



Masonry, stone accents, and a hip roof with dormers and a cupola – and no visible mechanical mezzanine – create an upscale traditional look for the new world headquarters of Chase Plastic Services, Inc. in Clarkston. These features seamlessly blend in with the primarily residential neighborhood.

High - End Design

INSIDE & OUT

For a Rapidly Growing Michigan Business

By Clare Desmond

Photography by
Matthew Austermann

A few people figure out very early what they're good at and what they want to do for their life's work. Kevin Chase seems to be one of those people. He's taken a very early interest in plastics engineering to stunning heights with the business he and his wife, Carole, founded in Clarkston in 1992. The company has experienced double-digit growth since its beginning, and

in 2006 the Chases found themselves in need of an enlarged office space – for the sixth time!

“As a matter of fact, at our last office space, we had three people working in the hallway, and I shared my office with an intern,” Carole Chase said.

A national distributor of specialty engineering thermoplastics, Chase Plastic Services, Inc. has been flying ever since the Chases started out in a small rented



space in the back of a roofing company's building. They have 72 employees now. "We're very blessed with incredible people," Kevin said of his employees in offering his explanation for the company's success.

In the past 16 years, the company is described on its website as having grown to become one of North America's leading and fastest-growing distributors of specialty engineering thermoplastic products – no easy feat in a state whose economy has suffered more in that time frame than many others. In addition to an enlarged world headquarters in Clarkston, Chase Plastics also expanded in its main material distribution facility in South Bend, Indiana in 2006, from 60,000 square feet to 95,000 square feet; the facility's fourth such expansion. The company serves plastic processors in a variety of industries out of 20 sales offices and more than 30 distribution facilities throughout North America, Canada and Costa Rica.

Faced with limited options to expand at

their previous office, the owners decided on new construction to satisfy their immediate needs for a larger office space and to accommodate future growth. Construction on the new building began in November 2006, and in October 2007 Chase Plastics moved into its new world headquarters at 6467 Waldon Drive, just down the street from its former office. "We had the building blessed by our friend, Fr. Leon," Carole Chase said, referring to Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., Ph.D., of Notre Dame Preparatory High School, Pontiac.

Campbell-Manix Inc., Southfield, was the general contractor on the project. The company's vice president, Gary Burkhart, PE, was project manager. The full service firm also offered some much needed design/build expertise and value engineering assistance on the project. Although it did not do the architectural design on this particular project, Campbell-Manix offers that service, along with pre-planning, interior design, pre-construction and construction services, and a host of others. Campbell-Manix was established in 1972 and achieved its ISO 9001 certification in 2001. Chase Plastics is also ISO 9001-2000 certified.

Darryl Zammit was the project superintendent on the job for Campbell-Manix. He came on board approximately halfway through the project, owing to the retirement of the previous superintendent, and picked up the effort without a lost beat, Burkhart said. "The Chases loved him," Burkhart enthused. Carole

Chase agreed: "Darryl did a great job!"

The project architect was David Lubin of Lubin, Schulz and Skocelas, Bloomfield Hills. Collaborating with him on some of the exterior details and doing the interior design was Valerie Young of Valerie Young Interiors, Lake Orion.

With 14,000 square feet per floor, including a basement, the new 42,000-square-foot building is more than four times larger than the office it replaced. It contains increased office area for Chase's world headquarters on the top floor, a first floor planned for leased office space, and secure storage in a full unfinished basement.

THE BEAUTY IS IN THE DETAILS

The end result is one of refined beauty, highlighted by classic styling and fine detail, inside and out, blended with the contemporary features of today's modern office systems. This was accomplished, Burkhart said, with a generous portion of dark stained cherry finished millwork, including baseboards, crown moldings and 3 x 8-foot solid core, raised panel wood doors.

Nestled among rolling wooded hills, curving streets, semi-custom residential areas and a few light commercial buildings, the new office blends spectacularly well with its traditionally upscale, primarily residential neighbors. Having the new building fit well within its neighborhood and creating a homelike atmosphere inside and out were steadfast requirements of the owners.



Custom wood cabinetry and an 18-foot table are highlights in the main conference room.



Draperies, granite and upholstered chairs are among appointments in the executive offices chosen in part to help create a "home away from home," with a nod to the amount of time people spend at their offices.

Perhaps one of the reasons the project came together so well - as the end result shows and as all who were involved in the project can attest - is because of what all say was the outstanding teamwork by all involved on the job. And that was driven by Kevin and Carole Chase, Burkhart noted.

"The project work was a team effort," Burkhart said. "This was the most enjoyable project I've ever been on because of the Chases." They were very hands-on throughout the project, he added. "This was an incredible team collaboration from Day 1," Kevin Chase agreed. "We said at the onset we wanted an enjoyable process, that we wanted a win-win situation."

