

THE BUSINESS NEWS

Serving Brown, Calumet, Door, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano & Winnebago counties

February 1, 2010

www.thebusinessnews.com

Vol. 7, No. 20 \$1.00

Growth Strategies



Ken Petter is the Green Bay branch manager at Robert W. Baird & Co. The Green Bay branch added eight employees last year. The Business News photo by Matt Becker

Despite down economy, Baird's numbers are up

Green Bay office has added eight to its staff; office expansion is under way

By Betty Wall

bwall@thebusinessnews.com

During a year of upheaval in the investment industry, Robert W. Baird & Co. is expanding and has weathered the situation very well.

Baird is an employee-owned, wealth management, capital markets, asset management and private equity firm that operates 14 offices in Wisconsin, including its Green Bay office at 440 S. Washington St. and a Fox Valley branch at 3913 W. Prospect Ave., Appleton.

There are 65 Baird offices and operating affiliates in the United States, as well as offices in Europe and Asia. Baird works with individual, institutional, corporate and municipal clients.

Ken Petter, manager of the Green Bay office, said Baird added eight people to his branch in the past year, with growth of about 40-percent.

"Our growth is consistent with the growth

throughout the entire company," he said. "There was a tremendous shakeup in the financial services industry last year, with companies like Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns going bankrupt. Merrill Lynch was acquired by Bank of America, and Morgan Stanley and Smith Barney had to merge.

"At Baird, we have always been conservatively managed," he said. "We are a strong survivor. We have been a key beneficiary of a bad situation. We were not involved with a lot of the problems that occurred last year. We've always been well capitalized and in difficult times, we tend to grow."

He said that when the stock market is doing poorly, people realize that they need the help of a trusted advisor. "In the long term, the very good advisors and the very good firms pick up market share during the down times," Petter said.

With its corporate offices in Milwaukee, Baird has been serving customers since 1919. The firm has been operating in Green Bay for more than fifty years. Petter said the firm's

proximity allows Baird to be very responsive to its clients. "I think it's very important that we are a Wisconsin-based company, offering local resources and the strong work ethic of the Midwest. We are nearby and accessible. We are always able to help our clients."

A big part of the recent growth at Robert W. Baird & Co. in Green Bay included the addition of four financial advisors and four client relationship associates (CRAs). The two new teams that joined Baird this year included The Puissant Wiers Group (Jeff Puissant and Tom Wiers) and the Darling Kinziger Group (Craig Darling and Jeff Kinziger).

There are now nine different teams serving Green Bay and the Baird satellite office in Sturgeon Bay.

Petter said the investment firm thrives on personal service. "Our relationships are cultivated on our own," he said. "Just as it is important to have a good doctor, a good attorney and a good accountant whom you know and trust, it is equally important to have a financial advisor who is looking out for your well being."

The Green Bay office more than doubled in size in the last five years and total employment in the Green Bay and Sturgeon Bay offices is 30 people. Twenty three are employed at its Appleton office.

Baird is undergoing a significant expansion at its Green Bay location. The entire office will be refurbished and new construction will include the addition of three new conference rooms and five new offices. The space will go from the current 5,000 square feet to over 8,000 square feet. The project is slated for completion in June.

Petter said the Internet enhances communication with Baird clients. "The Internet works well for us as a tool we can use to help service our clients," he said. "It's not a competitor of ours, just like discount brokerage firms are not competitors of ours.

"We're not looking to be the largest financial advisor firm. We are looking to be the best," he said. "In the end, if you are providing value, you are going to survive and thrive. I think that is what we do."

Reprinted with permission of The Business News