



ENLIGHTENED EFFICIENCY FOR ALL

*Ryzen Lighting Group offers LED solutions to
improve wellness of people and planet*

by Ryan Bender

Thomas Edison and his team at Menlo Park, New Jersey, forever changed the way we see the world when he patented the first commercially viable incandescent light bulb in 1880. In recent decades, however, an increased demand for more resilient electric light sources is steadily making Edison's invention obsolete.

Today, light-emitting diodes (LEDs) have become a widely popular alternative for a variety of applications—including large-scale construction and remodeling projects—due to their durability, energy efficiency and cost effectiveness. A bright spot in this growing market is *Ryzen Lighting Group* (Ryzen), an LED lighting solutions supplier based in Wyoming, Michigan. Established in 2011 by Jason Black, the company's founder and President, Ryzen caters to residential, commercial and industrial clients primarily in Michigan, and also supports the needs of customers in surrounding states.

LIGHTING THE WAY

Before launching Ryzen, Jason worked as an independent contractor for Atlas Van Lines, one of the most prominent household goods movers in the U.S. He often performed independent research and engaged in conversations with other industry professionals about LEDs, which he found fascinating due to their efficiency and positive impact on people's health and the environment. Consequently, he decided to build a company focused on improving the wellness of the planet and its people by promoting this innovative, environmentally conscientious technology.

To grow his team, in 2014, Jason brought on Leslie Kaat as an office administrator. Previously, Leslie served as the Energy Manager for one of the largest nonprofit retirement communities in the nation. Once she joined Ryzen, Leslie's drive and willingness to learn was impossible for Jason to ignore. She was quickly promoted to operations manager to help him lead the company and spearhead all major

sales initiatives and business development tasks. And, just before going to press with this article, she was promoted *again* to COO.

Together, Jason and Leslie have made it their mission to become leading experts in the field of LEDs, offering professional guidance to clients on the most impactful ways to maximize product solutions. As Ryzen's top subject matter expert, Leslie shares how extensive industry research—along with streamlined client management—helps to ensure the best project solutions for the unique needs (and budgets) of every client.

BRILLIANT CUSTOMER CARE

When it comes to creating a first-class customer service experience, Ryzen's guiding principles play a vital role in gaining repeat clients and referrals.

"Honesty, integrity and conducting ourselves in an ethical manner are the core values of our company. These beliefs are infused into all of our client interactions and transcend all other priorities," Leslie says.

These values are clearly evident in the company's one-point-of-contact approach to customer care. When a potential client calls to set up a project, streamlined procedures are in place to ensure the client works directly with the same Ryzen representative throughout the entire process.

"We empathize with those who hate getting the 'run-around' on their projects," Leslie reveals. "So, we made our customer service approach simple, direct and consistent to make sure that our clients never have that feeling."



The lighting specialists at Ryzen Lighting Group provide clients with guidance on maximizing product solutions. Key company leaders include (from left to right): Jason Black, founder and President; Leslie Kaat, COO; and Kelsey Krizan, administrative assistant.

Ryzen also conducts a comprehensive lighting audit and creates a custom proposal for each customer. After assessing the property, the team recommends customized LED lighting solutions supported by intel showing energy savings, upfront costs, financing options and tax incentives—everything needed to make an educated decision.

"The greatest reward is when you help a client with a project and, four to six months down the road, the client compares past and current electric bills to see the actual savings. Seeing the customer's face 'light up' is truly a heartwarming feeling that you can't get enough of. It makes everything worth it," Leslie says.

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Leslie Kaat, COO, Ryzen Lighting Group

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PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID SPARKS



On the Eastland Apartments project, LED upgrades included post-top light fixtures, multipurpose area lights for building fronts, new address fixtures for each front entrance and disk lights to brighten hallway areas.

“With the huge success at Eastland, we have [Ryzen] working on other projects throughout our region. We couldn't be happier with Ryzen, their products and their service.”