Though the business is "technology-reliant," the Chases said they nevertheless insist on rapid, personal responses to all customers. "What we sell is service," they noted. They said they feel the key to their success has been the company's philosophy of "outrageous customer service."

They carried that philosophy over to the construction of their new headquarters. Kevin explained that in their busi-

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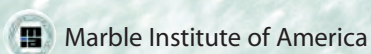
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ness, they have “high expectations” of their staff and the business is “all customer satisfaction.” He said they asked the same on this building project of the suppliers, contractor, designers and all of the people involved. Carole said they wanted the same level of respect that is obvious among their employees, extended to the people doing the work on the new building. “We really had a great group of people who never lost sight of what we were trying to achieve,” she said.

With respect to the proportionate number of hours people spend at their jobs, one of the Chases’ main objectives for the design of the new office, inside and out, was to make a home away from home. Because of that, the interior design demonstrates the “use of things that you would more normally see in a home, like sconces, pendant lighting, wallpaper, and other things like that,” Carole observed.

“This was my project,” she said, explaining that that she headed the project for Chase Plastics. Perhaps, she said, that’s one of the reasons the building radiates a feeling of home, rather than of an office building. “It’s a pretty warm building,” Kevin agreed.

TRADITION REIGNS

The new office building has been constructed with a traditional red brick veneer on a structural steel frame over reinforced concrete foundations, walls and slabs. The façade goes upscale on the exterior with such high-end details as cast stone quoins, copings, stone medallions and other stone accents. Dimension shingles on a hip roof, set off with decorative dormers and a cupola, lend a residential flair to the building exterior, and help the structure blend seamlessly within its primarily residential neighborhood. Alternating herringbone and rowlock masonry positions on the exterior add visual interest to the running bond masonry while delineating the entryway. There are cast stone accents over the windows and decorative stone pilasters add a vertical element to the façade.

Conspicuously absent on the exterior is a visible mechanical mezzanine, providing a clear example of the building design accommodating the community and constructed to look more like a home than an office. “There are no exposed mechanicals on the roof or outside,” architect Lubin said. “That was the way the owners wanted it. They wanted the building to be residential in detail.”

Creating an attic space within the roofline avoids exposing commercial rooftop equipment and the need for screening, Burkhart observed. The hidden mezzanine is a beautifully clean and easy-to-access room that houses a state-of-the-art HVAC system. A lot of thought and planning went into the design and construction of the HVAC mezzanine, said

Mike Kaiser, mechanical engineering consultant to Lubin. “The result is that it’s easy and simple to maintain,” he observed.

The HVAC system consists of a variable air volume (VAV) hot water heat system using an 80%+ high efficiency boiler and frequency drives on the air-handling units, explained Dennis Daniewski, proj-



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A granite-topped reception desk, set off with a wall treatment created of black tile, greets visitors to the Chase Plastics suite. Five different granites were used in the office.

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ect manager with HVAC contractor, ES/TEAC Mechanical, Livonia.

The air handlers have economizers, providing free cooling during winter months when the outside air temperature is below 55F degrees, Kaiser said. The system uses VAV boxes with heating coils. With a minimum set point, the VAV boxes help maintain proper air ventilation and the hot water coils help prevent overcooling of the space. The heating coils also provide perimeter heating.

This type of system may cost approximately 30% more to install, Kaiser noted, but the payback is in the comfort levels that can be achieved, the control the owners have in managing the system, and in the energy/cost savings over time. "This is a pretty costly system up front," Daniewski agreed. "However, the system offers a degree of comfort other systems do not, and savings over time."

As tenants move into the first floor, they can be readily hooked into the main ductwork infrastructure that has already been installed, Kaiser explained. That infrastructure includes ductwork and hot water heating piping that runs down a shaft to the first floor ceiling space and is looped all around. First-floor tenants hook in from the leased space, eliminating the

need to install a new rooftop unit for each new tenant, and run ductwork down to the first floor, bothering the second floor office space in the process. First-floor tenants and the building owners decide how many VAV boxes and thermostats their particular rental space will need.

The building HVAC is managed by a Direct Digital Control (DDC) system that can be accessed and monitored remotely by the building owners via the Internet, Daniewski noted. Otherwise, its operation is 100% automatic.

A GRAND ENTRANCE

On the interior, visitors are greeted by a serene two-story entry designed with floors of 20-inch square, polished porcelain tile in a light cognac color, punctuated at cross sections with groupings of 1-inch-square dark grey tile. Centered on the porcelain tile in the entry foyer floor is a 3-foot 9-inch-square medallion created with 6-inch x 12-inch sepia-colored carved stone with a matching 6-inch-square center of sepia-colored tile. The outside edge is graced with a double row of the dark grey 1-inch tile and a 14-inch porcelain tile in the same dark grey tone. All tile in the building was supplied by Livonia-based Virginia Tile Company.

