

CONTRACTOR PROFILE

Pennsylvania Firm Moves Forward

“Avanti.” In Italian, the word means “forward.” And, the term serves as a fitting description for 29-year-old Anthony Tosco’s Collegetown, Pennsylvania-based

Avanti Plumbing, Heating, and Cooling Inc.

While small in stature, the firm is building a large reputation through its kinetic, reputable service that’s certainly headed in the right direction.

DEEP ROOTS

His business success is deeply rooted in Tosco family warmth, traditions, and work ethic, tracing back many generations. Through childhood, Tosco worked at the family pizza shop, “Italian

Delight,” tackling a wide range of responsibilities. Fluent Italian rolled off the 11-year-old’s tongue and, boy, could he toss a pie.

After graduating from Methacton High, Tosco went to work for his high school sweetheart —



IN CHARGE: Anthony Tosco, owner and operator of Collegetown, Pennsylvania-based Avanti Plumbing and Heating.

and soon-to-be wife — Maria’s father for a year in the family tile and stone business. But there was a persistent nudge — a calling to the plumbing trades.

Tosco got to know tradesmen through frequent contact at his family’s restaurant, and, in 2001, he secured a job as an apprentice with a plumber. He learned, honed his skills, and excelled. After several years of working for someone else, Tosco took a leap in 2006, making the decision to go into business for himself.

“As a young guy, new to the industry, I started on the bottom rung,” said Tosco. “At that point, I did only plumbing work, but I was driven and wanted to learn. I enrolled myself in online courses and classes at local supply houses. It’s a huge inspiration to learn so much in so little time, gaining new understanding of installation techniques, or new technology, with each seminar.”

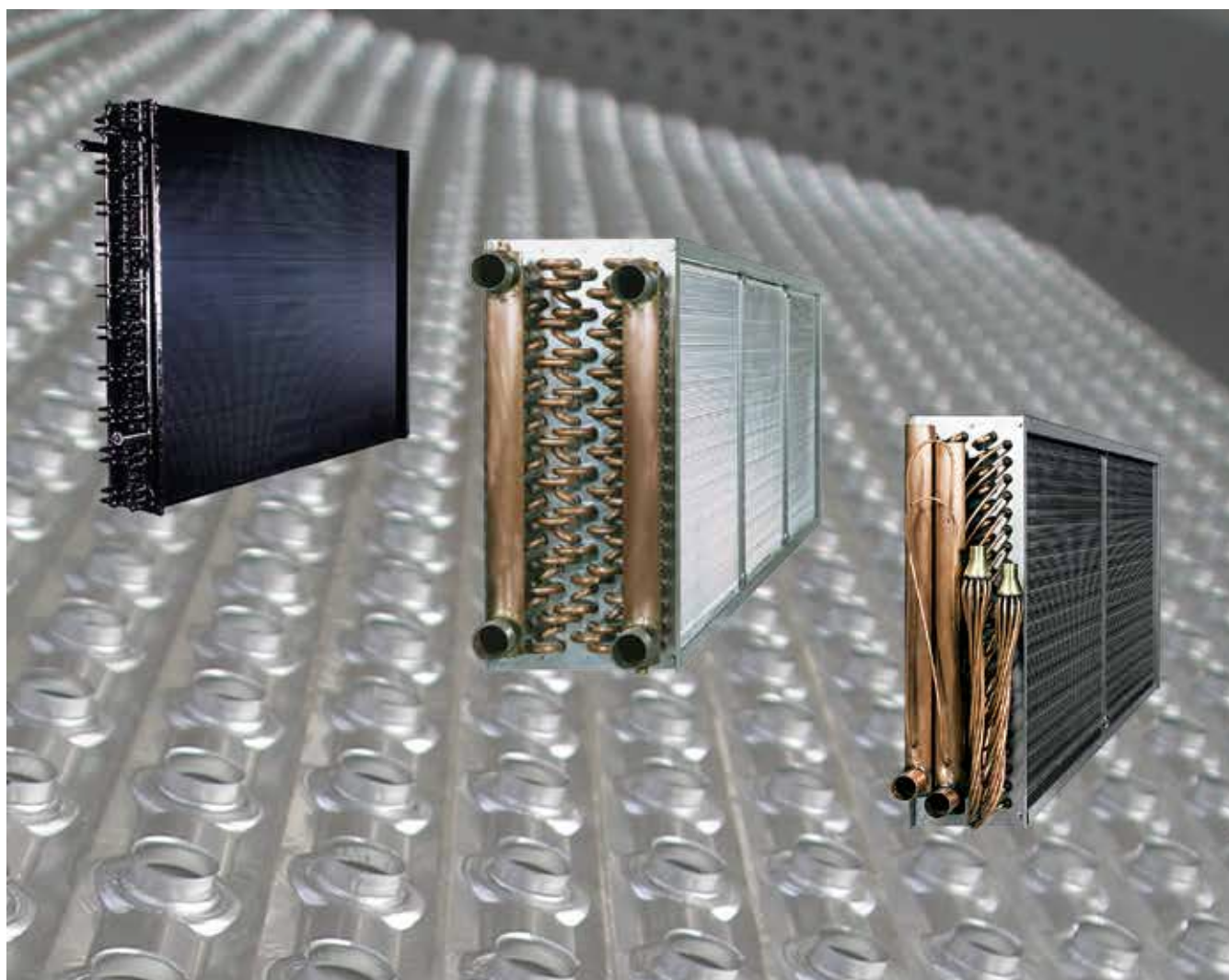
It was in one of those early classes that Tosco was introduced to the man who’s become his long-term mentor. “The first class I took back in 2009 was Hydronics 101, taught by Anthony Reikow, one of the key trainers for B.J. Terroni [a Bensalem, Pennsylvania-based manufacturer’s rep]. I loved his teaching, clarity, humor, and antics. I learned so much in just one class, and I was truly entertained at the same time. I immediately signed up for the remainder of the courses they offered,” said Tosco.

