



## Picture of charity



Principal partners William Ferguson (left), Lee Askew and William Nixon of Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects rearrange artwork in their Union Avenue offices.

### Architectural firm to sell artwork to benefit hurricane victims

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BESIDES ITS LENGTHY RECORD of architectural work, which spans 30 years this week, Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects earned a reputation for displaying local artists in the gallery at the company's offices in Midtown.

Over the years, at least 300 local artists have hung their work in the firm's gallery.

Tonight the company will host an art auction to celebrate three decades of architectural excellence and aid people from the devastated Gulf Coast region.

ANFA is putting about 100 pieces of its own considerable collection of art up for auction, including work by John Robinette and Freida Hamm, among others. They're hoping to raise as much as \$300,000 for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Payments will be made directly to the Red Cross.

“We have never seen anything as horrible as Katrina,” said Lee Askew III, company partner and Tulane University alumnus. “We just want to help.”

But community service is nothing new to the firm, which has hosted at least 34 “Architects’ Party” fundraisers over the years, bringing in over \$200,000 for local charities.

The firm’s deep commitment to charitable endeavors and its hometown can be traced back to its origin.

Like many other local companies, ANFA grew with FedEx. In 1977, the young firm landed a deal to build a new call center for FedEx, which was completed in 1978.

“That was some great fuel for our firm that allowed us to grow,” said Askew.

Since then, the company has made a name for itself by designing high-tech call centers and business offices, churches, schools, museums and even the Memphis mayor’s office.

“I’m surprised at how we just roll on and how lucky we’ve been,” said Askew. “Our specialty seems to be solving problems for clients that aren’t slam dunks.”

Take, for instance, the firm’s decision to design in the 1980s a FedEx hub in Indianapolis.

FedEx said it needed the hub to be built within four months, an astonishing request,



ANFA isn’t afraid to tackle challenging projects that might scare others away, said Lee Askew (right), with ANFA principal partners William Ferguson (left) and William Nixon.

considering all the detail that goes into such a project.

ANFA accepted the job and FedEx had its building in four months.

“We have a willingness to jump in where everyone else backs away,” said Askew. “I guess we’re too dumb to say no.”

ANFA has been able to survive and thrive for three decades because it

is adaptable and flexible, employees and customers said.

Those hallmarks show up in the company’s portfolio of projects.

From Brooks Museum of Art’s expansion and reorientation to the majority of the large sorting facilities at the FedEx Hub in Memphis and the Sam’s Town Casino and Gambling Hall in Tunica, Miss., ANFA has shown it’s able to handle almost any client’s needs.

“Most firms would stay in relatively narrow types of buildings,” said Bill Ferguson, ANFA partner. “We have a very broad idea of how to help a client get their facilities to perform for them.”

Jeff Nesin, president of the Memphis College of Art, chose ANFA to design the school’s new student housing building, called Metz Hall.

Nesin wanted to make sure the new building would be as special as the college’s Rust Hall building in Overton Park, which earned a Building of the Century Award from American Institute of Architects Memphis.

“We needed something that looked really, really terrific,” said Nesin. “We really had this standard to live up to, something that looked like it would be submitted for a contest.”

“They really got it,” he said. “We’re very proud of that building.”