



World-class world map in world-leading hospital

By Ron Treister

Children's Hospital Central California (CHCC) is a not-for-profit, state-of-the-art children's full-service healthcare facility on a 50-acre campus boasting a hefty medical staff



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of more than 525 physicians. Located in Madera, the hospital has more inpatient cases than any pediatric hospital north of San Diego, making it the second largest children's hospital in the state.

Having a 348-bed facility, CHCC is one of the 10 largest hospitals of its kind in the nation. During a recent renovation, a sizable, well thought-out and incredibly attractive pre-cast terrazzo tile waterjet-cut map of the world was installed in the main lobby.

The rationale for having this 37-foot diameter world map mural was to offer a brightly colored, interesting-looking floor that would welcome all visitors, patients and hospital workers upon entering the facility. The designers selected large format, pre-cast terrazzo tiles produced by **Wausau Tile Inc.**, in an exquisite array of colors. Whereas for this project many of these functioned as "field tiles," a great number of them were shipped to **Waters Edge**, the highly-acclaimed waterjet cutting

and fabrication specialist located in Burlington, Iowa, to be precision-cut and assembled into this master-piece of floor design as the very focal world map.

“This was a large project for water jet and as a result, a great number of steps had to be taken to ensure total quality,” says **Jeff Crowner**, president of Waters Edge. “Even though the tiles were big (24-foot x 24-foot x 5/8-foot), which meant we could have some sizable pieces to use in our assembly, we wanted to put all the pieces of the map, no matter how large, together very tightly. The grout joints between the field tiles were 1/8 inches wide; those between the waterjet-cut pieces were 1/6 inches wide. Ultimately, this worked out fine.”

Crowner says that each waterjet-cut tile was assembled with fiberglass mesh and flexible setting material. A layout grid was produced, indicating by number where each individual tile was to be positioned in the final floor installation. Nine crates were built to ship the custom-cut tile directly to the jobsite. On top of each of these crates was an attached picture of the floor, letting the installer know exactly which tiles were included within.

“We try not to allow even the tiniest margin for error,” Crowner says.

Why the waterjet technology works

By this time, most people in the flooring and/or hard surfaces trades are familiar with waterjet technology. Quickly defined, it consists of a computer-driven arm with a nozzle at its end, capable of slicing into highly dense materials such as granite, using a jet stream of water at high velocity and pressure – or a mixture of water and an abrasive substance such as tiny particles of garnet.

People should think of it as a

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— **Jeff Crowner**, president, Waters Edge

greatly accelerated and concentrated process very similar to water erosion found in nature. When it comes to cutting hard surfaces such as porcelain tile, granite and other flooring materials, this computer-run process guarantees perfect cuts that may be repeated time after time after time. This means that in the unlikely situation a waterjet-cut floor design is damaged, it can quickly and accurately

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be recreated, as the original cutting instructions have been saved via computer.

Dense and thick materials now can be precisely cut at a speed three times greater than that offered by waterjet technology just 10 years ago. Whereas such precision and speed are important for systematic production in today’s accelerated world, Waters Edge cautiously applies this same efficient approach to its daily working regimen.

“The key to a project such as this is simply being very methodical,” Crowner says. “Just because we can cut a piece of granite faster today than we could a few years ago, doesn’t mean we can cut corners time-wise when it comes to assembling the fabricated materials, packaging them for shipment to the jobsite or creating an intelligent schematic crafted specifically to communicate to the installer regarding what tiles go where. Cutting used to be the biggest challenge. Now, its just one part of the puzzle we physically put together and then ship out.”

The entire floor mural theme was conceived by **Visalia Ceramic Tile** (the company which handled the installation) in the following colors from Daltile’s Terrazzo Tile Series by **Wausau Tile**: TZ67 Socialite; TZ64 Attitude; TZ35 Mint Julip; TZ06 Tree Moss; TZ53 Analytical; TZ69 Optimistic.

The “chips” that make up a great percentage of both the integral and surface areas of each tile added great depth to the map. “The characteristics of the terrazzo added waves to the ocean areas and a perceived topographical feel to the map’s continents,” Crowner says. “The entire World Map Mural was installed using modified latex thin-set per TCNA guidelines.”

Children’s Hospital Central California purchased tile materials from **Dal-Tile**, the exclusive national distributor of Wausau Tile. “This may be the most beautiful waterjet tile installation I have ever seen,” says **Eric Schlundt**, manager of Daltile in Fresno, Calif. “The simplicity of the way the



installer just put the map down piece-by-piece was a sight to behold. It was all so well planned. I was there almost each day during the installation and was amazed at how professionally everything was handled, from the packaging of the cut tiles, to the schematics given to the Visalia team, to the actual installation.”

In the past, a project like this would have taken months to evolve from concept to completion. Not so in this case. “The project was ordered on 5/5/11,” says Wausau’s **Rob Mulry**. “Both field tiles and those that were waterjet cut and fabricated shipped to the jobsite on 7/8/11. Frankly, this could have been done even quicker, but there were some minor issues for Wausau, as a



couple of the colors (such as the sea blue) were brand new, and this was the first time they had been run at 5/8-inch thick. We wanted to make sure they were perfect.”

Installation only took one week. “The contractor raved about the ease of installation and the precision of the waterjet work,” Mulry says. “The hospital’s staff seemed very happy as well.” **CCR**