

State Line project

Passion for customer satisfaction delivers a renovation featuring a year-round outside swimming pool

BY SUE BROKAW GUARD

Situated on the far eastern edge of Kansas, smack dab next to the Missouri border, lies the town of Olathe (pronounced O-lay-thuh). It's the Shawnee word for "beautiful." Included among the 100,000 residents is Jason Cupp, CEO of Highland Outdoor Landscape Designers, which caters to upscale residences and commercial properties.

Because of the city's locale, Cupp named one of his company's most recent ventures the State Line Project. It's a high-end ranch-style home of about 5,000 sq. ft. surrounded by about an acre of landscaping that required enhancements or renovations. A Kansas City, MO, firm, D. Andersen Consulting, provided the project's engineering and consulting.

Built on trust

Dan Andersen and Jason Cupp have worked together for three years on other projects, as well. Their thoughts and

philosophies dovetail so well that you would think that one can read the mind of the other. There is pride but no ego in their business relationship.

"We think alike and we both keep an open mind for change or suggestions," says Andersen. "We believe craftsmanship, creativity, trust and client importance is woven into every project. All of these qualities result in achieving our goals."

Cupp has been passionately devoted to landscape design/build since 1986. It's a commitment that fuels the efforts of Highland's employees, as well.

With the State Line project, Cupp and Andersen worked with a client who travels a great deal. He requested that his outdoor pool be designed so that he could use it year 'round. Heated to 89 F. for that purpose, the client enjoys the heated pool even when the winter temperatures fall below freezing, which happens, on average, about 100 days a year in Kansas City.

"It was a big project," Cupp says of the pool renovation. "We installed a



Winter dip in the pool? A Kansas City homeowner enjoys winter swims thanks to Highland Outdoor Landscape Designers.

cover that slides out of sight when the pool is not in use. If the client is not home, the cover is put in place and the pool temperature is turned down. When Andersen says the client is returning home, we uncover the pool and turn up the temperature, all by computer. All is ready when the client gets home."

No cold feet here

When Highland Outdoor says it delivers customer service, it's not just talking, it's doing.

"On one occasion it snowed 12 inches overnight. Any time the client is home, the

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crew arrives about 5 a.m. to remove the snow so that he can swim in the morning without walking through snow," says Cupp. "And the snow is removed by hand so there isn't a lot of noise that would wake up the client." When the client is out-of-town, a machine removes the snow.

Meeting customer expectations in spite of unforeseen challenges is the hallmark of a quality company, and the State Line project had challenges.

Andersen says: "We wanted to enhance the pool perimeter in an onyx color so we found and ordered about 18 tons of Mexican pebbles. Our concrete supplier stored the stone at his yard. Then it rained. A jelly-like substance oozed from the stone and we were astonished. Everyone — me, Jason Cupp, and the

Cupp's company enhanced some of the features already present, on the property, such as the limestone walls and the red brick pathway.

supplier. We sent a few of the stones to a lab for processing and it was discovered the goo was some type of algae. We had to replace the stone with another type of shiny black pebbles."

Cupp emphasized that the landscaping, brickwork and other requirements were not all new installations.

"We enhanced and reclaimed what was already there to keep the house as original as possible," Cupp says. "A rectangular

limestone wall with arched insets is next to the pool. We cleaned it up and added two lions heads that were elsewhere on the property. The lions heads became fountains that flowed into the pool."

Vines, both dried and healthy, covered a similar wall on the property. "We found the main root system was strong and healthy and we pruned the foliage back, keeping the vines along the top of the wall as decorative greenery. Regular main-



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tenance will keep the growth under control." Similarly, Highland Outdoor Landscape Designers and upgraded the landscape's irrigation system.

Because the client likes to entertain guests poolside, the company installed new lighting at the pool area and also in the landscape at the rear of the house, which also features a red, brick pathway and a patio.

"On the morning of the big celebration party, we were checking the lighting one more time and found one of the transformers had blown," recalls Andersen. "Jason had one of his crew go to his own home and get a transformer from his yard. The party went off without a hitch,"

Cupp's Highland Outdoor specializes in upscale residential design/build projects, maintenance of any landscaping and snow removal, as well as providing similar services on premier commercial properties. It also incorporates property management and concierge services into its residential/commercial packages.

More challenges ahead

However, Cupp's real passion is envisioning the finished project, such as the State Line project.

He and Andersen are working on another challenging residential property where the owner has requested an indoor swimming pool. It's not your "cookie cutter" indoor pool with a greenhouse-type of roof.

"It's going to be in the middle of the house, accessible from the living room,

the kitchen and the master bedroom," explains Cupp.

As with every other project the Andersen/Cupp collaboration has been involved with, this one sounds like it's going to pose some fascinating challenges.

"As long we don't lose sight of our vision and we don't let our passion start flagging — and we won't — we'll be fine," says Cupp confidently. **LMI**

— *The author lives in Cleveland. Contact her at neebrokaw@yahoo.com.*

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