Since then, Reikow has become not only a mentor, but a family friend.

ALWAYS LEARNING

Today, Tosco and his two employees continue to take classes of all types and varieties.

“As a side benefit, we’re also building relationships with other trade professionals,” said Tosco.



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"I can't imagine I'll ever want to pull back on education. The process of improving professionally is so important. It's something my father and father-in-law instilled in me.

"I encourage my employees to take Taco's FloPro University online courses and watch the new videos when they're available," he added. "Occasionally, we'll hop online to go through the coursework together."

Currently, the company offers plumbing, heating, hydronics, and air conditioning services to customers all over eastern Pennsylvania. Most work consists of home retrofits, but the occasional apartment complex and restaurant provides them with a blend of light commercial work.

"Sixty-five percent of our work is high-end residential," said Tosco. "We get jobs ranging from \$50,000 to \$1 million or more. But we also do work in the everyday residential household."

This past year, Tosco picked up 40 service contracts for air-side work through contractors he knows. He's hoping to land even more contracts this coming year. "We love service work because it provides us with a varying array of work, and it's profitable, too."

HOT WATER RECIRC

Avanti is steadily becoming more focused on domestic hot water recirculation — a convenience and resource-saver for businesses and homeowners alike. It's especially applicable to high-end residences with sprawling floor plans.

Recently, Tosco was called to a beautifully remodeled and enlarged 1920s farmhouse. The newly reconstructed kitchen with dining area is at the farthest point from the homes' water heater.

"We were always waiting for the hot water to arrive at the tap," recalled the homeowner. "There were times it would take several minutes.

"Waiting means wasting," explained Tosco. "All the time they spent waiting for hot water to reach the tap, gallons of fresh water were going to waste. On top of that, they have a well pump that ran unnecessarily. This also meant the property's septic bed was receiving a lot of wasted water, which is not a good thing for a rural septic system. Saturated septic beds lead to failure and a very costly replacement."

According to government studies, the average American family of four wastes about 12,000 gallons of water a year if not using a hot water recirculation system.

Tosco witnessed that and more, especially in larger homes with multiple bathrooms and elaborate spray fixtures.

"We knew right away a hot water recirc system would fix the issue at the remodeled farmhouse," continued Tosco. The homeowner would save time, money, and pure water, making life more comfortable."

When Tosco wanted to know more about the latest in hot water recirculation technology, he reached out to Reikow, who suggested he look at Taco's extensive lineup of recirculation products with various choices to fit applications with and without dedicated return lines.

After learning more about the different options, Tosco

settled on the TacoGenie system because the homeowner wanted an efficient solution while not sacrificing instant hot water comfort. Plus, there was an existing electrical outlet under the sink, which allowed for a simple plug-in installation.

"The homeowner chose a key fob to activate the pump instead of the push button or motion

detector," said Tosco. "This allowed him to keep the fob in a cabinet, away from the family's young kids."

"Watching the Avanti crew prep my kitchen for the installation was like watching a surgeon prepare for an operation," added the homeowner. "The floor and cupboards were protected with drop cloths, and they all had

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PROFESSOR AND PUPIL: Travis Beveridge (left), Avanti plumber; Anthony Reikow (center), education and training specialist, B.J. Terroni Co.; and Tosco problem solve on location.



