

OPINION

Bedford firm helps promote science and engineering

When Arthur N. Mabbett was a student at Medford High School back in the 1960s, he was a competitor in the state scholastic science fair. Today, as president of the firm he founded, Mabbett & Associates on Alfred Circle, he continues to promote scientific opportunities for young people.

"Science and engineering, I think, are not emphasized enough," he believes. "Anything that we can do to help encourage young people to pursue knowledge, if not careers in science and engineering, we feel is important." That includes an annual Citizens Scholarship Foundation award to a high school senior planning to concentrate in one of those academic areas.

Mabbett & Associates specializes in integrated environmental, health and safety consulting and engineering services. The firm employs 17 in Bedford, mostly scientists and engineers, backed by administrative and finance staff. More than 90 percent of its current contracts are with the private sector.

Mabbett noted that the company recently was certified as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Busi-



MIKE ROSENBERG

ness, a new federal classification as defined by the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003. "So we've established a new Federal Services Group," he said. "This will give us significant opportunities to further develop our federal government business base."

The company moved here in 1989, nine years after it was established in Cambridge. "We pick and choose our clients," Mabbett said. "We want to work with them for as long as they're in business. Everything we do assists that goal, to develop long-term relationships."

He described a typical project, "We are serving a large, well-respected printing company with about 300 employees, providing comprehensive environmental health and safety consulting and engineering services. That includes on-site services, where our staff serves as the company's environmental, health and safety staff. The company uses us to fill

that need because we provide more technical depth, continuity and value, and it's our responsibility to ensure that the job gets done. That's typical of what we do."

Also, the company handles all of the client's environmental compliance requirements, including record keeping and reporting to state and federal agencies. "If there are any particular on-site environmental health or safety issues, we will conduct training programs, prepare reviews and update written program documents," Mabbett said. "And we'll provide comment, opinion and input to senior level management on a regular basis."

The firm also oversees cleanup of oil or chemical spills. "We will get involved not only in assessment activities but also soil and groundwater cleanup," Mabbett explained.

"We will provide what we call management operations and maintenance services for groundwater and wastewater treatment systems. We will run the systems, monitor them, maintain them, handle all the record-keeping and report to agencies."

Mabbett earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and a master of science degree from Rutgers University. He entered the Army in 1970 as an environmental sciences officer stationed in Hawaii, anticipating tens of thousands of troops returning from Viet-

nam. "My job was to make sure the Army had little or no impact on the Hawaiian environment," he said. Mabbett spent six years active and another 14 in the Army Reserve, retiring with the rank of major. Today he is a registered professional engineer, qualified environmental professional and a registered and cer-

tified environmental health scientist and safety professional.

The CEO said he spends more than a third of his professional time, in the United Kingdom, providing senior management support to the 24 employees at the firm's affiliate in Scotland, which offers similar services. Why Scotland? "Glasgow has an extremely strong science and engineering educational base," he said. "The Scottish work ethic is exceptional, the local environment is very supportive of young, growing businesses, and agencies provide guidance, support and even, in some cases, funding." Business is growing in the UK, and he expects clients in central Europe in three to five years.

He said the company is pleased to be in Bedford. "We were always referred to as Cambridge-based. But then Cambridge's lack of parking, difficulty accessing, and traffic congestion problems made it difficult for many of our clients, and difficult for us to get to them. We've always been a high-technology-oriented company. Our clients are up and down Routes 128 and 495. Now we have an excellent location from which to access them."

'Anything that we can do to help encourage young people to pursue knowledge, if not careers in science and engineering, we feel is important.'