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## J&L: Construction company turns slump into growth opportunity

by Brian Johnson Staff Writer

A Hudson, Wis.-based company that's known primarily for installing structural and reinforcing steel is celebrating a new name, a milestone anniversary and a newly expanded lineup of construction services.

The company, formerly known as J&L Steel Erectors, recently added an electrical division to construction offerings. To reflect its expanded focus, the company has changed its name to J&L Steel & Electrical Services.

The company plans to officially announce the expansion into electrical work during tonight's open house at the company's headquarters in the Towerview Business Center, 2365 Willis Miller Dr., in Hudson, Wis.

The open house also marked the 30th anniversary of the company, which was founded in Minnesota and moved last year to western Wisconsin.

LouAnne Reger, J&L's president and CEO, said the company's first electrical project is already "in the books" and that it's bidding on additional work. A new master electrician just came on board, and the company hired two electrical workers in December, she said.

"I have three people with probably 60 to 80 years" of combined experience, Reger said.



Bob Quist

Tom Mitchell

Among the electrical employees is Tom Mitchell, the company's electrical project manager and estimator. Since 1971, Mitchell has worked as an electrician, foreman and project manager, according to the company's website.

Reger isn't daunted by the slow economy. On the contrary, she says the timing of the expansion is right because high-quality workers are available, and she believes that by being proactive now, she will be in a better position to grow her business when the economy rebounds.

"It was an opportunity that came to me and I think this makes a lot of sense," she said in a phone interview. "We

have the space and we have the backup: the bookkeepers, the estimators. ... When opportunity knocks, you open the door."

Since its founding in 1979, J&L Steel & Electrical Services has contributed to projects such as the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit line, the Xcel Energy Center, the Minnesota Science Museum, the Minneapolis Convention Center, the Highway 212 project and the new 35W bridge.

Its current work includes the new Highway 23 bridge in St. Cloud, and the eastbound span of the new Interstate 494 Wakota Bridge over the Mississippi River in the southeast metro.

The company has 68 employees and is a certified disadvantaged business enterprise in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

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