

INDIANA, LOUISVILLE & LEXINGTON



# THE Who's Who

FALL/WINTER  
2019

IN BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION

The Blue Book Network's Exclusive Magazine and Buyers' Guide

**BELIEFS +  
BEHAVIOR =  
EXCELLENCE**

*Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components delivers  
turnkey structural framing for commercial construction*

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Christian Hodges (from left), Casey Hillerich and Hank Basham assemble a truss in Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components' truss shop.

Cover: Managing Partners of Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components are (from left to right) Troy Lutgens, Vice President of Engineering; Stu Melvin, President and CEO; Steve Beck, Vice President of Finance and Ed French, Vice President of Operations.

Photos Credit: Nathan Cornetet

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



## WHAT'S BEHIND YOUR NETWORK?

This year, our team of local Franchise Owners is focused on developing small, highly targeted networking events to help their GC community find the subcontractors and suppliers they need. With over 300 events delivered nationwide in the first six months of 2019, I am confident The Blue Book Network is more vibrant than ever.

It all starts with a Franchise Owner working directly with a GC to uncover the specific trades or products they need for their projects. Our team then goes into action, locating a venue at the GC's office or another Network member's location, such as a truck dealership or equipment rental company. The Franchise Owner works with our Events team to create communications to target the event to the specific trades the GC wants to meet face to face. And the local Franchise Owners work together to personally invite their members. In the end, a highly targeted networking or education event is delivered and new relationships are built.

Event connections are a powerful way to help our Network members build strong relationships. Project connections are another. To assist our Franchise Owners, the Project Information Team continues to refine their processes and identify more project opportunities and more importantly, *the people* behind the projects. With project growth of over 10% in our regional markets, our Network is brimming with companies building teams for both public and private projects. Our project content is rich in essential data that help foster relationships, including detailed owner, architect, engineer, GC and subcontractor information. Many of the projects contain complete plans and specifications. With over 100,000 plan rooms, contractors, suppliers and manufacturers can accurately locate the projects and companies that require their products. Our Franchise Owners act as a concierge to help our members navigate the activity inside the Network to take full advantage of all the opportunities.

I am proud of what our teams have been able to accomplish so far this year. We continue to stay focused on developing strong, face-to-face relationships. And with the launch of our newest app—"Engage"—we have made it easier for every individual in commercial construction to stay connected to all the relevant opportunities and events for their business. If you haven't logged in to Engage, please contact your local Franchise Owner and they will walk you through it! Or go to [engage.thebluebook.com](http://engage.thebluebook.com).

More events, more projects and more relationships! We look forward to engaging your company in all that's happening in our Network...The Blue Book Network.



Rich Johnson,  
President and Publisher

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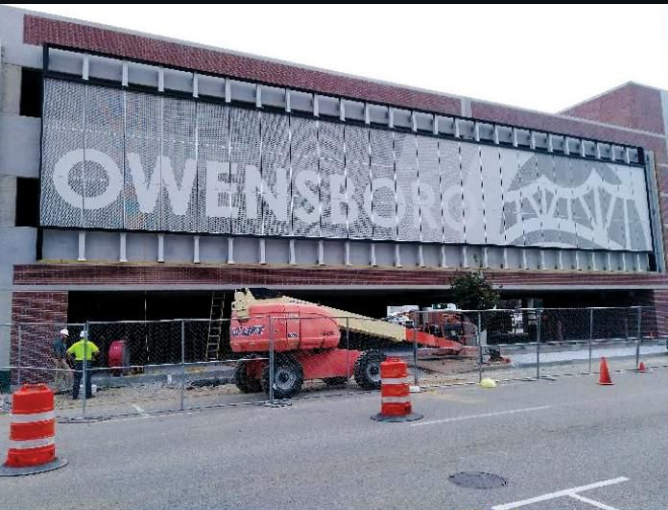
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## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

# SHARING THE "WHO" BEHIND OUR STORIES



I'm often asked "where do you find these stories for your magazine?" Many times, it's more of a positive declaration with no real answer sought (and I'm hopeful that's a good thing)! But for those that actually seek the secret sauce, here you go.

Our Network is fortunate to have over 250 engaged Employee-Owners in the field every day. As Franchise Owners as well, they work closely with all members of their local construction communities. One of their primary missions is to help these companies share their unique stories. That happens in person, on our website...and here in *The Who's Who*.

