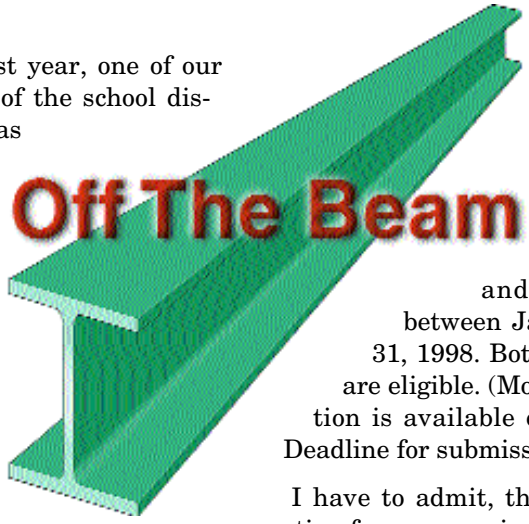
Off The Beam



When my wife and I moved last year, one of our biggest concerns was the quality of the school district (even though our daughter was barely a year old). The community we chose is actually served by two high schools—one of which ranks as one of my favorite buildings.

Actually, it's not the high school itself of which I'm so fond. Rather, it's the attached field house. Designed by OWP&P, the Niles West High School Field House features a curved roof supported by exterior structural steel elements and clear-spanning 170' over the field house's open floor. The concept was elegant in both concept and execution. The central portion of the building needed a minimum vertical clearance of 35' for basketball, while the perimeter only needed 12' above a track. Because the owner wanted to minimize heating and cooling costs, the designers optimized the facility by placing the supporting structural members outside the building. The resulting design eliminated nearly a quarter million cubic feet of unnecessary volume—which translated to an annual energy savings of about $27,800. And, as my wife and I discuss almost every time we drive by the building, it also looks great.

Of course, I'm not the only one who thinks it's a great building. In 1997, the Niles West High School Field House was a National Winner in AISC's annual Engineering Awards of Excellence competition.

This year, awards will be presented in three categories: Projects up to $10 million; projects greater than $10 million but less than $25 million; and projects over $25 million. The projects must be located in either the U.S., Canada or Mexico and must have been completed between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 1998. Both new and renovation projects are eligible. (More information on the competition is available on pages 66-67 of this issue). Deadline for submissions is January 29.

I have to admit, though, that I have an ulterior motive for encouraging you to submit your best projects to the EAE Awards Program. As you can imagine, it's unlikely that everyone will agree on which projects are the best in any competition. So after the judging is over, Modern Steel Construction's editorial staff usually sits down and reviews the projects that don't receive awards. We then choose the one's we like best and use them in future issues of the magazine.

On average, we run four project stories per issue. As you can imagine, it's tough to come up with 48 good stories each year. Quite frankly, having the best projects from around the world submitted each year makes my job easier.

So help me out and prepare your submissions today!

Who's Who at MSC

Editor & Publisher:
Scott Melnick
ph: 312/670-5407
email: melnick@aiscmail.com

Assistant Editor:
Jenifer Golec
ph: 312/670-5448
email: golec@aiscmail.com

Technical Editor:
Abraham Rokach, P.E., S.E.
email: rokach@aiscmail.com

Editorial Offices:
One East Wacker Dr., Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60601-2001
fax: 312/670-5403

Advertising in MSC

Account Manager: John Byrne
ph: 847/699-6049
fax: 847/699-8681
email: jabber10@ix.netcom.com

Advertising Offices:
2400 E. Devon Ave., Suite 267
Des Plaines, IL 60018

To receive a media kit, call, fax or email

John Byrne

or view advertising information on Modern Steel Construction's web site at:

http://www.modernsteel.com

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American Institute of Steel Construction, Inc.
One East Wacker Dr., Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60601-2001
ph: 312/670-2400
fax: 312/670-5403