

## StarNet offers choice picks for '05

Designing a methodology to select the top members of any category is never an easy task. *FCW's* feature on the Top 25 Architects and Designers is no exception. Last year's efforts consisted of surveying suppliers, distributors, industry executives and associations to arrive at a consensus representing the top firms in the country. This was followed by additional rounds to narrow the list to the finalists.

Unlike our ranking system for distributors and manufacturers, size was not a key part of the criteria. Rather, *FCW* was looking for those firms that place a high value on creativity, design excellence, integrity and that illusive quality — passion.

However, this year *FCW* took an entirely different approach to the nominating process. Instead of asking the industry in general, the editors reasoned that commercial flooring contractors are the closest in the supply chain to the finished product. Those companies that must make the architect's or designer's dream come alive have first-hand knowledge and understanding of the creative drive behind it. So why not ask them who they consider to be the top architects and designers working today?

To that end, *FCW* contacted StarNet, the industry's largest flooring contractor group, a cooperative of independent companies with nationwide representation. Each StarNet member was asked to nominate up to two firms in their market area that represent the highest possible standards of design as well as some intangible qualities such as environmental initiatives or community service. The firms were then asked to submit information and photography for the feature.

*FCW* was looking for firms — large or small — which champion creativity and innovation in design, have a passion for the business and are dedicated to creating the best possible solution for the client. StarNet members were also asked to consider firms that have a greater-than-average interest in flooring solutions.

Some of the venerable names in the A&D community who made last year's list didn't make this one. The two lists were not meant to be compared. Rather, both celebrate a group of talented people and companies worthy of recognition by this industry.

### Top 25 ARCHITECT & DESIGN FIRMS

#### Merlino Design Partnership



**Headquarters:** Gulph Mills, Pa.

**Why nominated:** Merlino has nice projects, creative use of flooring, good working relationships with the trade and is well versed in flooring.

**Nominated by:** Ronald F. Sliwinski  
Floor Covering Services

**In their words:** "Our goal is a design that's inviting, aesthetically pleasing and comfortable for residents, appealing to their families, economical and easily maintained by the staff.

We strive to incorporate creativity and areas of interactivity into an environment that delights residents."

**Pictured projects:** Seashore Gardens Living Center, Galloway Township, N.J.; and Waterford Glen, Wall Township, N.J.