Once we finalize our story lineup for all 36 regional editions of the magazine, we turn to a team of highly qualified and talented writers from around the country. These skillful storytellers are attentive, insightful and passionate about their craft. Their mission is to provide you with a personal introduction to these companies, and most importantly, *the people* behind them. They, like all of us here, consider it a privilege to share the stories of our members—their successes, their challenges, the lessons learned and the goals ahead.

We truly appreciate hearing feedback from the companies we feature in our magazines. Here are a few recent messages from our mail bag that suggest we're on the right track...

- *"You did an amazing job of capturing the unique benefits of our corporate culture. We can't thank you enough for highlighting us in your Who's Who publication!"*
- *"The article is far larger and more encompassing than we imagined it would be and we have had many compliments from clients, employees and family."*
- *"I have honestly never been more impressed with someone's writing and how you captured our conversation. I absolutely love the article."*
- *"The article is fantastic. I really enjoyed it and you did a great job portraying our business in words."*

Secret sauce? Not so much. Just two teams, with the same vision and commitment, working together to bring you content that informs and inspires. With lofty goals like that, I encourage you to help keep us grounded and share *your* thoughts on how we're doing. You can reach us at: [content@thebluebook.com](mailto:content@thebluebook.com). In the meantime, enjoy your new edition of *The Who's Who in Building & Construction!*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Tartaglia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "T".

Michael Tartaglia,  
Editorial Director

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# BELIEFS + BEHAVIOR =

# EXCELLENCE

## ***Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components delivers turnkey structural framing for commercial construction***

by Melinda Guravich



Stu Melvin (left), President and CEO of Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components, discusses a job with Christian Hodges. “All of the bosses are helpful and all of my co-workers are respectful and keep a positive work environment,” Hodges says.

*Tri-State Cold Formed Steel Components* (Tri-State) provides light-gauge structural framing packages for hotels, apartments, dormitories and other nonresidential construction projects, including retail businesses and assisted living communities. The company designs and fabricates metal roof trusses, floor trusses and metal load-bearing wall panels in Shepherdsville, Kentucky, and provides delivery and installation services across the continental United States.

“We make sure builders have a great experience using our products,” says Stu Melvin, President and CEO, who (along with his partners) founded Tri-State in 2003. The company’s core values are respect, accountability, integrity, ethics and teamwork. “Our culture drives our beliefs; our beliefs drive our behavior. Those behaviors drive habits that lead to excellence,” he adds.

Stu emphasizes that using Tri-State’s prefabricated components ensures quality and minimizes installation

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NATHAN CORNETT





The Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components management team.

time for construction contractors—and therefore minimizes costs—because the trusses and wall panels are manufactured in a quality-controlled environment, not at the job site. For example, five floors of Tri-State’s cold-framed products were installed in just 20 days during a project for Hampton Inn Baltimore Bayview Campus in Maryland.

Tri-State built its reputation on product expertise, creative problem solving and a commitment to a family-like workplace. Stu attributes the company’s stability and success to the quality of his managing partners and employees and to the higher purpose to which they all adhere. The company has grown steadily despite two major recessions and a shortage of skilled labor.

Today, Tri-State employs 50 people in its manufacturing and business operations. Optional installation services are performed by a trusted, exclusive contractor. While much of its operations are within Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio, Tri-State’s trusses and wall panels have been installed in buildings in 28 states and Washington, D.C.

## **A TURNKEY SOLUTION FROM ENGINEERING TO INSTALLATION**

In 2015, the company expanded its operations and began manufacturing load-bearing wall panels. Tri-State customer demand drove the decision; building owners wanted

**“We’re committed to being the best supplier of turnkey solutions in the construction business. We’re equally committed to the success of our customers and employees. The only good transaction is a win-win relationship. No one should ever have to lose.”**

Stu Melvin, President and CEO,  
Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components

to purchase a complete package of quality components from their trusted supplier: floor trusses, roof trusses and wall panels.

To lead the new wall panel division, the company hired an experienced panel fabricator, George Swartz, now Tri-State’s Business Development Manager. The successful rollout of this strategic investment decision has been a prime driver of the company’s growth. The firm now provides customers with a single-source turnkey framing system, from floors to walls and roofs.

