

# Putting Together the Pieces

## Lee's Welding Inc.

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One of the unfortunate results of the current recession is that the number of unscrupulous contractors who cut corners and perform substandard work is on the rise. There are, however, still those companies that are against cutting corners to try and generate jobs. Lee's Welding Inc. – out of Murdock, Neb. – is one company that is firmly against saving a few dollars if it doesn't benefit the project at hand. Because of that fact, owners Lee and Jodie Husk have seen their firm's reputation and workforce grow dramatically since they opened in 2003.

"When we started, we had one truck and one welding machine," recalls Jodie. "And over the years we've developed a team of highly qualified welders, fitters and safety supervisors. We focused on irrigation systems initially, but quickly created a niche for ourselves in utility piping. We're now recognized in our region as a leader in our industry."

This standing has led to some highlights in Lee's Welding's substantial portfolio of successful undertakings. For example,

"Omaha, Neb., switched a portion of its water source from the Missouri River to the Platte and that has provided many local projects, including the MUD Platte South Water Treatment, underground utilities including 10 miles of 36- to 72-inch pipe above and underground, not to mention a large trouble shoot under the Elkhorn River," says Jodie.

### The Arc of Success

Another reason for the firm's rapid rise to the top is because of the quality of work that it does. Lee, a portable rig welding contractor and third-generation welder with over two decades of experience, brought a complete understanding of procedures for tough welding situations. Due to the high standards put in place by Lee, the company has shown itself to be a leader in certified welding and fitting, especially within utility piping, fast turnaround plant shutdowns and emergency repairs within the states surrounding Nebraska. This has led to some large-scale new construction, repair and expansion projects (including ornamental to underground utility work) on which the company has exhibited its focus and diversified services.

Jodie explains, "Archer Daniels Midland [ADM] expanded to their [dry mill] plants in Columbus [Neb.] and when we started we had seven employees on site. Over time our skills proved better than other contractors hired to do the majority of the work. ADM liked our work and getting the job done right within less time, even if they paid a bit more for our labor, and eventually added projects to our punch list and we ended up having 60 employees on-site by project end."

Unlike most other welding contractors, Lee's offers clients a wide variety of services from design and fabrication to ongoing maintenance. For the ADM project the firm



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are like comparing apples to oranges. I could drive down the road and hire some day laborers who have no experience and will work for next to nothing, but we don't do that. We use the right products at the right time. We never sacrifice quality for cheaper products. We pay our welders higher than industry standard, and we give them the best experience and knowledge in the trade. I spend a lot of time educating my customers that you really do get what you pay for." Assisting in reinforcing proper operating procedure are Lee's Welding's staff certifications through the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) and the American Welding Society (AWS).

Most project owners and managers are listening, as Jodie estimates that over 90 percent of Lee's Welding Inc. business is from repeat or referral clients. Jesse Walz – a project manager with Judds Brothers Construction out of Lincoln, Neb. – explains why he prefers to do business with Lee's: "We like working with Lee's because they do a very professional job, they run a structured organization, and the quality of their work is exceptional."

Lee and Jodie Husk have come a long way from the one-truck operation they founded seven short years ago, and the infrastructure of eastern Nebraska is better off because it. •

really showed its versatility by working on the underground utilities, structural welding, as well as the condensation/steam, firewater and alcohol lines, the cooling tower, the utility buildings and the distillation building portions of the project. "If it's even remotely related to the industry, we do it. We can write and test all procedures in-house. If someone calls us and says, 'I've got this situation,' we know there is a procedure to get it done. So, whether it's something we've done a 100 times or never before, we will design it and weld it and we'll have our labs test it prior to implementation."

**A Little Can Save a Lot**

For the type of work Lee's Welding does, precision is everything. Investing in a competent firm upfront avoids costly mistakes, in terms of both safety and economics. For example, after flooding in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Lee's Welding bid on some repair work, but was under-bid by a competitor. After the project turned out to be beyond the capabilities of the competitor, the client turned to Lee's Welding to fix the work. This allowed the project to be completed with no corners cut, avoiding further expense and frustration.

Doing it right the first time is something that Jodie feels very strongly about. "It can be frustrating at times when we're competing against other companies for bids, because the bids



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