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A scrolled ornamental iron and wood spiral staircase, highlighted by a 16-light, three-tiered chandelier with amber-etched, hand blown glass shades, leads visitors to the Chase Plastics suite on the second floor. Porcelain tile dazzles on the floor, while Cambria natural quartz stair treads offer beauty and stability.

The entry also dazzles with a spectacular ornamental iron and wood spiral staircase under an equally stunning oiled bronze 16-light, three-tier chandelier with hand-blown, amber-etched glass shades. "I really wanted the chandelier to be special," Young said. "I wanted it to be the centerpiece. While it's a new fixture, the chandelier has the look of a high-end antique." And, it adds greatly to the homelike ambience the Chases wanted to achieve, she observed.

The impressive spiral staircase to the left of the entry door leads upstairs to the Chase Plastics suite on the second floor. The staircase is constructed of scrolled ornamental iron painted dark brown and wood, with Cambria natural quartz stair treads. "The Cambria quartz used on the staircase was selected because it's less slippery, and the color was perfect for our palette," Young said. "The texture also added contrast to the foyer porcelain."

Paneled wood double doors give entry on the second floor to Chase Plastics suite. It's a lot like entering an English country estate, with sumptuous yet welcoming colors, materials and appointments. Dark cherry-stained raised panel solid core dou-

ble doors, paneled walls, porcelain tile and carpeting on the floors, and granite countertops - no less than five different granites - are among the high-end finishes used throughout. Indirect pendant hung lighting and sconces along with a warm color palette and such residential features as sumptuous draperies and a private bath in the executive suite, add to the gracious residential feel.

This is a Michigan-based business, so Young selected artwork featuring such essential Michigan subjects as automobiles, boats and lakes, and it is displayed throughout the office.

BEING NEIGHBORLY

For the design of this facility, it was important to the Chases, the architect, the community, and Independence Township in Oakland County for the structure to blend in with the surrounding commercial and nearby upper-middle class residential dwellings, Burkhart said. The blend of brick and cast stone on the exterior was selected, in fact, to achieve the desired traditional upscale look.

There are semi-custom single-family homes and a high-end townhouse development nearby. Carole Chase participated in township meetings and meetings of the nearby neighborhood homeowners association to ensure ongoing feedback from and to the neighbors before, during and after construction. Township officials have reported that both the business and residential neighbors have endorsed the new building as a great contribution to the community. Chase Plastics is continuing its association with the township and homeowners group as they work to enhance the area, located in a planned urban development. Gardens, pathways, wetlands enhancement, and bird nesting platforms are in the works.

Rows of mature globe arbor vitae were planted on raised berms outside to shield both the office building's windows and the neighboring residential areas on the other side of an existing retention pond from car headlights accessing the parking lot. Hundreds of trees and shrubs were planted in the landscaping design that also features the generous use of concrete pavers and a picnic bench.

A full-unfinished basement in the new building offers substantial and secure on-site storage space for Chase Plastics and first floor lessees. The added storage space minimizes storage requirements that intrude into valuable office space upstairs, Burkhart noted. Incorporating tenant



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spaces on the first floor of the building provides an economic buffer for the building's immediate operational expenses and long-term expandability for the expected continued growth of Chase Plastics, he added.

GENERAL CONTRACTING AND MORE

In addition to providing the general contracting on the project, Campbell-Manix contributed its design/build expertise, providing value engineering assistance that saved time and money for the client throughout the project. "We value-engineered a lot of things, and drove Gary nuts," Kevin Chase said.

The primary example of that is provided in the millwork, Burkhart explained. Due to cost considerations and final allowable budgets, millwork had to be designed very late in the project and became a design-build effort between the owners, interior designer, subcontractor and contractor, he said. SBD Commercial Interiors, Belleville, did the millwork for the project. "He's a real team player," Burkhart said of SBD Commercial's president, Douglas McKillop. The company provided millwork for all the running trim (baseboard, crowns moldings, chair rail, etc.), wainscoting, and trim for doors and windows. In addition, it built all of the wood and wood furnishings in the conference room, executive offices and reception area.

With long lead times to deal with - up to eight weeks for high-end wood doors, wood crowns, base and millwork cabinets - the materials had to be purchased from different suppliers, Burkhart explained. They also had to use different sources for wood-staining, necessitating that a common control sample be sent to vari-

ous suppliers. A control shade was selected in concert by the owners, interior designer and SBD Commercial, McKillop said. The risk was taken with respect to the construction schedule, and the result was a pleasing and well-matched end product, he said. SBD created the stain and shared it with the interior painters and the door manufacturer.

