

# BUILDING

## WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

hand. Trimble said, "I hate writing. I also found there was more room for error, so I didn't want to risk it." Because of this, and it being faster to do them on-screen, she is usually the one assigned to projects over \$2 Million.

She says that "women shouldn't be afraid to innovate or think outside the box, because it will benefit everyone else around them."

"It's important for women to be everywhere—where decisions are being made—where things are happening," says Sarah Vespa, assistant general counsel and risk and compliance manager at GMF Steel Group.



Becoming a lawyer was always Vespa's goal when attending Florida State University. After graduating, she clerked for Children's Legal Services but found that she wanted her career to go in a different direction. In

2019, she began working at GMF to ensure their compliance with state, local, and federal laws.

"One thing I love about the construction industry is knowing that we are the ones unseen making things happen so others can live their lives. We build the buildings where society, at large, is going to spend their free time or further their careers," Vespa expresses, "and it's easy to forget that women have a huge role in that."

"Sarah implements positive attributes about GMF and the projects we build," Andy Norman, president of GMF shares, "she's really excited to tell that story."

Vespa thinks that "there is a misconception that women in the construction industry are not tough enough to handle it." She elaborates, "It does a disservice to women because women are some of the toughest people I know."

Vespa believes that women are a "tremendous asset" and hopes that they "leverage their skills because they are a benefit to any company and the industry as a whole."

Norman explains that "diversity is important because if you end up with all the same kind of people, you're going to limit your think tank and emotional capacity. The diversity we have at GMF allows us to have different thought processes and approaches to overall growth." ■

### H. J. High Construction Company

H. J. High has a total of 15 women on staff, nearly half of the company's workforce. As the number of women in the industry grows, it is more important now than ever to

encourage young women to consider a career in construction.

While many women in the industry fulfill the marketing, administration, and assistant roles, they wanted to highlight the women in the field.

Lori Baker and Liz Buske are two of their top project managers. Their dedication to their projects and the love they have for the industry is evident in the work they do. They lead their project teams with authority to impressive results. Their enthusiasm for their job is inspiring to all the other women in the office



and shows young women that they can excel in construction. The steel-toed boots and hard hats are not just for the men.

Lori's advice to any woman who wants to pursue this career is to get out into the field and walk with a seasoned superintendent as much as possible.

"While having a degree in a construction/engineering field is great, what you learn in the field from an experienced superintendent is invaluable."

Another powerful female force in H. J. High's office is the safety director, Cindy Spiropoulos. Cindy is the Greater Orlando regional director for the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC). Cindy spends her free time organizing and planning events for NAWIC so she can help inspire and encourage women to pursue a career in construction. ■

### Interior Specialties, Inc.

Interior Specialties, Inc., a Division 10 and 12 specialty contractor, has a long history of leadership from women in construction. Now, the company once again has a woman at the helm. In early January 2020, Stacy Robinson took the lead as the company's CEO. She joins her husband, President and Co-Owner Bob Robinson, and Vice President and CFO David Yates on the leadership team for the company.



Interior Specialties, formerly Window Interiors, was founded by and previously led by a woman, from whom the Robinsons bought the company. Now, Stacy is continuing that tradition, with the company on the path to once again becoming a certified woman-owned business. Through her leadership, Interior Specialties has seen strong growth, and taken on several notable jobs recently, including at the cutting-edge Center for Advanced Healthcare at Brownwood in The Villages, UCF's Celeste Hotel, and the Global Home of the PGA TOUR in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Stacy is a great example of the power of elevating women leaders in the industry, she and her team look to build on these successes as they continue to deliver excellence on jobs in Central Florida and throughout the Sunshine State. ■

### JK2 Scenic

Since 2013, JK2 Scenic has been on a path of strategic growth. Led by President Julie Holmes, the company has stood out as a certified woman-owned and operated business. Now, with a diverse team and unique perspective, JK2 Scenic is looking toward the future, fortifying a culture of creativity and employee growth.

At JK2 Scenic, the company is not only focused on the development of their employees, but the support of the local community through involvement in local industry organizations and charities. Over the last year, JK2 Scenic has added four women to the team, who participate and are involved in the community.

They believe their strategic focus and ability to think outside the box and adapt is the reason they have been able to find the silver lining over the past year. Although 2020 was a challenging year, they made quick business decisions, pulled in outsourced work, and invested in technology, equipment, and talent to position the business for growth and a strong future.

They look forward to building upon their creative approach to uncommon ideas and will continue to invest in strong women in the industry, think outside the box and build things that have never been built before. ■

### Marietta Drapery & Window Coverings Co., Inc.

The women of Marietta Drapery & Window Coverings Co., Inc. have a text thread containing the actual thoughts and experiences they face walking into trailers, safety meet-

