salute the heroes working on the front lines every day, in health care and first response.

We salute inventive manufacturers adapting their processes to produce essential supplies.

We salute teachers navigating a new world of virtual education.

We salute families who make the best of change, provide care and draw closer to each other.

And we salute our own teams, staying healthy and using best practices as they move our clients’ projects ahead and keep the region supplied with construction materials.