

Something to celebrate: DiLoreto Architecture

By: [Rick Arnett](#) in [Architecture and Engineering](#) December 26, 2014

You can't keep the doors open for three decades unless you're doing something right.

When **DiLoreto Architecture** hit its 30th anniversary this year, the firm celebrated with a night of dancing, food and fun for the employees, clients, friends and supporters who make it all possible. Chris DiLoreto, who co-founded the firm with his wife, Ann, attributes their success to a progressive approach to communication both within the firm and especially with clients.

"We have a process to problem solving," Chris said. "Working in groups and workshops leads to clever solutions. Developing a relationship with not just the principals, but those who are affected with the decisions builds their team and leads to a greater dynamic in design choices."

That approach helped the firm build relationships with clients that have led not only to satisfaction with final designs, but also repeats and referrals – a crucial element in building any business.

Chris met Ann at the **University of Oregon** when they were both students there. He earned a degree in architecture; hers was in social work. Chris spent five years working at two architecture firms before deciding to open his own shop. Ann was fully supportive of the plan.

"My father was an engineer with his own firm, so I knew the risks," she said. "We were actually very excited about it. (Chris) started in the basement (of our home), and our son, who was a toddler at the time, would yell, 'Hi, Dad!' down the vent. So that lasted about three weeks before he found a place to open the office."

Ann has served as the office manager for the firm from the start.

"We have a real level of trust because we're married, work well together and raise kids together, so my taking over the office duties and all the accounting was a natural extension of that partnership," she said.

"She does the stuff (the design staff) isn't good at so that we can do what we are good at," Chris said.

While the firm is small compared to some, its projects have steadily grown in size and cost.

“We just finished a \$12 million project,” Chris said. “We’ve done 60 church projects – each one different, each one challenging – and in every case, they were a bit skeptical going in, but came to embrace the designs. And now they love the finished buildings.”

His recent work on the **New York Building** in an industrial section of Portland has garnered recognition from peers and in regional publications. Sustainability also is a strong element in the firm’s projects.

“We think about including (sustainability) in our designs from the beginning so that it almost becomes a necessary part of the project,” Chris said. “Taking existing ideas and working to promote them in a risk-averse building environment can be a challenge sometimes. Nontoxic finishes, non-petrochemical coatings – things like that – are not easy to introduce unless they’re really cost-effective. But if we’ve maintained a good relationship with the client, they’re much more interested in including those things in the project.”

“It takes a while for the construction industry to catch on to some things, but once they do, it builds a following.”