PERPETUALLY PREPARED: Beveridge emerges with the proper tools for a job in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Avanti Plumbing, Heating, and Cooling Inc. specializes in high-end residential work.

booties on their shoes. They were very methodical — and it was greatly appreciated.”

“Homeowners can hire anyone they want,” explained Tosco. “It comes down to who they really feel comfortable with. We’re not just selling a service or product; we’re selling a relationship.”

HYDRONICS, TOO

Ten miles away, at a 12,000-square-foot home boasting radiant heat, Tosco was hired to replace an old boiler and improve comfort to the many zones.

A 150-MBtuh wall-hung mod-con boiler provides the home with space heating and domestic hot water — set as priority, served through an 80-gallon indirect. Above the indirect is an American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) 1017-certified Taco 5000

Series mixing valve to protect the homeowners from scalding.

Because the home didn’t have a dedicated recirc line, Tosco installed a Taco Hot-Link recirc system. “The homeowner liked that the Hot-Link is completely customizable to their hot water needs,” said Tosco. “Hot-Link begins working when the timer-activated pump, which can be installed at the water heater, pushes hot water toward a one-way bypass valve beneath the furthest fixture in the house; it acts as a gate keeper between the hot and cold water supply lines. As long as the water in the hot line remains cool, the valve stays open and the cool water is circulated back to the water heater through the cold water line. But, when incoming water reaches approximately 110°F, the valve closes.

Hot water is then delivered immediately when any tap is turned on in the house.”

The home was originally zoned with fixed-speed circulators; seven in all. To provide more precise flow and save energy, Tosco replaced the pumps with Taco electronically commutated motor (ECM) circulators. “We made improvements where we could without any invasive changes, and now we’re getting calls from all of their neighbors.”

Tosco says he uses only Taco components for his hydronics work. “I choose them because they’re an American family making American products to install in American homes. That’s something that makes great sense to me.”

An emergency call came in late that day as Tosco and his employee



PRECISION PRESSING: Tosco presses a pair of tees under the kitchen sink at a remodeled farmhouse in rural Pennsylvania.

of three years, Travis Beveridge, were completing the job.

“I’d hoped that our day might end a bit earlier, getting us home to be with our families in time for dinner,” said Tosco.

But luck didn’t have it that way. They finished their day 15 hours after it began while pushing through heavy traffic to get to Pottstown for a frozen spigot call. The homeowner didn’t have a frost-free spigot and it was beginning to crack on the mold. Fortunately, Avanti got there before water started to pour inside.

“We always try to maintain fully stocked trucks so we’re able to handle any situation that may be thrown at us,” explained Beveridge. “We had exactly what we needed to fix the problem, which is especially important during the winter months. Quick fixes allow homeowners to get back to living comfortably.”

CYCLICAL RECIRCS

The next day, the Avanti team set out to provide a different hot water recirc solution. In another high-scale Philly suburb, they were called to a home with two propane water heaters — a 50-gallon unit dedicated to the master bathroom and a 75-gallon tank for the rest of the house. The home, having a dedicated recirc line (never used), received a Taco SmartPlus recirculation system.

“Installing recircs has given us a foot in the door for custom homes. The SmartPlus pumps don’t require any programming and they’re maintenance-free. Learn-

ing the water usage patterns of homeowners, the pumps turn on automatically to make sure there’s hot water whenever it’s called for. Our customers want the smartest systems out there, and, with technology like this, we’re able to deliver,” said Beveridge.

As Tosco navigates his business through 2015, several things weigh on his mind while turning that wrench or scrolling through training opportunities on B.J. Terroni’s website:

- Is this the year to hire the next employee?
 - What can I do to really surprise Maria this year on our anniversary?
 - Did I forget to buy that extra roll of ½-inch PEX for Travis’ truck?
 - Is it my turn to buy lunch with Anthony Reikow ... or his?
- And so it goes. Tosco enjoys a good, long day at work and the freedom to take an hour, or a day or two, when he wants to.

Fortunately, the work is coming in at a steady pace, thanks to good mentoring, a passionate work ethic, and rock-solid workers. The customer base gets bigger every day, and, with that, Tosco’s willing to put in the work wherever and whenever he’s needed. **N**

Information courtesy of Rachel Vasty, a writer and account manager for Common Ground, a Manheim, Pennsylvania-based trade communications firm that specializes in the hydronics, radiant heat, plumbing and mechanical, geothermal, and HVAC industries. Contact her at 717-664-0535 or cground3@ptd.net.