

snpa

eBulletin

SOUTHERN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Associate Member Spotlight: Dario Designs

By Sean Ireland

Special to the SNPA eBulletin

You're a heart patient, 10 years removed from a heart attack and triple bypass surgery. You're being rushed to the hospital with chest pains.

It's 2 a.m., and the emergency room physician on duty is a young resident on his first heart assignment.

There's little question that your family is paging the heart specialist who treated you 10 years ago, right?

Architecture offers a similar choice, less the late-night drama, says Dario DiMare, president of Dario Designs, an architectural firm that focuses on designing facilities for the newspaper industry.

"We are specialists," DiMare said. He founded his Massachusetts-based firm after 11 years as an architect at The Austin Co., where projects early in his career for *The Star-Ledger* of Newark, N.J., and *Newsday* of Melville, N.Y., grounded him in the basics of the newspaper industry and its specific needs.

His early start in the field led him to other newspaper industry projects. He added more knowledge and more experience with each project, and earned a background that today gives him the confidence that his firm can design projects with both cost-saving and revenue-enhancing features for its clients.

"When a newspaper goes to a local architect, (the newspaper has) to do most of the teaching about what things are," DiMare said. "Newspapers can speak freely knowing we understand their language and in some occasions actually learn from us – we're at a different newspaper every week and there's 32 (about 100 if you include the firm's consultants) of us that focus on the industry all of the time. We're adding value when a local architect may actually think that FlexoMAN is a superhero. We have worked tirelessly striving to be the best at what we do."

Dario Designs has a well-earned reputation in the newspaper industry for its projects. Its most notable has been helping *The New York Times* with the plant consolidation project it announced in 2006. DiMare estimates that the newspaper will save \$3.5 million per month in operating costs.

It currently is working with *The Dallas Morning News* and the *Victoria (Texas) Advocate* on master plans for



Bristol Herald Courier, Bristol, VA



Naples Daily News, Naples, FL



Opelika-Auburn News, Opelika, AL

The logo for the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association (snpa) features the lowercase letters "snpa" in a white serif font. A white, curved line, resembling a stylized arc or a partial circle, is positioned below the letters.The word "eBulletin" is written in a light blue, sans-serif font. The "e" is lowercase, while "Bulletin" is in title case.

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future growth, and with the *Houston Chronicle* on changes in its newsroom and its packaging area.

In Myrtle Beach, S.C., Dario Designs is doing master planning for *The Sun News*, a McClatchy Co.-owned newspaper, and the firm also has projects on the boards with Hearst Corp. and Advance Publications.

It has just completed plants at newspapers in Opelika (*Opelika-Auburn News*), Ala., and Lynchburg (*The News & Advance*) and Bristol (*Bristol Herald Courier*), Va., for Media General, and for *The Times*, a Gannett Co. paper in Shreveport, La.

Two other projects designed by the firm are under construction in Florida, one for Sun Publications, in Lakeland, and a \$95 million project for the *Naples Daily News*.

"A lot of the new work is heavily focused on strategic planning, operational efficiencies, consolidation and new technology," DiMare said. "We have come up with innovative ways to both enhance revenues and save operating costs and this has caused an up-swell in our work load."

The firm's busy schedule aside, it's not easy to convince a newspaper, especially a smaller one, to go out of town or out of state for architectural services, especially when there might be pressure to use the architects living and working in the publication's service area.

But DiMare is adamant about the advantages a specialist in the field can provide to newspaper clients. "When was the last time a local architect saved you over \$3,000,000 a year in operating costs?"

His firm offers design services for front-end operations such as newsrooms, advertising and new media, and for production operations from plate-making to press, packaging and distribution. It also offers a wide variety of consulting services from strategic planning to production equipment selection, acquisition and layout. They do front-to-back and complete ROI studies as well.

Perhaps most importantly, the firm looks at the newspaper and its needs not just now, but for the future. Any newspaper considering new construction, consolidation or renovation must make current and future needs the focus of its decision-making, DiMare said.

"Our master-planning process does that," he said. "What the master plan asks is: 'What do you want to be when you get big? What are your long-term goals? What are your core competencies?' Then we ask where you see yourself in two, five, 10, 20 years, and then we can get you there. Once we understand their goals, the market will then define all the products that need to be produced. The products will then define the equipment and the people needed to produce it. That will then define how big the building has to be, and then the building defines the site." ■