

South Florida Hospital News[®] and HEALTHCARE REPORT

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Danto Builders' Owners Do It All

BY LOIS THOMSON

With more than four decades of experience in the construction business, Craig Danto and his wife Debbie have developed a firm that is capable of handling most projects in the design build field. Debbie Danto explained that her husband is a fourth-generation builder who came to South Florida well over 40 years ago, and has done every type of construction imaginable.

"We're a design build firm," she said, "which means we love to take a client from concept through completion, and even beyond that, because of other services we offer. We are able to start with the client with a complete design build team so everyone understands the project – their vision, their goals, their budget; even tax incentives, and how to maximize those to give a better ROI. So there really are benefits to starting with the design build team up front, and then working with the client all the way through construction."

Danto said she and her husband have always included medical facilities as part of their business, but they really started focusing on that after the downturn of the market. Before that they were building a lot of custom homes and multi-family developments, but when the market dropped, they realized they would be wise to diversify.

"We said we need to focus more on the healthcare industry, and with aging baby boomers and the increasing older population here, we knew that was a good segment of the market to focus on. We design and/or build medical office buildings, and build out separate medical offices like ear, nose, throat; MRI centers; primary physician; dental offices; patient rooms; and miscellaneous medical offices." They have also completed renovations for Broward Health and Holy Cross over the last decade.

Danto pointed out that Danto Builders is a woman-owned business, which has enhanced its growth. The changeover was made four years ago when she was in a meeting with Broward Health and they explained their diversity program. "I understood the competitive advantage of being woman-owned, so I got my GC license and we made that transition. We're a WBENC firm, which is a national woman-owned business designation. We made that transition so that we could be more competitive with hospitals like Broward Health, and we are an approved woman-owned contractor for them."



Debbie and Craig Danto
PHOTO CREDIT: JASON LEIDY,
MIDDLE RIVER ARTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Danto emphasized that whether a project is large or small, each one is given the same attention. She mentioned a younger couple they helped – both of whom were doctors who wanted to buy real estate and open their own medical office. "That's smart, because that's their nest egg – they eventually will retire but will still have this real estate. But it's very challenging because the bank wants plans and budgets before they approve the loan. So we had to help them expedite plans and they had to put money down for plans even before they knew they were going to get the loan. That's a tough situation."

She mentioned trends that are currently taking place in the industry, saying that more facilities are focusing on telemedicine than on brick-and-mortar, especially since COVID came on the

scene. However, she added that hospitals do not want to feel sterile, but rather feel more like a hotel. "That's great for us, because our strongest background is probably in hospitality – hotels and restaurants. So we are able to bring that into hospitals and make them feel comfortable; that's been an ongoing trend and I'm sure it will continue. An ongoing focus, especially with COVID, is maintaining safety in hospitals with cleaner air, which is also part of what we do."

Danto believes that their Midwest backgrounds enhance the quality of their service. "Craig is from Michigan and I'm from Ohio, and we both are very down-to-earth and ethical. We're hardworking, and we take a personal interest in clients. If it's not a big job, it doesn't matter, we're going to treat it the same and with the same urgency, because we know that's (the small customer's) livelihood."

Danto said all of this works well because she and her husband are partners/owners. "He was born and raised in the business and has tremendous construction and engineering knowledge. I come from the business side, so I oversee operations and administrative processes; and we're both in business development." She said they also care about the community, serving on boards and being engaged in various activities such as holding fundraisers for Special Olympics, and now helping young people learn about the trades and helping to get them enrolled into a certification program.

"Craig and I are very involved with our clients and community. We are thankful to our team and colleagues for helping us make everything happen."

For more information,
call (954) 229-2006 or visit www.dantobuilders.com.