A COUNTRY ESTATE

The oval-shaped reception area on the second floor welcomes visitors from around the world to Chase Plastics' headquarters. A decorative black granite tile wall treatment behind the reception desk features 12-inch black tile sparkling with flecks of copper and gold and set on a 45-degree angle. Wood is used generously in the lobby area, including on the granite-topped reception desk. The effect is elegant, intimate, rich and substantial, yet warm and subdued.

Opposite the reception desk a double-wide opening leads to an oval-shaped visitors' seating area. A grouping of four tufted upholstered chairs, dark hued wallpaper, ceiling moldings and a chair rail lend a comfortable feel to the space. The Chases already owned the chairs in the guest waiting area, upholstered in a floral pattern with shades of salmon and green on a black background, and interior designer Young was asked to work the color palette around them.

The warmth was achieved on the interior in part by not using the color white, Young explained. "The Chases did not want the color white," she allowed. Therefore all of the walls are painted in muted yet warm and lively colors, including one grape-toned

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wall in the sales room. The color palette consists primarily of muted terra cotta, golds, greens, warm reds and some black.

All restrooms are wallpapered, painted and tiled, with the result being almost luxurious, and definitely more like a home than an office. The men's room, for instance, is graced with a 2-inch, multi-colored mosaic tile ranging in color from off-white to pale gray and pale chocolate. The tile is used on the backsplash and walls approximately 5 feet up from the baseboard. Above the tile, the walls are wallpapered. A 16-inch companion tile was used on the floor.

From the reception area another set of double wood doors leads to an interior hallway and small inner foyer, with the sales office in one direction and the administrative offices and executive suite to the other. The 20-inch, cognac-hued polished tile carries into this inner foyer and is made even more elegant with the addition of a dark grey, 1-inch mosaic inlay on the perimeter. Young designed the added inlay.

Just past the inner foyer is the main conference room. Dressed in dark cherry stained wood paneling and floor-to-ceiling custom built-in cabinetry, the room is reminiscent of a refined library. An 18-x 6-foot conference table, custom designed by McKillop and Young, and built by SBD Commercial, centers the room.

The owners, interior designer, contractor and SBD Commercial met for several days to design the wood and wood furnishings for the interior. "It was a collaborative design/build effort," McKillop said. "The meetings enabled us to keep the design intent while allowing us to build the pieces on time and



The employee lounge provides kitchen amenities and a space to relax.

on budget."

McKillop said he feels the main thing SBD Commercial offers its clients is the business acumen it can provide as well its skills with millwork. "I feel the biggest value-added thing SBD Commercial brings to a project, not only for the client but for the designers and contractor, is our business management approach to a project," McKillop said. "We approach this trade segment as a consultative business manager with a manufacturing capability."

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EDUCATION IS THE THING

As the Chases have contributed to the surrounding community with a beautifully designed office building, so too have they contributed to the industry that has shown them such spectacular success. In 2004, they established the Chase Plastics Annual Scholarship Program for full-time junior or senior college students in the Plastics Engineering Technology bachelor degree program at Ferris State University. Two scholarships are awarded each year and are renewable annually.

"Chase Plastics has always placed a high value on education," says Kevin Chase on the company's website. "This award and scholarship program helps many students succeed in an industry that is not only demanding but also technically challenging in its very nature." The company also established in 2003 the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE) Student Chapter Education Award scholarship. "Plastics is an interesting and thriving industry," Carole Chase said, noting that engaging young people in the industry early on is a necessity, in part, so



Polished porcelain tile, with a dark gray mosaic tile inlay, carries through to an inner foyer and hallway leading in one direction to the executive offices, and in the other to the sales offices.

they can find quality people to work in the industry in the future.

Perhaps as an offshoot of the Chase's support of education, they added what they call an "Innovation Room" as part of their new office suite. Housing a computer, small library, a futon and one entire wall of dry-erase board. The room provides a private space where employees can relax and think and possibly research ways to improve their jobs and the business. Interior designer Young intended to make the room "energizing and inspirational," she explained, choosing vibrant colors and artwork with a motivational aesthetic.

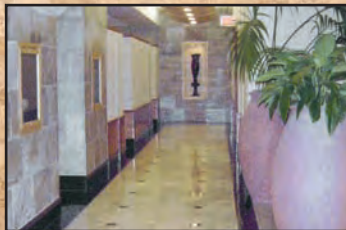
"It's an employee requirement that each employee spend two hours per quarter in the Innovation Room," Carole Chase said.

They also think well enough of their staff to have added an employee's lounge area, appointed with cabinets in two different colors, laminate wood flooring, tables and chairs, and a kitchen area with bar top. Just the place to sit back, enjoy the surroundings, and maybe come up with new ways to satisfy the customer. ☺



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