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I-595 contractor puts a pink spin on bulldozers

Color became part of company's branding

By Michael Turnbell, Sun Sentinel

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Women say it's pink. Men may call it "wild berry."

Either way, the color of these road graders, rollers, bulldozers and excavators is hard to miss on Interstate 595.

The equipment is owned by Orlando-based Bonn-J Contracting Inc., a subcontractor hired to install 1.2 million square feet of retaining walls as part of the \$1.8 billion reconstruction of I-595.

Bonn-J employs 11 on the I-595 project but plans to boost that number to near 30 and fill those jobs with local people as the construction kicks into high gear this year.

The company is helping the Florida Department of Transportation fulfill its goal of giving 8.1 percent of each I-595 contract to small firms owned by minorities or women.

Twenty years ago, owner Bonnie J. Rimel bought a beaten-up old crane that needed to be refurbished and repainted.

Most construction vehicles are yellow. Drab. Boring. Institutional.

Why not pink, she thought.

"It got a lot of attention," she said. "I became known as the lady with the pink crane."

The color drew so much interest that she started to paint her other construction vehicles pink, and soon it became part of her company's branding.

Now about 16 of her 24 vehicles are pink, a color that usually has more in common with ballerinas, cotton candy and all things feminine than with "macho" construction equipment.

Rimel chose pink to set her company apart from others. Now she hopes it can raise breast cancer awareness.

The color pink became linked to the disease in 1991, when Susan G. Komen for the Cure, then known as the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, handed out pink ribbons to breast cancer survivors at a New York race. Each October, practically everything from buildings to baked goods goes pink to support the cause.

Now bulldozers are on that list.

Steve Johnson, a burly, bearded man who happens to be Rimel's husband and the company's operations manager, said the eye-popping pink does elicit some stares and good-natured ribbing from motorists and other contractors.

"We get a lot of guff at first," Johnson said. "I tell them it's not pink, it's wild berry."

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