

CONNSTRUCTION

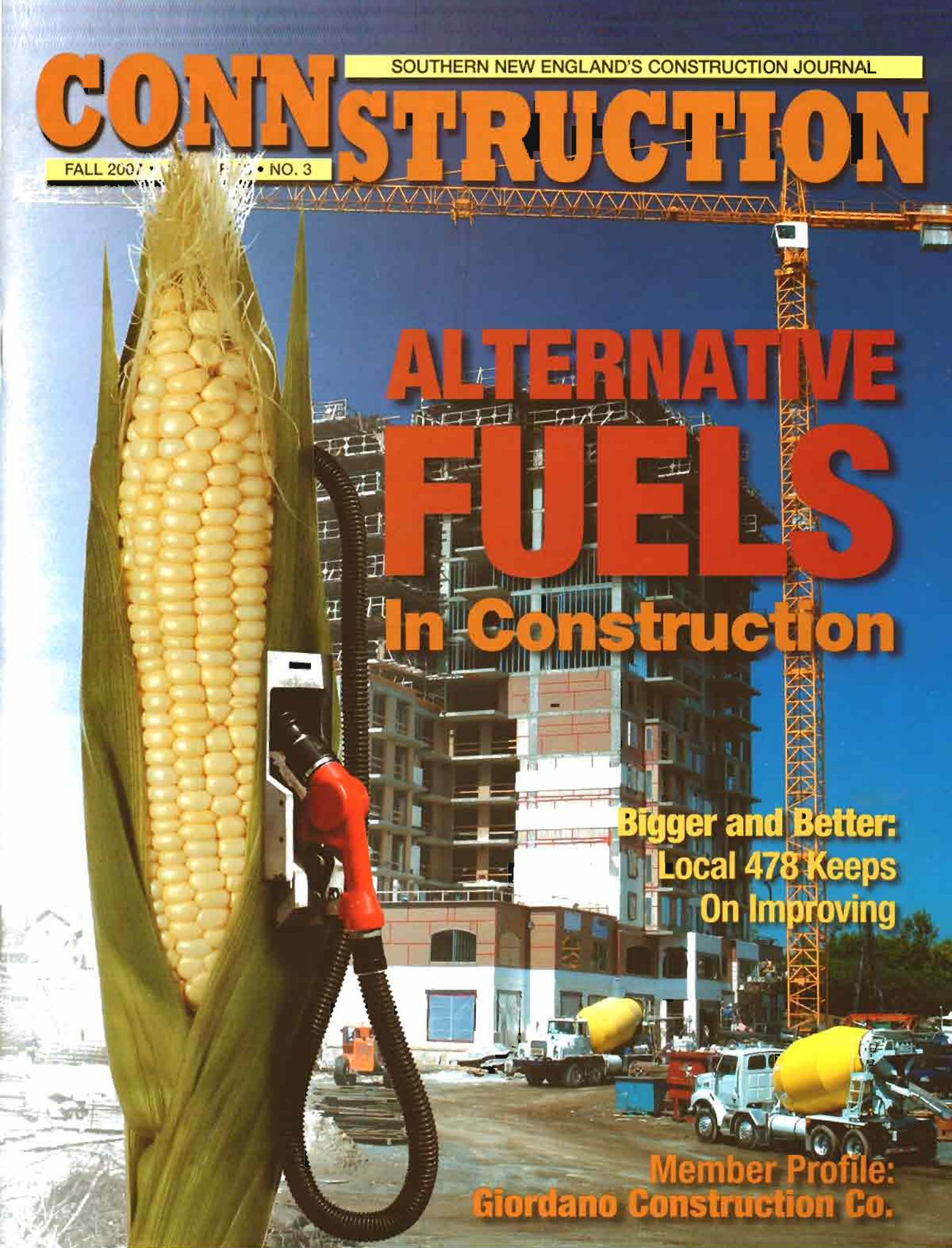
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ALTERNATIVE FUELS In Construction

**Bigger and Better:
Local 478 Keeps
On Improving**

**Member Profile:
Giordano Construction Co.**



feature



Giordano Construction Co.


A True One-Stop Shop

By Mary Lou Jay

More than 30 percent of all family-owned businesses survive into the second generation, but only 12 percent make it to the third, according to the Family Firm Institute of Boston. By the time a business reaches the fourth generation, only three percent are operating with members of the founding family still at the helm.

Giordano Construction Co. of Branford has demonstrated every sign of being in that small, successful minority. "My brother Vincent and I are the third generation of the family to be in the business and we now have sons and daughters coming in representing the fourth generation," says company President Michael F. Giordano.

Michael Giordano is named for his grandfather, who founded the company in 1925. "He started out as a one wheelbarrow



The Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School, designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, is a 150,000-square-foot arts and humanities magnet school.

mason contractor, as so many of his compatriots did,” says Giordano. Next to take charge was Vincent (father of the current company leaders), who headed the company as it moved into housing construction, particularly after World War II. Giordano Construction built several tract housing developments in the Branford/New Haven area before getting out of the single-family market in the late 1950s. It then turned its attention to the educational market.

“It’s interesting how things have evolved,” says Giordano. “We built our first school back in the late 1950s, the New Short Beach School in Branford. Over the decades we have gone from redevelopment in the 1960s, to multi-family housing in the 70s, to office and institutional facilities in the 1980s, to looking for work in the 1990s, and then back to schools and multi-family housing in the 2000s.”

Adapting to new market needs

For eight decades, Giordano has thrived through a mixture of market diversification and flexibility in construction delivery methods. It owns and operates several affiliate companies, including Branford Buildings Supplies, a full service lumberyard; Westmount Management, a real estate management company; Queach Corporation, a development firm; and the Office Network, which provides executive office space and administrative services to entrepreneurs and small business owners.

