

Paved with success

Sunland CEO Doug DeClusin built asphalt company from the ground up

BY DANIELLE VERBRIGGHE | Contributing Writer

Doug DeClusin, founder, president and CEO of Sunland Asphalt and Sunland Sports, didn't succeed the first time around.

He got his start in 1978 by dialing up companies from the phone book and selling them sealcoat out of an 8-foot by 5-foot trailer on 40th Street in Phoenix. When a new manufacturing plant came to town and put him out of business, he started working as a contractor, founding Sunland in 1979.

Now, 33 years later, DeClusin heads an expanding company with 200 employees and six locations spanning four states. Sunland takes on public works and private projects in Arizona, Nevada, California, New Mexico and Utah. He also was named ACE awards CEO of the Year.

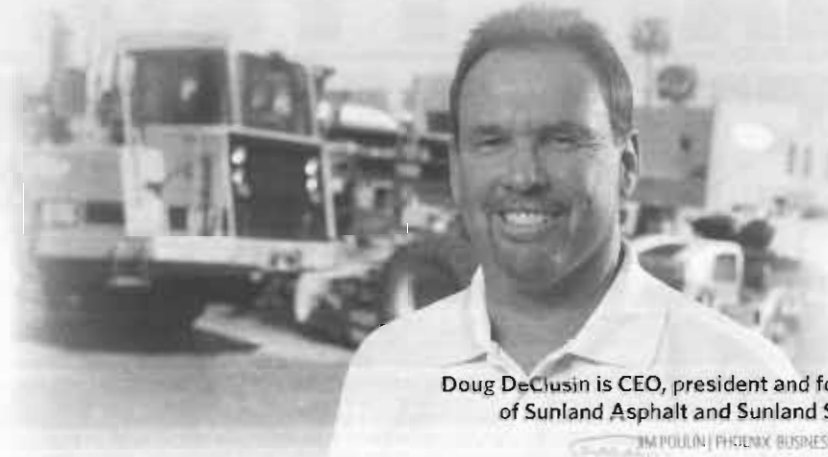
The company brought in \$50 million in 2011, but DeClusin projects revenue to grow to \$75 million this year.

"We've become more sophisticated in our bidding strategies. Over the past two or three years, we've been putting pieces of the company in place to grow the business," DeClusin said, adding that those investments are starting to pay off.

A native Phoenician, DeClusin graduated from McClintock High School and spent two years at Mesa Community College. He worked as a carpenter before embarking on a career in the asphalt industry.

While the company started small, DeClusin grew it steadily over the years, adding products and services as well as expanding geographically through acquisitions and organic growth.

"My job has turned into mergers and acquisitions. I am constantly looking for opportunities to expand the company, whether it be in-state or out of state," DeClusin said. "Our goal for 2014 is to be a



Doug DeClusin is CEO, president and founder of Sunland Asphalt and Sunland Sports.

\$100 million-a-year company. We are actually going to be reassessing that, because I think we can take it up higher than that."

To move his company forward through the recession, DeClusin focused on growth, while managing costs. That means every employee and piece of equipment must serve a purpose.

"The margins have become very, very tight. We're still getting our shares, but we watch our costs. We're diligent on cost control. This downturn has been, in a way, good for us, because it has made us better operators," he said. "Our geographic diversity coupled with our diversity of products has helped us a lot."

With about half the company's revenue coming from public works and the other half coming from private projects, Sunland has multiple customer bases. Sunland Sports, the company's specialty division, brings in between 10 and 12 percent of business, installing

courts, running tracks and artificial turf.

DeClusin said the company's success largely is due to the quality and dedication of its employees.

"My leadership style is to hire really good people and let them do their thing. I am not a micromanager by any stretch of the imagination," he said. "We have the best team we have ever had in the history of the company."

Sunland has an employee stock ownership plan, which DeClusin says gives employees a sense of ownership and a reason to work hard.

Although work keeps him busy, DeClusin finds time to stay active. He enjoys running, hiking, mountain biking, skiing and golf. When not working, he also spends time with his children and grandchildren.

CEO OF THE YEAR

Doug DeClusin

COMPANY: Sunland Asphalt and Sunland Sports

TITLE: President, CEO and Founder

YEAR FOUNDED: 1979

2011 REVENUE: \$50 million

2012 REVENUE (PROJECTED): \$75 million

FAMILY: Four children, Nichole, Natalie, Alex and Sophia; three grandchildren, Max, Colton and Braden

FAVORITE HOBBIES: Golf, skiing