

# the alliance

always aligned with clients in mind

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Volume ONE  
Issue FIVE

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STRANG



# The View From Here

There is an invaluable part of Strang's culture which inherently challenges the status quo. After all, innovations and discoveries are ever-present within our fields of expertise.

Technologies and materials constantly evolve. It's the same for space planning principles or design directions. We are ever seeking sustainable improvements or economic advantages. We also evaluate new developments in energy modeling, lighting design, and occupant comfort / productivity, to mention a few.

Like many of you, we are hardwired, programmed, even predisposed to innovation – a noble-enough charge, but is it always the best route? Well, the quick answer is yes, BUT . . .

Woven throughout our counsel is a meticulous assessment of “tried and true” together with contemporary and new; seldom do we jettison one for the other. Our judgements guide an evolutionary – rather than revolutionary – process. It's a matter of convergence, melding tangible advancements with time-tested traditions. Here is where customary thinking can be galvanized, even energized through fresh thought.

Orthodoxy can be emblazoned with challenging intellect. We believe conventional wisdom is a starting point. We believe in fact-based advancements built upon value and proven practices. We believe critical thinking is the new revolution. And we also believe in our theme line, located on the back cover of this eZine, just above the website address. Hope you enjoy issue number 5.





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14



10

## MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

4. At American Family, everything starts with a dream. In this case, American Family made their own dreams come true.

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

10. Here is what happens when you combine creativity, skill and plenty of community involvement.

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE

14. Two members of our staff participated in the International Facility Management Association's Conference - as speakers.

**IB EXECUTIVE  
CHOICE AWARD**

2015 WINNER

*InBusiness Magazine* readers named Strang the top commercial architectural firm in Madison.



LEARN CREATE COLLABORATE

## American Family Insurance **DREAMS FEARLESSLY**

Dreams Can Only Happen When  
You're Confident You Have  
The Right Partners

**The Dream:** To renovate the BL2 level of the “B” building at American Family Insurance, transforming the existing cafe and meeting space into a new cafe for the entire campus. The large, two-story volume was to be broken down into manageable landmark zones to accommodate a variety of functions and address circulation issues to eliminate bottlenecks and improve the use of extra floor space.

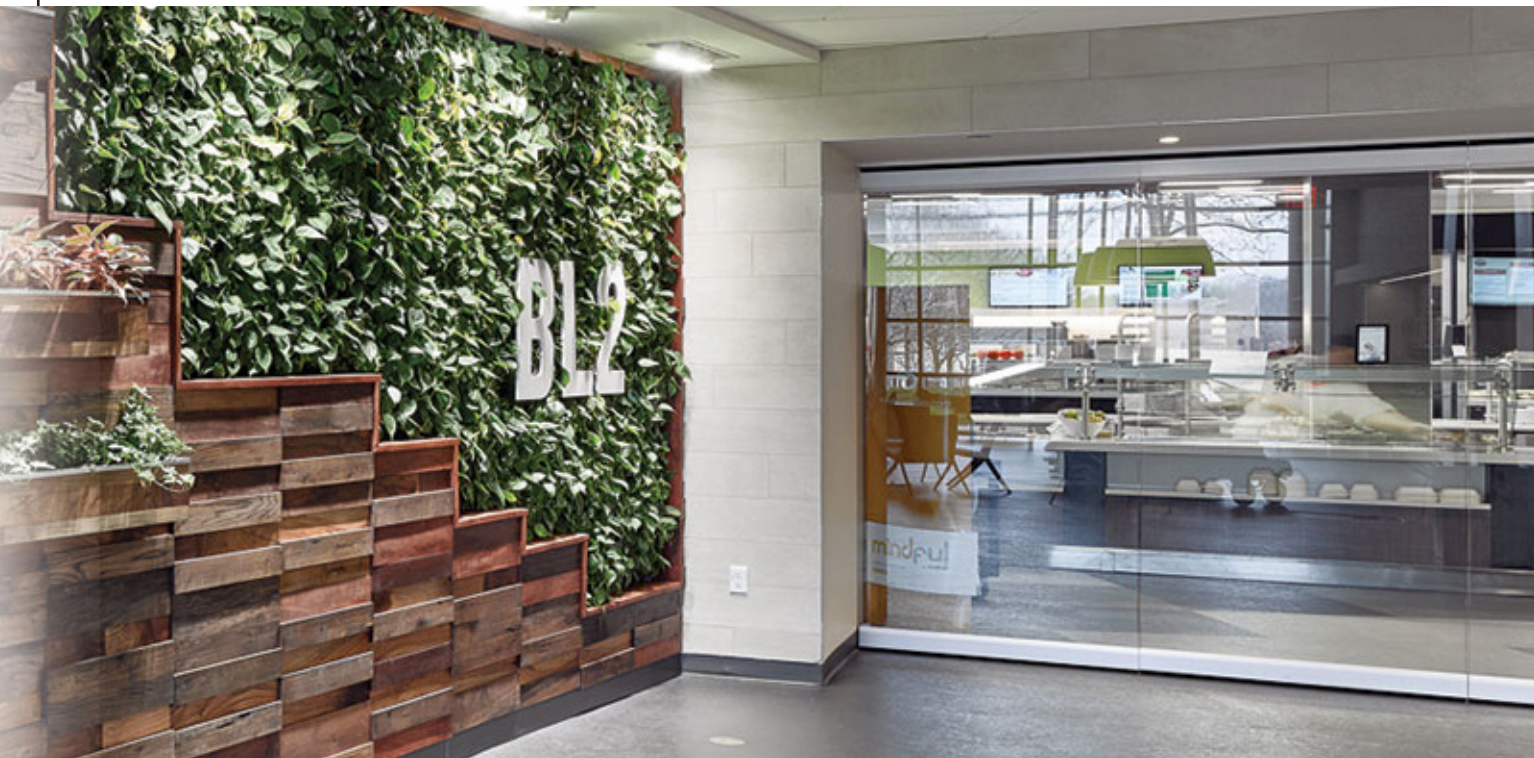
### KEY FEATURES:

