

SEWER AND EXCAVATION STEWARDS

Four generations of the Wanasek family have shaped a vision to meet the needs of Southeast Wisconsin

by Robyn M. Feller



The Wanasek Corporation team takes on a storm trap install at Milwaukee Medical College.

John Wanasek, the fourth-generation owner of *The Wanasek Corporation* (Wanasek), has followed in the footsteps of his father, grandfather and great-grandfather, carrying on a proud legacy of great relationships, expert employees and the highest quality work in order to serve the company's clients with pride. John, who took over the company in 2010 from his father, James, has been in the business practically his whole life.

Family owned and operated since its inception by Louis F. Wanasek in 1903, The Wanasek Corp., based in Burlington, Wisconsin, started out as a blacksmith's shop, which then turned into a welding and tile setting shop. The excavating business got started in the early 1950s when John's grandfather, Louis J. Wanasek, was building a house and he couldn't get anybody to dig a sewer lateral. Undaunted, he bought an old tractor with a backhoe on it and did the work himself...eventually doing dig work for plumbers. That then evolved into a full-service, sewer water and excavation business.

Today, Wanasek's main services include commercial sewer and water installation, relay and emergency response work as well as large scope excavation, site clearing

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and building excavation as well as an ancillary business utilizing the company's three cranes and three hydro-evacuation trucks.

Versatility and Dedication

Kevin Bird, Wanasek's Vice President and CFO, notes, "We do a lot of water main breaks in the wintertime for municipalities and commercial businesses in the area." He adds, "What really sets us apart from our competition is the amount of service work that we do, meaning the digging for other utility companies and the versatility that our guys bring. We can do concrete work. We do asphalt work. Not necessarily large stuff, but we self-perform about 90% of the work we take on."

The Wanasek Corp. is focused on providing its specialized services to other industries like plumbers and utility companies while also doing the large scope excavation work. One recent example is a \$3.5 million hospital project for which Wanasek did the earthwork and utilities. Another high-profile project was the \$8 million Burlington bypass. This internal city bypass allows for emergency response vehicles to be able to get over the train tracks whenever needed.

As for its manpower, the skill and diversity of Wanasek's 82-person workforce make it a standout in the industry, not to mention John's all-in approach. Bird remarks, "I always call John one of the best 'firefighters' out there, because whenever there is an emergency, he always seems to have the crew and the equipment to get it done right. Plus, although John's the President of our company, he's instrumentally involved in a lot of different things. He can run just about



Expert excavation is one of The Wanasek Corporation's main services. The crew can even excavate in a tight space, as seen here.



every piece of equipment in our fleet. There are times we'll be shorthanded and he'll take a truck out or move equipment himself. He still maintains his CDLs, and he's an active member of the crews if they need him. It's relatively unique for a President of his stature to be so hands on like that."

Accolades for Safety and Service

Beyond the day-to-day project work, an emphasis on both safety and community involvement is integral to The Wanasek Corp.'s success. The company provides countless opportunities for the entire team to support nonprofit ventures, including The Boy Scouts, Little League, a local wrestling club and the Wanasek family's longest running service project, the Burlington Chocolate Festival. Among the many awards won over the years is the 2017 Crystal Ball Community Leadership Award, as well as numerous safety awards for outstanding safety performance from Wisconsin Underground Contractors' Association Inc. (WUCA) several years running.

The Wanasek Corporation utilizes cranes and hydro-evacuation trucks as part of its ancillary business.



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