

ON THE LEVEL | PATRICIA 'PAT' ALGIERS



Staff photo by Kevin Harnack

STANDING 'PAT' ON DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Algiers wants work to result in go-to places

By Jessica Stephen
Special to The Daily Reporter

Patricia Algiers has a simple goal for her design work.

“Whoever we design for, we want to make it the house on the block where all the kids come to,” said Algiers, owner and president of Chemistry in Place in Shorewood.

“We make sure that it’s memorable, and the key to making sure it’s memorable is to bring out the best of the client, the uniqueness of the client, in an unexpected way,” Algiers said. “And you make it feel good for the UPS person, the FedEx person, the most revered client, a prospective employee.”

It’s a changing part of the construction industry and, Algiers argued, an important one.

“It’s sort of like being an editor,” she said. “We take what the client says, we take what they may already have, in terms of physical assets, and we put it together in a way that becomes the best for them.”

For Algiers, that could mean doing everything from locational studies to residential downsizing to professional-athlete

relocation. The company even provided project management for the so-called “Ghost Train,” a nightly light-and-sound show in Shorewood meant to give onlookers a sense of what it was like to witness the actual trains that had once run through there.

But, often, Algiers and her team of up to 10 employees set their sights on commercial construction, from spaces like HEAR Wisconsin’s hybrid audiology clinic and retail store in West Allis, to the software designer PKWare’s new location in Walkers Point, which turned the old Pittsburgh Paint building into a modern office.

“The challenge there was to turn it from the old school factory environment to a mind

factory,” Algiers said.

The diversity of Algiers’ work is informed by her own assorted professional experiences, which include time with a company that does commercial and industrial real-estate appraisals, as well as work with dairies, steel mills and textiles mills throughout the country.

“The take away and the learning experience of that is look at things with your eyes wide open,” Algiers said. “Look at businesses in a way in which you see where they’re at. Is this a growth business? Is this a declining business? And, then, for yourself and others, just encourage being really resilient. If you’re in an industry that is a declining industry, figure out

GETTING TO KNOW ALGIERS

The Daily Reporter: What surprises you most about your work?

Patricia “Pat” Algiers: I never get tired of it and have the same degree of enthusiasm each and every time we start a new project.

TDR: What would you change about the construction industry?

Algiers: I’d encourage high-school students to pursue a career in the trades to see firsthand the difference they could make in the changing skyline of the City of Milwaukee and surrounding areas.

TDR: What other job(s) did you consider trying?

Algiers: I’ve been curious my entire life and worked in a number of areas – store planning, facilities management, commercial real-estate appraisal, city development. Careers not related to interior/architectural design that I considered were fashion design and private investigation; I love to research and would love to be a PI. Go figure.

TDR: What profession would you not like to explore?

Algiers: Anything to do with politics, although I like to observe politicians and the political scene.

TDR: What’s the last movie you saw?

Algiers: London Has Fallen.

TDR: What would you never wear?

Algiers: Birkenstocks and tie-dye.

TDR: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Algiers: I’d be an avid golfer and skier and have a fabulous singing voice.

TDR: What would your colleagues be surprised to find out about you?

Algiers: I spend my vacation time exploring cities on the rebound – like Detroit, New Orleans, Brooklyn, Havana – and imagine developmental scenarios.

what else you can do.”

For Algiers, that means not just setting up workplaces but also helping businesses make use of those spaces in their promotions.

“You’ve created the new environment, now use it as a tool to enhance your business, to grow your business, to evolve,” explained Algiers, who offers social media and other marketing services as part of her design work.

“It’s kind of a new level of (being) all about the client,” she said. “It takes intuition, and you have to be a chameleon. But when their clients walk in, those clients get a very, very good idea of who the company is by just walking into the space, seeing and feeling. No pressure.”