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Svigals + Partners receives 2008 NE Region Golden Trowel Award

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Svigals + Partners, known for its ability to tell a powerful story through the integration of figurative art and building design, recently received a 2008 New England Region Golden Trowel Award for excellence in masonry design and construction, and was also named a finalist in the British Brick Development Association's (BDA) 2008 Brick Award competition. Both honors were bestowed for the firm's expressive use of brickwork in designing the John S. Martinez Elementary School, located in the city's Fair Haven neighborhood.

"It is a great honor to have this project recognized by two organizations of such outstanding caliber," said Barry Svigals, founder and managing partner, Svigals + Partners. "We're very pleased and proud to know the Martinez School continues to attract the praise of industry peers."

Completed in August 2004, the John S. Martinez School is a 100,000 s/f pre-K-8 brick facility sized to serve 600 students. The school is sited adjacent to New Haven Harbor which is populated with single-masted sailboats known as "sharpies." To incorporate the area's nautical influence into the school's architecture, Svigals + Partners developed its outer classroom walls as a series of undulating sail-like curves reminiscent of a fleet of sharpies. The scale of the classrooms also breaks down the massing of the elementary school, allowing it to relate to its surrounding context of houses and apartment buildings.

In addition to its billowing sails effect, the Martinez School boasts a number of original pieces of art. More than 50 fiberglass bricks designed collaboratively by the community and the firm are randomly set into the brick coursing of the building's exterior. Further, 15 clay-like fiberglass "gargoyles" created by Svigals, who is also a gifted sculptor, are employed to camouflage roof overflow drains. One of the gargoyles represents Dr. Reginald Mayo, superintendent of schools in New Haven; another bears the likeness of Mayor John DeStefano Jr. These unique details contributed to Svigals + Partners' recognition for innovative use of brick and clay products, which included Glen-Gery, Red Norman, York Plant Red and other custom-fired brick varieties.

According to Jay Brotman, partner at Svigals + Partners, the nautical-inspired John S. Martinez School was a perfect candidate for the International Masonry Institute's Golden Trowel Award.

"Each year, the IMI recognizes designers, craftworkers, engineers and architects for their role in the creation of quality masonry projects," he said. "These projects must use brick, tile, stone, concrete, marble and other masonry materials as dominant exterior or interior components.

"Brick proved an ideal material to bring the nautical expression of the Martinez School to life," Brotman said. "Plus, the specification of brick offered aesthetic consistency as well as permanence of construction to convey the timeless importance of education."

In addition to winning the IMI Golden Trowel Award, Svigals + Partners was shortlisted by the British Brick Development Association for its annual Brick Awards - one of the oldest and most prestigious

design awards in the United Kingdom. Through it, the BDA pays tribute to excellence in construction and design using brick, and awards 14 trophies and 50 certificates to international projects it considers worthy of distinction.

Svigals + Partners was named a finalist in the BDA Brick Awards' Worldwide Brick category, one of only six projects so honored. Other finalists included the Office te Kiefte, Borne, Netherlands, and the Office for SAHRDC, New Delhi.

In 2007, Svigals + Partners received two other design awards for the John S. Martinez School: a Brick in Architecture Gold Award from the Brick Industry Association, and an Architectural Award - Honorable Mention Citation from the American Association of School Administrators.

Svigals + Partners, a full-service architectural design and master planning firm based in New Haven, is reviving figurative art in architecture and is bringing its beauty, relevance and distinction into the 21st century. Established in 1983, Svigals + Partners employs 27 and serves clients throughout the U.S., offering a complete range of architectural services from master planning, site selection and feasibility studies through design and construction. The company specializes in four project areas: education, laboratory, corporate and master planning. The firm is known for its original and imaginative integration of planning, design, sculpture and artwork. Managing partner Barry Svigals was elevated to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) prestigious College of Fellows (FAIA) in 2007. Svigals was acknowledged for his significant contribution to the architecture profession, specifically for reawakening the tradition of enlivening buildings with hand-made sculptural artwork integrated with architecture. For more information, visit www.svigals.com.

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