

# Midlands Business Journal

FEBRUARY 6, 2015

THE WEEKLY BUSINESS PAPER OF GREATER OMAHA, LINCOLN AND COUNCIL BLUFFS

VOL. 41 NO. 6

## Omaha's Sun Valley Landscaping sees gains with customer demand

by Michelle Leach

Two years after launching the Sun Valley Landscaping brand, the Omaha-based company originally rooted in a mid-1990s rock yard is seeing 40 percent revenue growth as homeowners invest in landscape installation and business owners budget for enhancing spaces outside the office.

"A lot of companies merge, but they don't

### Sun Valley Landscaping

Phone: 402-932-5704

Address: 5601 Harrison St., Omaha 68157

Services: landscape supply yard, design-build, year-round maintenance, landscape enhancements

Founded: 1995 by Hugh Morton, the late Don Schrack; 2012 by Morton and Paul Fraynd as current brand

Goals: Add more full-time employees. Have Commit20 website go live.

Industry outlook: Residential and commercial budgets have opened up for landscaping improvements.

Website: www.sunvalleyomaha.com



Co-owner Paul Fraynd ... Seeing revenue increases as more homeowners and business owners invest in improvements.

dation, also offers design-build services, year-round maintenance and landscape enhancements.

"We have about 10 full-time people," Fraynd said.

In a seasonal-driven industry this means team members work 10 months of the year.

A big push is to have more full-timers — and Sun Valley has traction on this front.

Fraynd said since the 2012 merger it has grown from six full-time employees.

It employs another 30 to 35 people.

"As we get bigger and bigger we have needed more middle-management people," he said. "Hugh and I can no longer see everything out in the field."

He said while one can train for "processes," one cannot train "personality."

The nature of the business — employees working at homes — demands no corners

are cut when it comes to recruitment.

Fraynd indicated it has shared in each employee's personal successes; for instance, he recalled an individual working for the company for around five to six years.

When the owners first met him, the

host a commitment day ceremony at its 5601 Harrison St. headquarters, with employees filling out pledge forms to get started (and additional resources for those who don't know where to start).

Fraynd and Neneman also referred to the other side of the initiative: to engage clients and the rest of the Omaha business community by reaching out to contacts — asking each to commit and pledge 20 hours of time in 2015 to causes.

Hours will be tallied with grand totals shared at year's end.

Fraynd indicated this initiative is an outgrowth of veterans-related projects.

"We did a community veterans garden at Victory Apartments," he said, referring to veterans-only housing and services at the apartments at 825 Dorcas St. "That really got our team fired-up."

Its employees mostly do residential business on the landscape installation side, a robust area thanks to investments in outdoor living spaces and putting money back into one's dream patio, for example, according to Fraynd.

Other services, such as landscape maintenance and enhancements, are split between residential and commercial.

"Times were tough there, but commercial budgets have opened up," he said, as owners are "prettying up" their spaces with

get the kind of synergy that we've built with this new company," said Paul Fraynd, who owns the business with Hugh Morton. "It wasn't something that happened overnight."

Fraynd said the process of his then-10-year-old Omaha Friendly Services coming together with the company started by Morton and the late Don Schrack in the Sun Valley neighborhood, began four years ago.

"The reason it works is we have a shared set of values," he said.

Fraynd noted, one partner can't be focused solely on the bottom-line, while another "doesn't care" about making money.

"The people come first," he said. "Part of my dream is to create careers for other people."

Sun Valley Landscaping, which still boasts a supply yard as a nod to its foun-



A Sun Valley project at Bay Woods in Omaha: Poolside entertainment with natural stone masonry firepit and outdoor bar, with various ponds in the background.



Lake house firepit with flagstone patio in Springfield, Neb., completed by Sun Valley Landscaping.

employee was going through bankruptcy.

Today it's a different story. The employee recently said he was moving into a home with his new wife and child.

"The people we're lucky enough to have work for us give us a perspective on how lucky we really are," he said, adding these personal successes are genuinely satisfying.

Fraynd said Sun Valley Landscaping is engaging its employees as part of its Commit20 initiative to coincide with its 20th anniversary.

A seed first planted by Director of Business Development Ashly Neneman, the idea is to ask all employees to commit 20 hours to volunteering to local causes they care about.

Neneman said in late January that it will

the likes of flower containers and water features.

Fraynd also brought things back around to its genesis, the supply yard, which has been enhanced with features such as a bell-tower to honor founder Schrack, with 60 percent of its business generated by homeowners.

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