



Paving the Way for Montana's Disadvantaged Business Enterprises

DBE Program
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People Worth Knowing: Jim Bailey

Jim Bailey, owner of Hardrives Construction, Inc. in Billings, attributes much of his success to the work ethic he gained selling fruit along the highways of northern California. Today, this son of industrious migrant farm laborers manages a highway construction company that employs as many as 100 workers during the busy season.

Founded twenty years ago to serve Montana and Wyoming, Hardrives Construction, Inc. performs asphalt paving, asphalt maintenance, concrete work, and excavation throughout the western United States. Jim began learning his trade while still in high school. "My stepfather introduced my two younger brothers and me to paving when we were teenagers. He pulled us out school from May through September....but I still managed to graduate!"

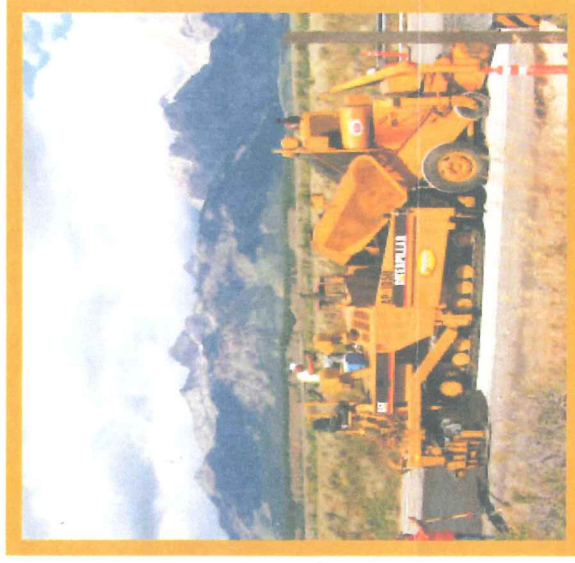
Bailey credits his Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and SBA 8-A certifications for the strong and steady growth of his business. Jim explains, "Hardrives has been a DBE for about fifteen years. Sometimes being a DBE firm provides a bidding advantage, but the real benefit for our company has come through using the bidding opportunities to generate contacts, build relationships, and increase our visibility with contracting agencies and large prime contractors. Even when we didn't win the contracts, we gained valuable experience in bidding. Being in the DBE program and having the exposure to larger contractors and larger jobs has forced us to grow and helped us develop infrastructure and accounting systems, and hire professional project managers and estimators. We know what our costs are, and we know we can compete."

An emphasis on quality and an attention to detail has helped Hardrives Construction secure many contracts and subcontracts. They also place a high priority on bringing projects in on time and within budget. Their most satisfying subcontracts are with primes who maintain a high level of integrity and dependability and who are interested in working toward a common goal of a high-quality project.

Jim notes that his firm subcontracts often with trucking, utility, and large excavation contractors. "We're willing to help other contractors, especially DBEs. Being in business for 20 years, we've learned a lot about not only doing the work, but also the management, the finishing, and the follow-up. We're always willing to help and mentor other DBEs." Firms interested in subcontracting for Hardrives Construction have to perform. They have to maintain a priority of high-quality, on-time, on budget work. And, they have to enjoy working as part of a team. Jim advises other DBEs, "Maintain a high level of integrity. Pay attention to detail and safety. It probably will buy you some grace and keep you from getting in trouble. If people know you have a high level of integrity, they are willing to work with you and help you along the way. Don't be afraid to make a mistake or two, but be informed. In the end, there's no substitute for experience. Get out there and do it."

Jim finds the work gratifying because of the sense of accomplishment in building something and seeing the fruit of his labors. He also enjoys the competitiveness and fast pace of the business. "The real bonus comes with working outdoors in the amazing places we work. In the 8-A business, our main work is federal highways and national parks. The places we work, like Yosemite, are out of sight. You might say that our culture here is travel."

Jim says his success would not have been possible without the support of his wife, Stephanie. "She is my partner, and her support behind the scenes has been incredible. She's been here since before there was a payday. She is my rational sounding wall." Jim and Stephanie have four children: James (21), Samantha (13), Morgan (7) and Preston (5).



Hardrives crew in Teton National Park

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Inroads, the Montana DBE Newsletter, is your tool to gain new ideas, meet new people, network with other businesses, blow your own horn, and move your business down the road to success.

- ◆ Have you or an associate won an award or been promoted?
- ◆ Do you have an idea for an article, or would you like to have your firm profiled in the newsletter?
- ◆ Do you want to show off your good looks or your contracting handiwork?
- ◆ Do you want to hire an employee or buy/sell a business-related item?

Let us know what's new! Send questions, comments, ideas, photos, and want-ads to: turnerandassocmt@aol.com or call (406) 443-8096.

For more information, contact Jim at 406-245-3128 or jbailey@hardrives-asphalt.com, or see the website at www.hardrives-asphalt.com