- / Large kitchen with food service
- / Coffee bar
- / Stone fireplace
- / Living wall (biophilia)
- / Micro kitchens
- / Private meeting rooms



STRANG





Herman Wittwer knew how to dream fearlessly.

In 1927, he was a struggling insurance agent who understood the business. He knew farmers presented lower auto insurance risks because they drove their cars less than others. With a strategy and a dream he started the Farmers Mutual Automobile Insurance Company.

How far did his dream take him? Today Herman's start-up is called American Family Insurance. The Fortune 500 firm is the third-largest mutual property/casualty insurance company in the nation and employs nearly 8,000 people (not to mention 3,000-plus independent contractor agents).

Let's just say that along the landscape of Madison businesses, American Family Insurance stands tall.

This company continues to follow in its founder's footsteps by dreaming big. In fact, its stated mission is to inspire, protect and restore dreams.

In following this mission, American Family has grown to be more than just a corporate giant. It is a corporate citizen extraordinaire, dedicated to serving its customers, employees and citizens. Company leaders dream fearlessly and think big in everything they do.

Consider the recently renovated café at its corporate headquarters in Madison.



American Family decided to create a 30,000-square-foot work café – an active multi-purpose space combining casual dining, flexible work areas, quiet zones and meeting rooms.

This is not your father's office lunchroom. It caters to today's worker, offering private work space away from the upstairs office, a place to chat with a co-worker over coffee, and even quiet areas to relax and rejuvenate before finishing that big project.

The area features floor-to-ceiling windows, but offers more than just a view. An outdoor patio situated between the café and campus walking paths, offers a natural respite from the office.

If that's not enough, a living wall brings nature inside.

The space in the BL2 level of the "B" building includes dining areas, meeting rooms, a large kitchen with food service, a micro-kitchen and a coffee bar. A stone fireplace surrounded by couches and adjacent to a reading area, complete with a fully stocked bookshelf, offers a comfortable place to take a break.

The furniture is designed to easily convert spaces from casual areas to work zones, includes tray tables – perfect for a laptop or tablet.





