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Manatee, Sarasota businesses upbeat on 2013 prospects

## Climatic Conditioning of Bradenton reinvents itself, celebrates 40 years in business

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An example of one of the company's larger-scale projects. In this photo a crane lifts large air-conditioning units onto the roof of Midtown Plaza in Sarasota.

By PATRICIA STRUTZ — Special to the Herald

MANATEE -- It's been a family affair for siblings Richard and Paul Stehle for the past 40 years as the two air conditioning and heating contractors worked to build their business: Climatic Conditioning Co.

The company started in 1972 with Richard H. Stehle and his father, Richard A. Stehle.

"Paul joined us a few years later," the younger Richard Stehle said. His wife Debbie is the company's controller and son Rick is the dispatcher for the service department.

Other Stehles have worked at the company over the years.

During the housing boom, the company did well, installing Carrier air conditioning units in homes and servicing them. The company also does commercial installations.

But in 2008, the economy led the Stehles to reevaluate and make some adjustments.

"The fiscal downturn of 2008 caused us to reinvent ourselves. We had relied heavily on new construction, so we shifted gears and focused on our service department," Paul Stehle said.

Revenues for sales and installation dropped by 50 percent. But the service department revenues rose by 30 percent, the Stehles said.

The company had as many as 48 employees. Today, there are 28.

Over the years, advances in technology have extended the lifespan of air conditioning systems, Richard Stehle said.

"Air conditioners used to last around eight years. Now they're lasting 12 to 15 years," he said. "We've had many return customers in our 40 years of business. We're proud of our 6,000-plus client base."

The Stehles tout Carrier products because of their high efficiency rating, which qualifies for Energy Star tax credits and Florida Power and Light rebates.

Like others in businesses connected to the housing and development industry, Climatic has seen a recent upswing in sales.

"We have worked on several new custom homes and commercial projects recently," Paul Stehle said.

The company is located at 2212 Whitfield Park Loop. For more information, call 941-758-3080.

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