

BEL Hall of Fame 2017 Profile

Tom Kinder, Michael Kinder & Sons, Inc.

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More than 125 years ago, Michael Kinder & Sons, Inc. started with three workers and a mule. Today, this regional construction firm boasts an ever-growing, satisfied client list that numbers into the hundreds.

“In 1892, my grandfather Michael H. Kinder started the company, and it passed through the generations until my brother and I bought it,” says Tom Kinder, Michael Kinder & Sons, Inc. “I still work every day, even though my sons Bill and Doug now own the company.”

Before working for and owning the company, Tom went to college, earned an engineering degree, and began his career at Central Soya.

“When I joined the family business, I brought Central Soya with me as a client,” Tom says. “Central Soya stayed with us for years because, like every client we do business with, we treat them and each building project right.”

The company expanded under Tom’s leadership, and the scope of its projects also expanded. What had been a more heavily focused industrial clientele grew to include even more work to serve all levels of business, education, cChurches, nNon-pProfits, and sSenior Living/health care needs.

When he wasn’t spending time-consuming work of estimating and budgeting projects, Tom was building strong relationships with every client.

“Through my early work experience I learned that customers have to feel comfortable with you and trust you,” Tom says. “That remains true today, especially as more owners take a hands-on approach to the design-build effort of creating their facility.”

As the construction industry moved from traditional general contracting to partnering with the customer to determine what each project requires for a specific need and culture, Michael Kinder & Sons changed, too. With its plan-design-build focus, the company is dedicated to working with customers to develop the project and budget before the first construction dollars are spent. That team focus is critical to the success of each project.

“The company grew again when my sons Bill and Doug joined the team. They had new ideas and wanted bigger jobs, so we’ve expanded to accommodate all sizes of jobs, even single projects in excess of \$25 -million-,” Tom says. “Our sales have increased six-6-fold because of

their hard work and the great people they have hired.” ~~(current employee count ranges around 75-100 depending on the season)~~

Today the company employs 75-100 people, depending on the time of year. Services include~~offers a full range of services, including~~ site selection, planning, design, and construction management. Projects range from new and renovated Higher Education facilities, houses of worship, health care facilities, senior residences, ~~f~~-Financial ~~i~~nstitutions, libraries, and municipal buildings to commercial and industrial buildings.

Recent projects in Fort Wayne include work for Indiana Tech, Brotherhood Mutual, Turnstone, Micropulse, YWCA, Northeast Indiana Innovation Center, Manchester University School of Pharmacy, Emmanuel Church, to name a few.- Across the region, MKS is working on projects including~~with~~ Plymouth Aquatic Center, Lippert Components’ 400,00-square foot manufacturing center in New Haven ~~(400,000 SF New Building)~~, De~~K~~kalb Hospital, Westminster Retirement Village in Muncie, and multiple projects for Trine University in Angola, Taylor University in Upland, Ancilla College in Plymouth, and Manchester University in North. ~~Manchester to name a few.~~

Michael Kinder & Sons remains headquartered in Fort Wayne. While work is typically within a 120-mile radius, projects have taken the company as far away as Argentina to serve a client.

A family-owned business for four generations, the company has forged relationships with its clients. Clients are more than business partners, they are valued team members and ~~our~~-friends. At work every day, Tom continues to maintain his ongoing relationships.

“I still love the work, and I’m here five days a week because it’s a new challenge every day,” Tom says. “There are lots of opportunities out there, so it’s important that you like what you do as you choose your path and then work for success.”