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Thorburn Associates Inc. Celebrates 16th Anniversary With a Slice --

*StoneFire Pizza Co. in Kenosha, WI is Thorburn Associates' 1,816th Project --
"A great family visitor experience"*

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StoneFire Pizza Co.

"If someone had told me 16 years ago that I'd be working on a pizza parlor today, I might not have believed them, but StoneFire Pizza Co. is more than that - it's a great family visitor experience," says Steven J. Thorburn PE, Director of Engineering, Thorburn Associates Inc. "StoneFire Pizza is a place where a family can go to enjoy time together outside the home - and it was designed that way. In addition to providing food, it provides a complete, themed environment where children can play and learn, and where the parents also enjoy kicking back. It's not unusual for a family visit to last several hours. I'm proud to say that one of the elements that make it such a pleasant place for all is our acoustical treatment."

Thorburn was referring to the StoneFire Pizza Co. family restaurant and entertainment center. His company, Thorburn Associates (TA) - an acoustical and audiovisual consulting company now celebrating its 16th anniversary - worked with designer/producer White Hutchinson Leisure & Learning Group (WHLLG) to create the StoneFire Pizza Co. in New Berlin, WI, a 37,000-square-foot, \$10 million venue that opened November 2006. The same team is now engaged in realizing another StoneFire Pizza Co., scheduled to open in early 2009 in Kenosha, WI.

"This project is a great example of how all of our company's services blend to make a project better - to help design a quality environment," says TA President Lisa Thorburn. "Our role with WHLLG on the StoneFire Pizza Co. restaurants draws upon all our base services, in our two primary areas of specialization: Acoustics and Technology Engineering."

Coincidentally, the Kenosha, WI StoneFire Pizza Co. is TA's 1,816th project since the company opened its doors April 1, 1992, and also represents its 16th project with WHLLG. This longstanding business alliance with WHLLG is the source of most of TA's work in the entertainment and restaurant field. "In general, our company is more associated with performing arts, education, houses of worship and auditoriums," says Steve Thorburn, "although we also work on medical facilities, industrial buildings, mixed-use developments and residential. But good acoustics are also a must for restaurants - if their customers are going to really enjoy themselves and want to come back again."

"Acoustical design is as essential as air conditioning and lighting. We have a design alliance and Thorburn is part of it," says Randy White, CEO of WHLLG, whose preferred term for StoneFire Pizza Co. is "eatertainment facility." White co-authored an article in 1997 with Steve Thorburn titled 'How Would YOU Like to Spend the Day Inside a Pinball Machine?' for the magazine FEC Management. "When families go out together, they want to be able to talk to one another," continues White. "Loud, reverberant environments make conversation difficult, and they induce stress, which makes people want to leave. We don't believe in driving customers crazy - or driving them away - with noise."

StoneFire Pizza Co. in New Berlin, WI seats 460 people in its all-you-can eat buffet area, in four separate, themed rooms: Northern Woods, a quiet dining room; The Fan Club, sports-themed with nine television screens showing ESPN sports; Toon City, showing children's cartoons; and Discovery Play, a dining room with children's make-believe play activities. Eight private birthday rooms furnish seating for another 160 people. The family entertainment area occupies about half of the center and features bumper cars, a Boulderling wall, a three-level interactive foam ball play Ballocity unit, four lanes of mini-bowling, a children's Frog Hopper ride, 90 redemption and ride-simulator games and a redemption prize store. The pending Kenosha venue will be larger, covering 54,000 square feet and seating 740.

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"Acoustics is one of those subtle things - when it's not right, you can't put your finger on what's missing, but when it is right you don't consciously know it's there," says Thorburn. "The design - and the commercial success - of StoneFire Pizza Co. reflects an understanding of two things: first, that family dining is a group guest experience and second, that in order to make that experience great you need all the factors that make up a successful visitor attraction: healthy per-capita spending, repeat visitation, long stays and a comfortable family environment."

According to Thorburn, acoustical design is most affordable when it is incorporated into the process of new construction or renovation. "If you bring in the acoustician at an early stage, it doesn't change the budget that much," says Thorburn, "because it's essentially just a different selection process in terms of finish materials and integrating acoustical detailing into the project." Retrofitting costs more. "The 'A' in acoustics is not for 'afterthought,'" quips Thorburn. "And good acoustics will improve any environment, whether a shopping mall, medical office, building lobby or family entertainment center."

Thorburn Associates Inc. (TA) is a professional service firm providing acoustical consulting and technology system engineering for the commercial, corporate, leisure, residential and retail industries, and worship facilities, in both new construction and renovations. TA is an independent consulting firm - not associated with the sale of any specific brand - offering unbiased designs to improve communication and fully realize the functionality of all projects.

Headquartered in Castro Valley, CA, with regional offices in Los Angeles and Raleigh-Durham, NC, TA specializes in highly technological projects in education, entertainment and corporate venues. The company has been recognized as one of the leading firms in the acoustical design industry. In the course of 16 years in business, TA projects have received multiple awards from the International Communications Industry Association and the Themed Entertainment Association. For more information please visit www.TA-Inc.com.

White Hutchinson Learning and Leisure Group, (WHLLG) based in Kansas City, MO, is a multi-disciplinary consulting, design and production company that specializes in predominately family- and children-oriented leisure, entertainment, shopping, dining, play, recreational and learning facilities of all types. Since 1989, WHLLG has worked for over 350 clients throughout the world. The company's work and expertise have been recognized by Time magazine, the Wall Street Journal, the Food Network, the book "The Experience Economy," and by many other publications. WHLLG projects have won 10 different first-place awards. Visit www.whitehutchinson.com.

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*Thorburn Associates: 16 years of Designing Quality Environments
Acoustics ~ Audio ~ Video ~ Data/Telecom ~ Lighting ~ Security*

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