**STEPHANIE FITCH, IIDA, WRID**  
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#### PROJECT STATS:

- / 30,000 sq-ft cafe renovation
- / 1,755-sq-ft mezzanine
- / 3,000-sq-ft kitchen servery
- / Integrated project delivery

This flexibility allows people to occupy the space as needs change, often multiple times during the day. It also gives American Family more options in the future as the workplace continues to evolve.

BL2 is much more than a state-of-the-art café. It becomes the perfect place for a casual meeting, when a conference room is too formal or maybe not available. Privacy away from the desk is valued too, especially when someone can bring a mobile device to the café to finish a project without interruption.

Giving employees the right types of spaces to meet the needs of customers is important at American Family. It all





comes down to treating employees well and giving them all the tools they need to take care of customers.

*“Simply put, our people are our single greatest competitive advantage,” said Jim St. Vincent, Vice President of Human Resources. “Our agents and employees have and will continue to be the reason customers choose to do business with us.”*

It all goes back to responding to customer’s needs and helping them fulfill their personal dreams. It’s a message American Family sends out to the entire community, not just customers. That is why they opened DreamBank in downtown Madison, a place dedicated





# I can't wait to be a Girl Scout.



**TROOPS FORMING NOW** [gsbadgerland.org](http://gsbadgerland.org) or **800.236.2710**

Please consider joining Strang in support of Girl Scouts.

to helping people – customers and non-customers alike – identify and pursue their dreams.

DreamBank not only offers a series of interactive experiences and digital tools, but hosts classes focused on helping people realize their dreams.

American Family Insurance also places a focus on strengthening families in our communities. In 2003, it donated \$10 million to help fund the American Family Children's Hospital. Each year it supports United Way to the tune of \$1.5 million.

Working for the betterment of the community has become a deep part of

the corporate culture at American Family Insurance.

*"Our employees and agents believe in supporting and protecting the communities where we live and work," said Jack Salzwedel, president, chairman and CEO of American Family Insurance.*

The company has taken their mantra of "dreaming fearlessly" very seriously and it has made a difference in Madison. Herman Wittwer would certainly be proud.

Photography, Mike Rebholz Photography



# To Infinity And Beyond!



## Strang Staff Blends Creativity, Skills To Give Back To The Community

Not long after Buzz Lightyear of Star CANmand stood tall in the center of West Towne Mall in April, a huge black box, lit from the inside, went on display at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art.

Both were the result of Strang Ideation – a program of giving back to the community in fun and creative ways.

The first spring project, hosted by Middleton Outreach Ministry (MOM), challenged designers from throughout the community to build themed sculptures with





## DESIGN MMOCA

- Interactive display at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art
- 10' X 10' enclosed box
- Lighting provided by Electronic Theatre Controls, Middleton
- Wheels provided by Hooper Corporation

cans of food. The CANstruction event not only raised the awareness of hunger, but collected food for MOM's Food Pantry.

The Strang team, in partnership with American Family Insurance, designed and built a replica of Buzz Lightyear, a popular character from the movie "Toy Story."

Less than a week after CANstruction ended, Strang set up a display for the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art's Design MMoCA 2016 event. The museum's event invited design professionals to create art displays inspired by the museum's permanent collection.

The Strang team chose the lithograph "Stage Left" by Laddie John Dill and built a 10 x 10 enclosed box with windows. Using lights provided by Electronic Theatre Control, the interactive box worked like a large kaleidoscope, changing colors and patterns as viewers pushed buttons and turned wheels (provided by Hooper Corporation).

It's not the first time Strang was involved in either of these events, but both displays were one-of-a-kind designs.

"We stress creativity here and Strang has a corporate culture of community service. It's terrific when we can combine those things," said President and CEO Larry Barton.