Dennis Kennedy, Regional Maintenance Rover,
Monarch Investment and Management Group

One prime example of customer satisfaction is evidenced through work performed at the Eastland Apartments, a Grand Rapids, Michigan-based apartment community managed by Monarch Investment and Management Group

(Monarch), which has its corporate headquarters in Colorado. The client contracted Ryzen to upgrade multiple elements of the property with LED lighting, including address signs for each building entrance and parking lot enhancements.

As with every project, the Ryzen team made an extra effort to present the proposal to the client in person.

“Our customers value these meetings,” Leslie emphasizes. “We are able to point things out in the proposal that may be missed in an email, plus in person we are available to explain different portions in more detail. Moreover, our clients just appreciate the personal touch.”

Monarch's positive response to this level of diligence serves to validate Ryzen's efforts.

“Ryzen kept us informed from start to finish. The proposal was easy to follow, and they handled everything during installation. Their

PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIC LEE GRAY

electricians and install team were very knowledgeable and professional,” says Dennis Kennedy, Monarch’s Regional Maintenance Rover for western Michigan.

Eastland Apartments covers four acres and contains 19 buildings. Prior to the LED upgrades, the apartment complex used around 235,350 kWh at an average cost of \$28,245 per year. Thus far, these lighting improvements are saving the client upward of \$12,000 in estimated annual energy costs. To facilitate those savings, Ryzen installed post-top light fixtures, multipurpose area lights for building fronts and fixtures to illuminate address numbers. In addition, disk lights were installed in all buildings to brighten hallway areas.

“The property looks fantastic at night when all the lights are on. The illuminated address lighting on the apartment buildings are a welcomed addition, too,” Dennis notes. “With the huge success at Eastland, we have [Ryzen] working on other projects throughout our region. We couldn’t be happier with Ryzen, their products and their service.”

DAZZLING SAVINGS

Last year, Ryzen executed a proposal for Thornapple Manor, a senior living facility in Hastings, Michigan. Lighting over 104,000 square feet, Thornapple Manor used approximately 866,000 kWh annually at an average cost of \$111,325. After the Ryzen team replaced nearly every fixture and bulb, the facility’s projected annual costs will be \$46,420.

“That’s an annual savings of nearly \$65,000,” Leslie calculates, adding, “The client began seeing a 20 percent to 22 percent reduction in energy costs almost immediately after the install was complete.”

Leslie also helped Thornapple Manor (as well as Eastland Apartments) obtain great rebates through the Consumers Energy Multifamily Program. Consumers Energy, based in Michigan and a subsidiary of CMS Energy, provides multifamily customers with financial incentives for various upgrades that serve to create a more sustainable environment—including the replacement of certain incandescent lamps with energy-efficient LEDs.

Looking forward to a 287 percent return on investment within approximately two-and-a-half years, it is no wonder

LEDs: An Eco-Friendly Lighting Alternative

It is noteworthy that incandescent lighting has illuminated our homes, businesses and recreational spaces for more than a century. However, its death knell tolled in December 2007 when President George W. Bush signed into law the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA), which essentially banned the manufacture and sale of common household incandescent (and other) bulbs that are not energy-efficient under EISA standards.

In the last decade, LED innovations have flipped the switch on how lighting solutions are viewed and handled. Ryzen Lighting Group’s COO, Leslie Kaat, notes, “Current LED technologies can cut energy consumption by 80 percent per bulb when compared to incandescent alternatives. When you are working on a large facility, the savings can be enormous.”

The U.S. Department of Energy boasts that, by 2027, the widespread use of LED innovations could potentially save about 348 TWh of electricity. This translates to roughly \$30 billion in savings at today’s energy prices.

Not only do LEDs offer significant energy savings, they are more eco-friendly compared to traditional light sources. Incandescent bulbs are grossly inefficient and use 90 percent of electric energy to produce heat, and only 10 percent to produce light. Certain incandescent and compact fluorescent lamp bulbs contain traces of harmful chemicals such as radon and mercury, whereas an LED bulb contains mostly plastics and aluminum. LEDs are also 98 percent recyclable.

