

Member Profile: Christian Sweet of Vinyl Concepts Inc.

# Specializing is the specialty for this third-generation contractor

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

Christian Sweet has both feet firmly planted, one in the past and one in the future.

"I was just a little kid when I started helping my grandfather and my father around jobsites," says the Coventry native and third-generation contractor. "Before long, I was swinging a hammer alongside them, and I was doing carpentry with them by the time I was 18."

Chris's grandfather was Phil Pompei of Pompei Cement Construction, a longtime member of the Rhode Island Builders Association. His dad and mentor was Dennis Sweet. But Chris's mind was set on the future too, and he saw a growing demand for vinyl products as a replacement for wood in construction. That's why he founded his own company, Vinyl Concepts Inc., in 2000.

"I felt well prepared to do this. I spent years in extensive specialty and safety training. And today, I specialize in one thing: vinyl," states Chris, a VSI (Vinyl Siding Institute) Certified Mastic® Master Elite Contractor.

Most days you can find Chris up on the scaffolding, working with his three-person crew, something his customers find reassuring. Their work includes vinyl siding installation and repair, custom trim work, replacement windows, roof installation and repair, skylights, ridge vents, soffits, shutters, gutters and even custom window flowerboxes.

"We do complete home exteriors, and we're very proud of a Queen Anne Victorian house we restored last year in vinyl siding and PVC trim," Chris declares.

Chris's wife, Christine, manages the office.

Vinyl Concepts serves mostly residential customers in Kent and South Counties, but Chris's crew can range all over Rhode Island. That includes Burrillville, where Vinyl Concepts is a major contributor to the home-building project led by Homes For Our Troops and RIBA's charity, Builders Helping Heroes. Chris has donated all the labor while Dennis Poland of Mastic arranged for donation of all the siding materials.

"We're very happy to make a difference for young heroes like Cpl. Kevin Dubois, who will live in that house," Chris says.

## ***Vinyl Concepts Inc.***

***Owners:*** Christian Sweet

***RIBA member since:*** 2001

***Focus:*** Residential applications for vinyl products

***Serves:*** Rhode Island

***Founded:*** 2000

***Based:*** Coventry, Rhode Island



Christian Sweet

How has Vinyl Concepts handled the "Great Recession"?

"By keeping the company small and reducing overhead, we're able to cut down the big guy's prices by almost half," he says. "We have advertised more, we do trade shows, and we have a big online presence."

That strategy has paid off, according to Chris.

"Business has taken off, and this has been a record year for us. You just have to be proactive in building your brand. If you do quality work for a least 10 years, then people will come to you."

Vinyl Concepts joined RIBA in 2001.

"We feel it's important to be members because it always keeps you ahead of the curve. That's because of the education and information RIBA provides," Chris explains. "Every year there are new codes or other important information, and RIBA keeps us current. Without RIBA, we wouldn't know."