“We also have followed the needs of the marketplace and moderated our delivery systems and our skill base to meet the needs of the moment,” says Giordano. “We have been involved in every type of contracting form that there is, from general contracting to design build to turnkey. Now construction management is our primary delivery mode.”

Giordano has also retained the ability to self perform many types of work. “That diversity gives us the ability to serve the needs of the client in multiple capacities that are not necessarily typical of the industry,” says Giordano. “More conventional construction managers don’t own a wheelbarrow, much less the significant

depth of earth moving equipment and concrete formwork that we have. That diversity brings a special depth and power to our relationship with the owner of a project.

“We offer diversity not only in the types of projects that we do, but also in the ways that we can approach the solutions to any individual project’s special challenges,” says Giordano. “Control of the site and the foundation are paramount. Coming out of the ground provides the highest incidence of project failures. If we’re the CM on that project, we can often solve that problem ourselves. We have the skilled people and necessary equipment in house to get it done.”

Building relationships close to home

Today Giordano Construction works primarily in the New Haven area. “We have been very fortunate to be able to stay close to home and to stay pretty busy – a combination that is not necessarily typical in the construction industry,” says Giordano. “By virtue of our presence in the City of New Haven, at the Housing Authority, and at Yale University, and with some exceptional private clients, we have been able to keep a pretty good work program in New Haven county. It’s not nearly as large as that of some other companies, but we don’t seek to be that large. As an executive who believes in work-life balance, I like to go home for dinner.”

Giordano Construction has played a “significant” role in the school building program in New Haven, which Giordano calls one of the most progressive in the country. “Right now we’re doing our fifth school, the Co-op High School on College Street. It’s a 150,000-square-foot magnet school for the arts and humanities designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects.

“We also built the New Haven Athletic Center for the school district. It is a beautiful facility for the people of New Haven, something that many colleges don’t have.”

For the New Haven Housing Authority, Giordano is serving as construction manager for the renovation of the new Prescott Bush elderly housing facility and for McConaughy Terrace, a family housing unit, where it is doing exterior modifica-



1. Steelworkers top off COOP High School in New Haven, Conn.
2. The award-winning New Haven Athletic Center is the largest high school indoor athletic facility in Connecticut. Inverted triangular tube trusses and the precast concrete envelope became the hallmarks for the striking impression this building makes.
3. An addition and renovation of Park Ridge Apartments II in New Haven. Originally built by Mike's father over 25 years ago in response to a community request, the two buildings have been owned and operated by the Giordano family since, are in impeccable condition, and are considered some of the most desirable elderly housing in the area.
4. Project manager Vincent Giordano III directs excavation work at Yale University's Cross Campus Library.

5. Vincent S. Giordano, Jr., Giordano vice president, with his sister Jeanette Mobeck, president of Park Ridge, LLC at a recent roof topping off ceremony.
6. Giordano's role in the resurrection of the Yale campus has been multi-faceted. Performance on extensive and highly complex infrastructure improvements as well as delicate restorations of many of the university's historic buildings are representative of the company's broad dimensions.

tions and a functional and architectural upgrade. In Westville, the company is adding 60 new units to its own elderly housing development called Park Ridge.

At Yale, Giordano Construction has been serving since February of this year as construction manager for the bundled multiple projects assignment, a contract that has so far included 26 different jobs. "One of the reasons that we got this job is our self-performance capability," says Giordano. "If a door needs to be hung, it doesn't take four months to accomplish. We don't have to send out an RFP, and get bids from other trade contractors to make it happen."

Additionally, Giordano has recently entered into a partnering agreement with the Indianapolis office of Hunt Construction Group. The partnership's first award was the new Social Science Academic Building, designed by Koetter Kim and Associates. It will be on the Yale campus and front on Prospect Street. Construction on this building has just started. In addition, Yale recently awarded the construction management contract for its new 350,000-square-foot School of Management to the Hunt/Giordano partnership.

Hands-on leadership

Much of the success of Giordano Construction Co. can be attributed to the good working relationship the Giordano brothers have maintained during their tenure at the company. Michael, who joined the company in 1970, serves as president; Vincent, who is now vice president, went to work on full time in 1972 after serving in Vietnam.

The brothers have managed to maintain separate but equally important roles within the company. "Years ago, I used to say that I create the paper and Vinnie executes it," Michael Giordano says. "That's the way it was for a long time."

There's more overlap now—both brothers are more involved in paperwork, the "job creation" as Giordano calls it—but the arrangement still works. "We have a high regard for each other personally and professionally, and we are also sensitive to the roles that we play in the company,"

Giordano adds. "We try very hard not to cross over each other, because there's nothing worse than a two-headed monster in leadership."

Now the next generation is preparing for leadership as well. Vincent's son, Vinnie III, is involved in site development and the self-performing side of the business. Michael's daughter Sarah is running the lumberyard, and Rick Ross, son of Michael and Vinnie's sister, is running the management company.

Giordano believes that the family involvement and hands-on leadership make a real difference to clients. "My brother and I participate visually and continuously and proactively in every job that we take, which is the reason that we don't take more jobs than we can handle. That personal involvement has a lot to do with the fact that we have many repeat jobs from clients around the area," he says.

"We've had nothing but successful projects," he adds. "I'm proud to tell that you I have not spent a day in court since I came on June 2, 1970. We have never had an owner or a subcontractor sue us. It just hasn't happened."

"We honestly try to be fair and reasonable and expect the same thing from other people. I haven't had a problem yet that I couldn't resolve face to face with someone across the table," he adds.

Giordano intends to continue that record of success in the years ahead. "We are quite appreciative of where we are in our marketplace and expect the successor generation to sustain the historical success that has become the hallmark of our company." 