## LEADING THE WAY IN NON-RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Tri-State has established a niche in the hospitality sector. “If there’s a hotel going up in light-gauge steel, we’re the experts,” Stu says. Tri-State has completed projects for brands like Marriott Hotels, Hampton by Hilton, Embassy Suites by Hilton, and Hyatt, for hotel properties located in Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Notable projects include two properties near the Ohio River in Newport, Kentucky—Aqua on the Levee waterfront apartments and the Aloft Newport on the Levee; the Operational Readiness Training Complex at Camp Atterbury, Indiana; and the 860-room Army Lodge at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Several structures on the University of Notre Dame campus near South Bend, Indiana, were built using Tri-State’s cold-formed components. Architectural features for new construction projects must be a fit with the 177-year-old university’s existing structures. “Once the exterior of a building goes up, make no mistake: if the structure isn’t right, the building won’t look right,” Stu says. “We’ve established our expertise in accommodating their designs with our trusses.” Tri-State’s next project at Notre Dame is a new residence hall.

Assisted living is a growing market segment for Tri-State. Baby Boomers are driving demand for retirement communities nationwide. Tri-State’s expertise is a perfect match. “Roof trusses provide a homelike design with sloped roofs, not that boxy



Morris Inn is one of several structures on the Notre Dame campus built with Tri-State’s cold-formed components.

feel of an institution,” Stu says. In addition, light-gauge steel lasts much longer than wood and is 100% recyclable.

## CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR COMPLEX PROBLEMS

Tri-State enjoys a design challenge. Architects and engineers regularly consult with the firm on truss and wall framing solutions. “Our approach is, let’s sit down and see what we can do,” says Troy Lutgens, Vice President of Engineering at Tri-State. “The easiest problem to solve is one that never happens,” he adds.

This problem-solving mindset has created significant repeat business for the firm. For example, the Tri-State team determined how to span a 75-foot space above a truck bay for a large shipping company in Portland, Oregon. Instead of using

heavy structural steel, Troy proposed using cold-formed trusses to build a conveyor system. The final design and Tri-State’s fabricated trusses were featured in the August 2011 issue of STRUCTURE magazine, the official publication of the National Council of Structural Engineers Associations. This innovative use of cold-formed steel led to a decade of repeat work for similar designs all across the country, including orders for several additional conveyor system structures from the shipping company’s other locations.

“We don’t shy away from getting involved in what may appear to be a crazy idea; that’s what we thrive on,” Troy says.

## DRIVEN BY A HIGHER PURPOSE

Tri-State’s purpose and plans are reflected in its core values and company culture. “My partners and

PHOTO COURTESY OF TRI-STATE COLD-FORMED STEEL COMPONENTS

I believe that we have been established to take care of the FEW (families, employees and the weak—those who are hungry, homeless or hurting). We are sustained by our faith in God,” Stu says. The first item on the agenda for partner and operations meetings is an opening prayer.

Their bible-driven mandate goes well beyond making a profit. “We take care of people,” Stu says. “They like working here. We have fun, and we laugh every day. We’ve never had to fire any of the office staff and have nearly zero turnover.” He attributes the company’s significant repeat business to the quality of its people.

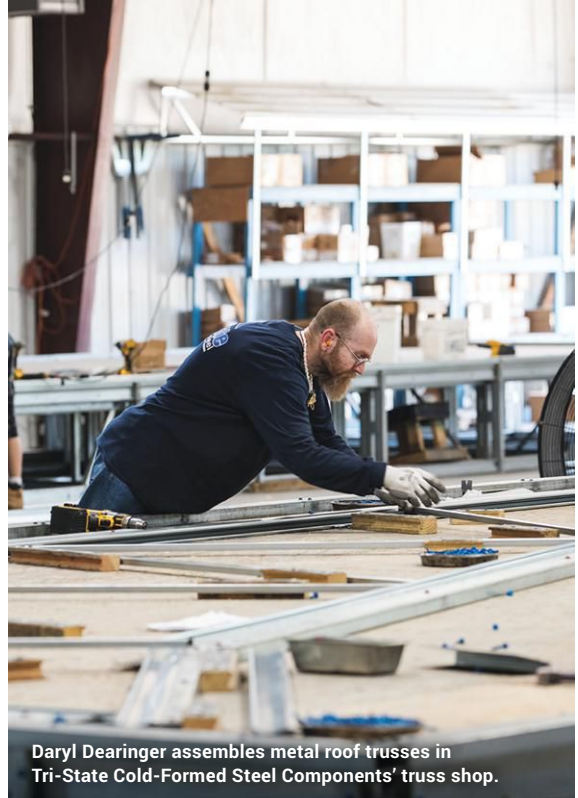
Tri-State treats its people like family. “I know that a lot of companies say that,” Stu says. “For us, ‘family’ means that we all support each other, inside and outside of work. We’re always going to use the resources of this company to help each other out as much as we can.” Recent examples include employees rallying to quickly repair a co-worker’s house badly damaged by a storm, and when an employee’s spouse was diagnosed with a serious illness, the team generously presented him with donations to cover two weeks of his pay. When an employee experienced car trouble, Stu picked him up and drove him to work. Stu knows his employees’ personal situations as well as the names of their children and the sports teams they play on.

