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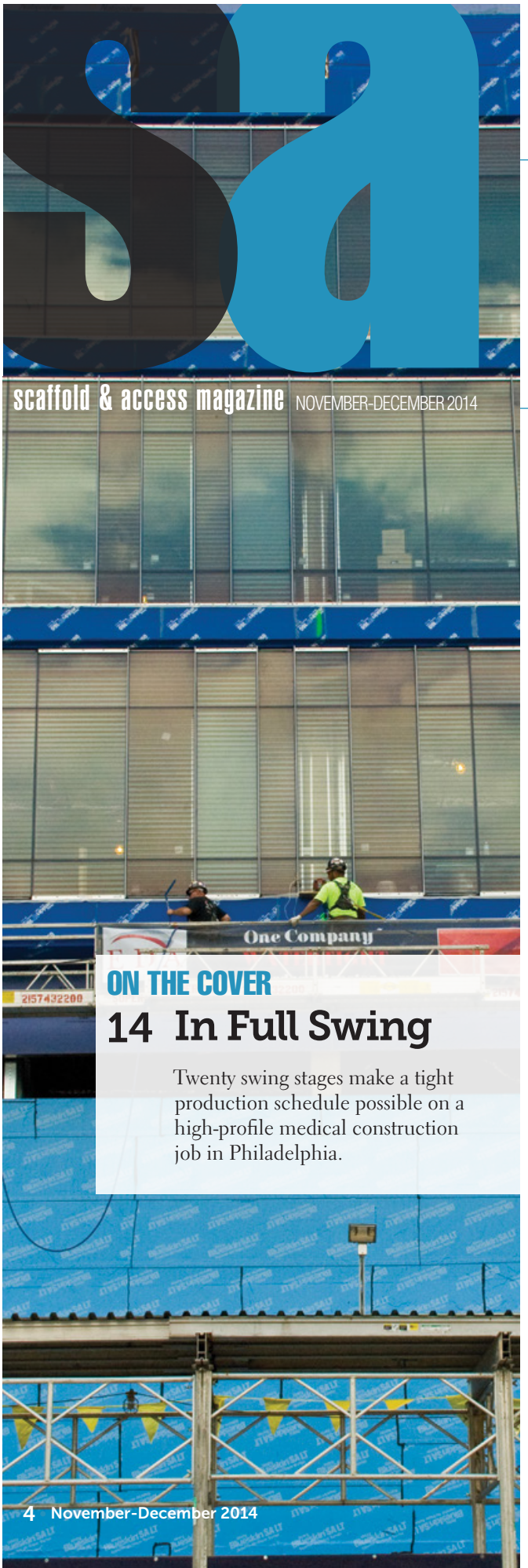
In Full Swing

Twenty swing stages make a tight production schedule possible on a high-profile medical construction job in Philadelphia

SAIA SCAFFOLD & ACCESS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



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In Full Swing

Twenty swing stages make a tight production schedule possible on a high-profile medical construction job in Philadelphia • by Lindsay Minard

Not long ago, construction pipelines were hollowing quicker than they were being filled, timelines consistently took a backseat to cost efficiency, and parodies of forecasters telling about the improving economy, just down the road, were too common.

But in the past few years, real evidence that the economy has truly made forward progression up the bell curve has surfaced, and Philadelphia-based Superior Scaffold Services is currently providing the access equipment on just the type of project that proves it.

For over a year, Superior has been a significant part of the project team at the new Penn Presbyterian Medical Center's Advanced Care Hospital Pavilion located in West Philadelphia—significant to the tune of 20 of its swing stages on site at any given time.

"In 2009 and 2010, project timelines were longer. There was no rush to get a job done because everyone was looking to save money on rental costs," says Guy Bianchini, CEO of Superior. "At that time a job like this may have only had three swings that were being moved from one area to the next of a project; today, production efficiency is king and the 20 swings on this job is a clear indication of an improving economy."

With Philadelphia general contractor, L.F. Driscoll at the helm, construction began on the new six-story—complete with rooftop heliport—178,000 sq. ft. acute care center in May 2013 with a Jan. 1, 2015 scheduled completion date.

The $90 million expansion project moves Penn Medicine's Level-1 trauma center from its current digs at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania to the Penn Presbyterian Medical Center campus. Once complete, the new state-of-the-art pavilion will feature overall upgrades and more space for emergency, surgical, trauma, and critical-care patients, and will additionally include an expansion and renovations to the existing Penn Presbyterian Hospital.

The new, 178,000 sq. ft. Penn Presbyterian Medical Center Advanced Care Hospital Pavilion is part of a $90 million expansion project that began in May 2013 and is scheduled to be complete in January 2015.

** Photograpy by Erik Highland with Superior Scaffold*

Superior installed 10-ft. high outrigger beams and offset floating platforms (porch brackets) on the backside of the swings so the façade panels could be loaded and moved to their specific locations, without impacting the other trades on site.

Critical Dependability

Considering the project's scope and design, which had input from key medical personnel to ensure the new facility meets the unique criteria associated with getting patients in a doctor's hands as quickly as possible, the Penn Presbyterian project is considered one of the largest medical construction jobs going on in U.S. presently.

It's fair to say that since the economic downturn, those in the business of construction are more aware than ever that a smoothly run project is, much less one of this magnitude, is crucial—a reality that has made the business relationship in an already particularly relationship-driven industry—all the more critical.

Bianchini explains: "Our customers want to work with a vendor they know they can trust and rely on. On a job of this size, with so many moving parts, the project managers need subs that almost read their minds—that know what they want and how they work; they don't need any surprises. This is the type of relationship we've built with our customers and Bob Sarkisian, vice president of our suspended scaffold division, has had a tremendous part in that. The result is a loyal customer base and in any economy, that's critical to business."

