



As sunlight moves across the school's feature wall, shadows emphasize the distinctive laying pattern developed by the architect.

Concrete Masonry Units Bring Interest, Eye Appeal to School



REED SPRINGS MIDDLE SCHOOL OCCUPIES A STEEPLY SLOPED, HEAVILY-WOODED PROPERTY FOR ITS K-12 CAMPUS.

A combination of cooperation and shared ideas served as the inspiration for the team of individuals that worked to construct Reed Springs Middle School in Reed Springs, MO.

"That is what is so impressive about the construction industry," said Mark Wilhelms, Vice President of Architectural Sales for Midwest Block and Brick. "One person can't build a building. It takes a team of people and the trust that the architect had in Midwest Block and Brick, and the trust that the architect had with the mason, the trust that the mason had with the architect and the supplier was critical to the success of this building."

According to the firm Dake Wells Architecture, the school's design accommodates the district's desire for the state of the art technology integration, collaborative learning and storm safety as priorities for students.

A Unique School Building

Wilhelms described the project as “unique” because half of the school is underground while the other half is above-ground with a large wall separating the two spaces.

“Our rep has worked closely with this particular architect over a number of different projects. That relationship allows the architect to speak freely, open up and share their design intent with us,” Wilhelms said. “We got involved early on in the project. It is a very unique school.”

Wilhelms explained the architect realized early on the large dividing wall would be a key feature of the school’s design, and reached out to explore what could be done.

“The architect went through a number of reviews of materials, colors and textures, and actually came over to our facility and laid different patterns out on the ground and ultimately came up with a very unique application of a very basic material,” Wilhelms said. “This area is simply a 4x4x16 Abri Veneer unit used in a repeating pattern throughout the massive dividing wall the structure.”

About Abri™ Masonry Veneers

Abri™ Masonry Veneer is made by Midwest Block and Brick, which is part of The Concrete Products Group (CPG). Abri Veneer is a new product line for Concrete Products Group.

Wilhelms said the Concrete Products Group got its start back in 2010 focusing on load-bearing masonry units and improving the structural wall system, which has been a reliable choice for many years.

“As codes change we need to make CMUs more energy efficient and more weather resistant,” Wilhelms said. “A lot of our initial efforts went into improving that structural system, and we have been focused so much on structure that it is exciting to be moving into Abri and begin to look at some of the new textures and colors and patterns that we can add to walls. Creating a new product line that highlights concrete masonry’s aesthetic possibilities is very exciting.”

Appealing to Modern Architects

Today’s architects are looking for something “different,” according to Wilhelms, including more sculptured surfaces or interesting patterns.

“The modern architect is focusing on how the elevation might change over the day as the sunlight hits the wall at different times,” he said. “It might look different in the morning and totally different in the evening, and so we are seeing more of a sculptured approach to the wall and less texture in the unit itself.”

A Teamwork Approach

Wilhelms said the architect and the mason for Reed Springs Middle School developed a teamwork relationship that allowed them to work on patterns and mortar colors and laying techniques, allowing the mason to execute the architect’s design.

“This really just goes to show some of the beauty of what can be achieved by handset craftsmanship from traditional masonry construction, and more importantly shows that when an architect allows the architect to be creative, to reach out and ask a craftsmanship for his ideas and when the two work together and come together, amazing things can happen.”

