

# Professionalism key to company's growth

## K&D Landscaping gives back to local community

By ERIK CHALHOUB  
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

At K&D Landscaping, there are six core values that employees live by: professionalism, teamwork, humility, respect, hunger and safety.

It is these values that have not only helped the 31-year-old Watsonville-based business succeed, but also helped its community thrive.

The business is more than just a landscaping company, CEO Justin White said, and in recent years, a growth in customers has led to an expansion of its philanthropic endeavors.

"That's when we started to position ourselves as not just another landscaping company," he said. "We really wanted to make a difference in the community."

As a result, K&D Landscaping began getting involved as many community activities as it could, White said, whether it be helping out the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds to joining the Chamber of Commerce.

The business is currently involved with the planning of LEO's Haven, which, once built at Chanticleer Park, will be the county's first inclusive playground designed to meet the needs of local children of all abilities.

K&D Landscaping also organizes monthly beautification projects, asking community members through social media what nonprofit or school needs help with their landscaping. The company will then send a crew out to the location for a full day and donate time, materials and plants.

Thanks in part to its community outreach and professional service, White said the company has grown 30 percent each year for the past three years, and is on track for similar growth this year. K&D also got a lift from a rebranding process a few years ago that included a new logo and website and business coaching for the executive team.

"We said, 'let's be the most professional company we possibly can, and set a standard for the industry,'" White said.

That growth has translated to employees who are compensated 30 percent more than the average landscape employee in the area.

Alongside others running the company is White's brother Shane and sister Kelsie, and it is this family culture that extends to other employees of K&D Landscaping.

The company holds quarterly barbecues and other employee recognition events throughout the year, Kelsie White said.

"We give back to them because they give back so much to us every day," she said.

K&D Landscaping is a family business that got its start in 1986 by the parents Kendel and Dawn White. The small, one-truck lawn care company was created out of a necessity to provide income for the family, Justin White said.

The company grew organically over the years, driven by a simple fact that great service can be hard to come by in landscaping businesses, White said.

"Kendel got the reputation as the guy who got it right the first time," said Justin of his father.

In the mid-2000s, K&D Landscaping expanded its services to the commercial sector, adding to its already large base of residential customers.

But when the recession hit in 2008, landscaping was seen as a luxury, and as customers began cutting service, K&D Landscaping saw its sales drop by half over the



Images By Audra

These photos show projects recently completed by K&D Landscaping.

course of the year, according to White.

Through "creative" means, the company held on, he said, taking on maintenance jobs.

The year 2012 saw the company bounce back, and now employs 50 people and takes care of customers throughout Santa Cruz, Monterey and south Santa Clara counties.

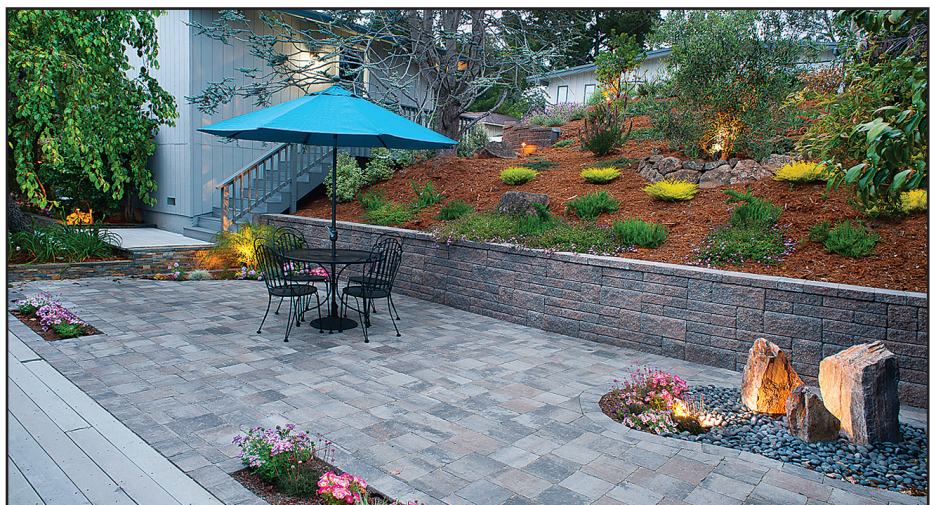
White attributes the company's six core values as the

reason people want to work for the company.

"It's helped us grow from a 15-employee company to a 50-employee company, while keeping the culture and feel of a small family-owned business," he said.

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*K&D Landscaping is located on 62C Hangar Way in Watsonville. For information, call 728-4018 or visit [www.kndlandscaping.com](http://www.kndlandscaping.com).*



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