“Our people are breadwinners—when they experience a personal issue, their families are impacted,” Stu says. The company provides an employee assistance program to connect them with resources so they can work through challenges and issues and continue to provide for their families.

## GIVING BACK TO COMMUNITY

The company also supports several local social services organizations, including Habitat for Humanity, Room In the Inn and Heart of My City, Inc., which serve homeless families in Bullitt County, The Lord’s Supper Soup Kitchen Mobile Ministry in Elizabethtown, and Turnaround Resource Center of Lebanon Junction. “We need to be a blessing for others by sharing our resources to meet the needs of those who can’t help themselves and can’t pay us back,” Stu says. “We want to reflect the compassion of Christ.”

Stu has served as a Big Brother with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kentuckiana and was named 2017 Big Brother of the Year.



Daryl Dearing assembles metal roof trusses in Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components’ truss shop.



Chris “Stitch” Engle cuts web material for truss assembly in Tri-State Cold-Formed Steel Components’ truss shop.



Five floors of prefabricated components were installed in just 20 days during construction of Hampton Inn Baltimore Bayview Campus in Maryland.

While much of its operations are within Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio, Tri-State’s trusses and wall panels have been installed in buildings in 28 states and Washington, D.C.

## MAKING EVERYONE FEEL IMPORTANT

In a tight labor market, Tri-State’s values have created a good word-of-mouth reputation that it’s a great place to work.

Visitors to Tri-State are introduced to its employees in the office and in the shop. That makes employees feel worthy and recognized. “I have confidence in them and value their work, and I make sure that is demonstrated,” Stu adds. “Employees, customers and bankers all feel good about the mutual respect and relationships we have.”

Employee benefits include a 401(k) program. Fun perks and rewards range from cookouts, lunches and anniversary rewards to unscheduled—and highly popular—paid time off before special events, such as the Kentucky Derby weekend.

Stu is also known for showing his appreciation to employees who go above and beyond their duties with “twenty-dollar handshakes.” He comments, “That’s our culture; that’s who we are.”

## AN ALL-HANDS, HANDS-ON APPROACH

During the course of the company’s growth, the managing partners have performed every job, from cutting steel and building trusses to cleaning the bathrooms. Stu recalls one night when a truck had to be loaded for shipment but somehow the shipping order had not been communicated. He and two of his partners returned to work that night, parked a trailer underneath a light and spent the next few hours loading products.

It’s not unusual to see Stu, Troy, Ed French, Vice President of Operations, or Steve Beck, Vice President of Finance, out on the production floor, pulling inventory and helping workers move trusses. “We may sit in an office, but no one here walks around with egos and titles,” he emphasizes. Employees tell him that they’ve never worked in a place where the owners roll up their sleeves and work alongside them to get orders out the door.

“We’re committed to being the best supplier of turnkey solutions in the construction business,” Stu adds. “We’re equally committed to the success of our customers and employees. The only good transaction is a win-win relationship. No one should ever have to lose.” 🐼



Aqua on the Levee, a waterfront apartment community in Newport, Kentucky, was built with Tri-State’s cold-formed components.

*Freelance writer Melinda Guravich enjoys capturing the fascinating backstories of AEC firms and their leaders.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRI-STATE COLD-FORMED STEEL COMPONENTS