Driscoll tapped Pennsylvania-based EDA Contractors Inc., commercial and industrial roofing, carpentry, sheet metal, and wall panel contractor to handle the installation of nearly 60,000 sq. ft. of vapor barrier (Henry Blueskin self-adhered water resistive air barrier membrane) and approximately 30,000 sq. ft. of insulated metal wall panels (Centria Formawall Dimension Series 3-in. panels) before the masonry and curtain wall could be put up. With lots of moving parts,

a tight production schedule, and strong relationships in mind, EDA in turn, called up Sarkisian, to pitch the job and get the Superior team involved in preplanning to determine an access solution that would enable the EDA crew to complete their extensive part of the project on schedule.

"The schedule really was the biggest challenge we faced on this job," affirms Vincent Dougherty, project superintendent with EDA. "This wasn't a typical square building—there were a lot of unique details that also made access a challenge; however, Superior met the challenges and was available and helpful whenever needed. Without their level of support, we would not have been able to meet the schedule."

Albert Bianchini founded Waco Scaffolding of Philadelphia in 1952 and grew his business by paying particular attention to superior customer service. After selling Waco to the parent company, Bianchini reformed his business as Superior Scaffold Services Inc. in 1992. Today, along with sons Guy Bianchini and Gary Bianchini, president of the company, the family business remains customer-focused, and as a result, an industry leader in the Tri-State region.

Paul Goldberg, project manager with EDA says, "I've been working on projects with Superior for around four years now and I've never had a project where exterior access was required that Bob and his team could not provide. Superior custom tailors their assemblies per specific project requirements, and beyond that the company is simply one of the most dependable specialty contractors we've done work with."

Considering that it was determined that some 20 swings stages would make up the access solution—it's safe to say trust and dependability were atop EDA's priority list.

"This is one of the largest suspended scaffold jobs we've ever done in Philadelphia; it's definitely unusual, at least here, to have that many swings on one building," says Sarkisian. "I believe the timeline really drove the reasoning for that many stages. Also we had other contractors utilizing them at the same time, so essentially, different crews were bouncing from swing to swing trying to complete the job on time."

The EDA team loaded and fed all their materials from the roof; Superior engineered a custom tie-back system to mitigate tripping hazards for workers.

Superior swung the entire exterior of the building and also had swings inside the elevator shafts for work that was being done by exterior and interior framing and sheathing contractor Philadelphia D&M.

Timed Test

While having 20 stages on a job is a challenge in and of itself—(think electric grid and summer months)—in the case of the Penn Presbyterian job, the challenges primarily revolved around the timeframe to complete work and the scope of the job. "This is simply a huge job with a ton of equipment on it," affirms Sarkisian. "The biggest challenge we had was trying to work around the other trades on site. The key was sticking to the plan of doing what we needed to get done in the timeframe in which we were scheduled to get it done."

Superior used its Altrex standard suspended scaffolds for both the exterior and interior elevator shaft work. The exterior, 40-ft. units are powered by a combination of BisoMac210 and Power Climber PC1, 1,000-lb hoists; the stages inside the elevator shafts varied in length in order to fit (any info on the lengths?). The exterior swings located on the ends of the building had 3-ft. returns in order to make the corner cap.

With all of EDA's materials loaded on and fed from the roof, typical tiebacks and lifelines would have created hazards for the project team. To ensure that the EDA team could safely navigate the rooftop work zone, despite the 20 platforms on site, Superior installed 10-ft. high outrigger beams and offset floating platforms (porch brackets) on the backside of the swings so the façade panels could be loaded and moved to their specific locations, without impacting the other trades.

Additionally, the Superior team knew that using traditional safety lines for that many platforms would present a major tripping hazard for workers maneuvering around the rooftop. To mitigate the issue, Sarkisian and his team engineered a custom tie-back system for the equipment. Sarkisian explains, "The engineered system allowed access on the top elevation roof with no interference of tieback cables and safety lines." Workers used double static safety lanyards to tie off to the swings versus the building, again, to avoid lines getting in the way of workers.

The swings were craned up to the roof of the Penn Presbyterian project in early April 2014, and again, with a no room to spare in the production schedule, and a substantial amount of work going on in that location, the Superior team had to immediately unload, erect, and move the stages off the rooftop to

Currently, nearly all the facade work is complete on the new pavilion, and it is expected that the job will be completed on or before the January 2015 deadline.

their working location; the platforms were lined up in sequence so crews could complete their work without having to move the entire rig.

A Job Well-Done, Nearly

Sarkisian says that today there are only a handful of swings left on the Penn Presbyterian job, as the project is nearing completion and may even finish ahead of schedule. "I cannot believe how fast this job has gone. Everything has gone unbelievably smooth and knock-on-wood there has been no issues or complaints with the equipment, despite the amount of equipment being utilized at one time," concludes Sarkisian.

A forecasting Bianchini says that while suspended scaffolds are presently dominate as the access equipment of choice in Philadelphia, with the economy improving and owners with more cash to spare, he anticipates seeing demand continue to grow for mast climbers, construction elevators, and material hoists.

"While suspended and supported scaffolds are a mainstay in our market considering the amount of façade restoration done, we're seeing more and more new construction projects with personnel/material hoists on them; mast climbers are also starting to show a real presence. I believe this type of equipment is the future of the scaffold industry and it's something we're focused on, to ensure we're able to provide our customers the best access solutions possible," states Bianchini. "Bottom line is that the growing demand for more high-end equipment speaks to the trend of an improving economy and that certainly is a good thing."•