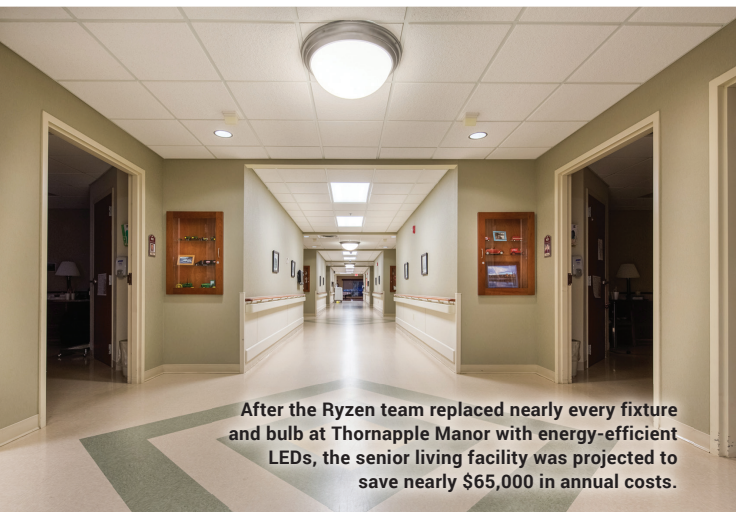
“Another benefit of LED lighting relates to its longevity and ease of maintenance,” Leslie explains. An LED can last up to 25 times longer than its incandescent counterpart and is proven to perform just as well, plus it’s virtually maintenance-free. LEDs can also turn on immediately with no flickering, and do not produce any harmful ultraviolet rays than can damage eyes.



Upgrading exterior lighting at Thornapple Manor provided a much safer walk for staff departing the senior living facility at night.



Thanks to Ryzen's recommendation to switch out incandescent bulbs for energy-efficient LEDs, Thornapple Manor received substantial rebates through the Consumers Energy Multifamily Program.



After the Ryzen team replaced nearly every fixture and bulb at Thornapple Manor with energy-efficient LEDs, the senior living facility was projected to save nearly \$65,000 in annual costs.

that Thornapple Manor's Director of Facility Services, Michael Burrill, and Facility Administrator, Don Haney, are thrilled. "I would like to thank the Ryzen Lighting team for their efforts in assisting Thornapple Manor with our lighting upgrades! The transition from the existing lighting to the new LED bulbs was handled professionally, and the team did a fantastic job working around our busy schedule and went above and beyond to accommodate our residents' needs," Michael says.

Jason adds, "Switching to LED lighting solutions is one of the best ways to improve the bottom line and maximize profits. From industrial to commercial to small business to residential applications, LEDs can provide major savings in virtually any space."

A BRIGHT FUTURE

As our nation's progressive culture leans more heavily on digitalized conveniences, LEDs are becoming more mainstream in people's everyday lives. For example, some LEDs have built-in receptors that can be controlled from smart devices, such as smartphones or tablets, via Wi-Fi or Bluetooth. Other LED bulb varieties can change color to best match consumer preferences.

"LED technologies are constantly evolving for the better, which makes the future of the lighting industry exceptionally bright," Leslie affirms.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ERIC LEE GRAY



LED flat panels in the hallway areas of Thornapple Manor look like skylights, giving the senior living facility a much more interesting design and feel.

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Michael Burrill, Director of Facility Services, Thornapple Manor

Leslie, with years of professional experience in senior assisted living, also points out, “Some senior residents have sensitive vision, and certain LEDs can be customized to best meet their needs. Also, I know of some schools that implement these lighting solutions in special education settings and autism classes to make those students more comfortable.” Ryzen, with its eye on future growth, is looking to do more work in the education sector and expand into other markets as well.

With an illuminated focus on one-on-one customer service and cost-saving strategies, as well as a dedication to improving the health and wellness of the planet, Ryzen Lighting Group is clearly changing how we see the world—one bulb at a time. 🐼



Consumers Energy recognized Ryzen Lighting Group with a Trade Ally award for top electric savings in 2017.

Contributing writer, Ryan Bender, brings passion for history and education into his articles and enjoys interviewing AEC leaders.