# Buzz Lightyear Of Star CANmand:

Protecting The Universe From Hunger One Can At A Time



## CANstruction

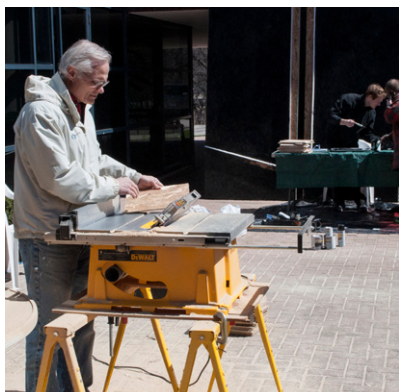
- 8' high, 10' wide Buzz Lightyear sculpture
- Made from 1,200 cans of food provided by American Family Insurance
- More than 20 teams raised \$19,000 and 21 tons of food for the Middleton Outreach Ministry Food Pantry





## “React | Create”

Interactive Box Allowed Viewers To Change Light and Colors With Pulleys, Switches and Wheels



“React | Create” was inspired by Laddie John Dill's 1982 lithograph, “Stage Left”



Watch The Video:  
Our team discusses the Design  
MMoCA project at the museum

# NOTEBOOK

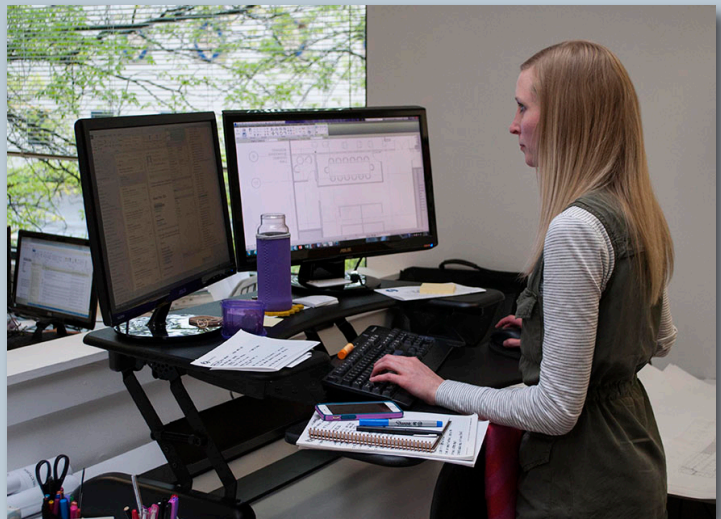
## > Strang Staff Speak At IFMA Conference

Strang's Alice Clark and Curt Norton spoke during the International Facility Management Association's Tri Chapter Symposium at Madison's Edgewater Hotel May 12. Alice, an Interior Design Specialist, spoke on Generational Integration Within the Workplace. Curt, Specifications Director, talked about Spec Books That Empower You to Work at Your Professional Best.



## > Stand-up Workstations Get A Test

Our staff is trying new adjustable workstations which allow for sitting or standing. The units, which easily collapse or expand when workers want a change of pace, will be rotated throughout the office each month. The feedback we receive will help us better understand the pros and cons of the units for the future office needs of both Strang and its clients.





## We Asked Our Staff...



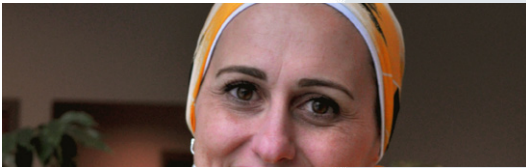
What people  
think I do:

What I  
really do:



**Scott Wheaton, Director, Electrical Engineering:**

"People think I design electrical systems. I do, but I'm part of a team that makes sure systems are properly designed within a context of other elements. It's really more about communication and collaboration with other disciplines at Strang, the building owner and the users."



**Hana Altabbaa, Senior Architectural Designer**

"A lot of people ask me if I design kitchens or interiors. Some see architecture as very prestigious and picture someone with a T-square drawing creative designs. But my job has more to do with the technical details and less about overall design."



**Dan Schmitz, Director, Mechanical Engineering and Commissioning**

"I get all sorts of responses from 'operating a train' to being 'some sort of mechanic.' What I really do is design heating, cooling and ventilation systems, oversee construction and commissioning - making sure engineered systems are operating to specifications."



**Katie Lowery, Director, Integrated Control Systems**

"Because I have a degree in Mechanical Engineering, people have the impression I design any machine that would go into a non-residential building. I actually design plans on how to make heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment operate automatically and maximize energy efficiencies."

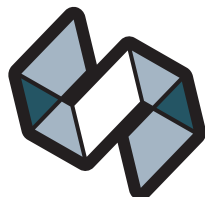
*From Best Practices To Next Practices*  
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