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American Girl Place

Water Tower Place

American Girl Place

Commercial
Real Estate



American Girl Place at Water Tower

- *This Time It's Personal*

by William Di Santo, President of Schiller Park-based Englewood Construction

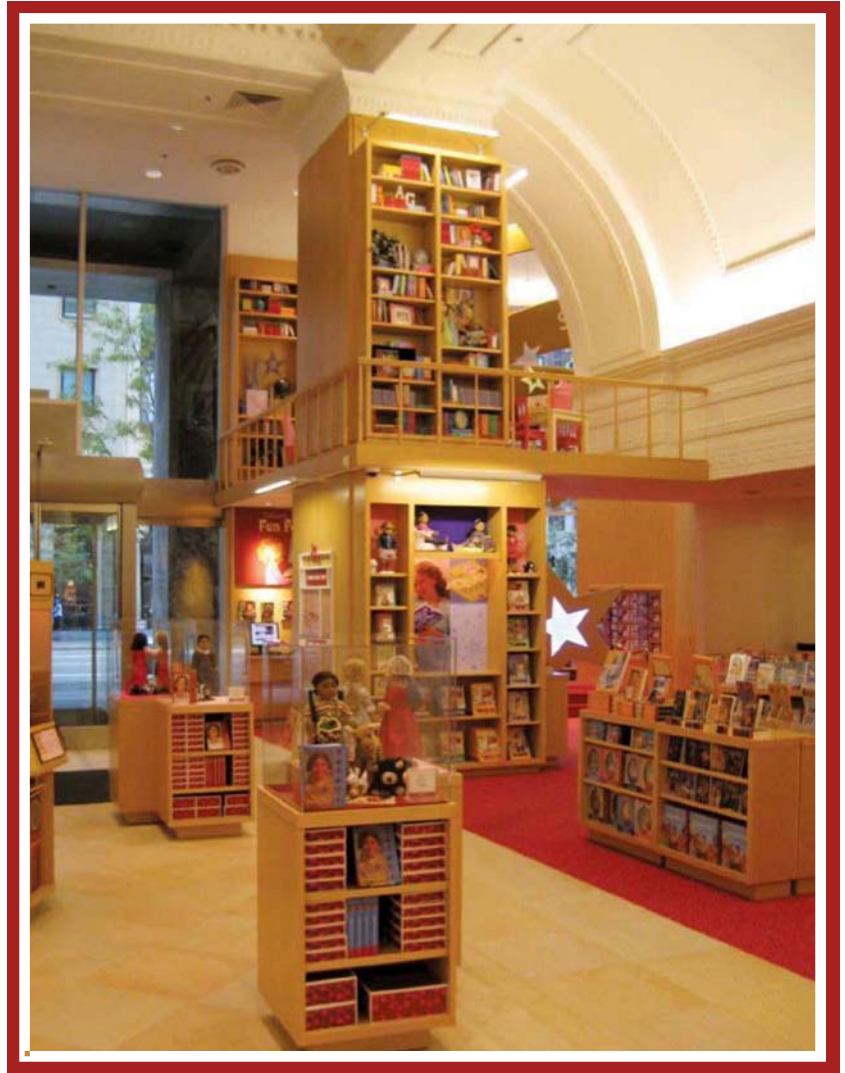
FFor more than 25 years the staff at Englewood Construction has been involved with Michigan Avenue retail, but never before has a job on this iconic avenue been as personal as the completion of the new American Girl Place flagship store at Water Tower Place.

This was our first American Girl Place project – a job we pursued from a cold call. So, while we were determined to exceed the client's expectations, we all knew we had to answer to an even higher authority – our daughters, granddaughters, and nieces. Their love of American Girl Place only enhanced our own excitement and passion for this job.

As with any retail project, the biggest challenge is the schedule. In retail construction a lost day equals a lost week with respect to delays. The American Girl Place store was no exception. With one of the most popular retail addresses in the world, the store's progress was constantly in the public's eye. But we've worked under Michigan Avenue pressure before, so for us it was business as usual – do whatever needs to be done to meet the grand opening date.

That's not to say this job didn't have its challenges. For as many times as we've built projects in operating vertical retail buildings, it is always more difficult to move your manpower, receive materials, and dispose of garbage than in a single-story building. But that is also what keeps the job interesting – managing the construction process as efficiently as possible, overcoming any unforeseen obstacles and still adhering to the set budget and schedule.

In the case of this job, Englewood Construction was given seven months to demolish 52,000 square feet of the vacated Lord & Taylor department store and build a two-story flagship store for American Girl – the largest American Girl Place store in the country.



Additionally, the project involved several components: high-end retail, a full-service upscale restaurant, a doll hair salon, a photo studio and the American Girl regional offices.

We began work in February 2008 and had five full-time employees dedicated to the project. At any given time during the construction of the store there were as many as 100 people on site – sometimes working around the clock.

On November 12, in time for the holiday season, the American Girl Place flagship store at Water Tower Place in Chicago opened to rave reviews from our new client, and also hundreds of little girls.

Photo: American Girl Place, located at 835 N. Michigan Ave. The 52,000-square-foot store opened in November. Photo provided by: Englewood Construction.