



Photo by Duane Tinkey

Pictured: SVPA Team - Together Everyone Achieves More

## at a GLANCE

### SVPA Architects Inc.

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**PRIMARY PRODUCT/SERVICE:**  
Architecture, interior design,  
master planning, feasibility  
studies, site analysis, landscape  
architecture & structural  
engineering

**TOP LOCAL EXECUTIVES:**  
Scott A. Hatfield, AIA, IIDA  
Steven E. Gray, AIA, IIDA  
Vitus Bering, AIA  
Daniel C. Willrich, AIA  
Timothy A. Olson, AIA, LEED AP

**LOCAL EMPLOYEES:**  
24

**YEAR FOUNDED:**  
1953

**SVPA**  
**Architects Inc.**

## SVPA's past shapes vision for the future

In an industry that emphasizes innovation and the importance of keeping up with the latest trends, the leaders of SVPA Architects Inc. recognize when to resist change.

As part of the next generation of leadership at the West Des Moines firm, Dan Willrich wants SVPA's future to respect its past by emphasizing honesty, open communication, and integrity. These were the principles the firm's founders Robert Savage and Stan Ver Ploeg started out with 55 years ago.

"As leaders, Bob and Stan did a lot of things right," Willrich said. "The profession has certainly changed since their time with new technology, but we've maintained the same value system."

In 2007, SVPA said its farewell to its founders. Stan passed away in February, followed by Bob in September. Both had been retired for over a decade, but remained familiar faces around the offices through their visits.

Stan's architecture legacy included projects in his hometown of Pella, such as the Pella Corporation headquarters and Central College's Central Market, in addition to Des Moines projects such as the Park Avenue Business Park.

Bob's portfolio of work included the Westridge and Regency West office parks in West Des Moines — an extension of SVPA's longstanding relationship with Mid-America Group — along with KCCI-TV's headquarters and the Henry Wallace Elementary School in Des Moines.

In the process of designing these and other buildings in the state, Bob and Stan created a strong team to lead their firm into the future. Today SVPA has 24 full-time employees, half of whom have 10 years or more experience working for the firm.

Scott Hatfield and Steve Gray are two of SVPA's firm principals with deep roots in the organization. Scott, chairman of the board, has 27 years with the firm, and Steve, president, has 31 years. Both are "second-generation" leaders of SVPA and were mentored by Robert Savage and Stan Ver Ploeg.

Scott credits SVPA's strong team of employees with enabling the firm

to be as successful as it is today.

"Our TEAM motto is Together Everyone Achieves More," Scott said. "It's a collaborative approach to how we work."

Collaboration is visible from the time SVPA begins a project. With a staff comprised of people with several different specialties, the various contributors play a role in shaping the project from the beginning stages.

"It's not just a handoff of getting to a certain point and then that part takes over," Scott said. "If structural engineering is needed on a project, the structural engineer is involved from the beginning."

Around 80 percent of SVPA's work is with repeat clients. For the firm to have low turnover in its staff is a benefit to both the firm and its clients, Steve said.

"Having a number of people who have worked together on projects before makes us stronger," Steve said. "And it helps with our clients as well. When they see the same people working for us that they worked with several years earlier, the continuity gives them a greater comfort level."

SVPA's projects generally fall into the following categories: commercial, academic, medical, retail and hospitality, civic, athletic facilities and religious. Corporate offices, part of the commercial division, is the largest segment of their business. Last year, Master Builders of Iowa presented SVPA with its 2007 Master Builder Award recognizing construction excellence and teamwork for one of its notable corporate projects, the Wells Fargo Home Mortgage West Des Moines campus.

SVPA principals such as Scott and Steve have direct involvement on every project the firm takes on, particularly in the programming and schematic stages. Steve said "giving clients this high level of service is just an extension of the firm's commitment to its customers".

The legacy that Scott and Steve want to leave behind is not only the fulfillment of the projects that we've been involved with during our years here, but making sure the firm's strong reputation carries forward for generations to come.