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Morra of Margulies Perruzzi Architects

November 23, 2011 - Spotlights

Real estate organizations / affiliations: AIA, BSA, NEWIRE, USGBC

What award or recognition has been the most meaningful to you and why?

Our firm has received many awards, but I am most proud of the Accessible Design Award that we received from the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board and the Boston Society of Architects for our BlueCross BlueShield facility in Quincy. It was a particular goal of BCBS to go "beyond ADA" and design a facility that was truly accessible to all. I had an opportunity to work with some of their differently-abled associates and to really understand some of the invisible barriers that they faced every day. It was a profound learning experience and it was an honor to receive an award for this achievement.

How has the need to create a more sustainable environment influenced the way you do business?

I have seen changes in two major areas:

1) The ability to design a "greener" project has changed all of our projects, whether or not sustainability was a stated goal of our clients. The recent boom in affordable green building materials allows us to select more sustainable products without a cost premium, which in the past hindered their selection.

2) Both design and construction documentation have become overwhelmingly electronic, resulting in a drastic reduction in the amount of paper being used. Although this might seem like a small item, it really amounts to a major decrease in the use of natural resources.

What advice would you give to a woman just starting a career in your field?

My advice to anyone (male or female) starting out in architecture would be to find an established architect that you admire and ask to do a short internship for them. Summers while still in school would be the ideal time to do this. It is very hard to get a job in the field without any prior experience, and it can be a good investment in your career to start out this way. As an example, my first summer job at an architecture firm was an un-paid internship. At the end of the summer I received a healthy bonus as well as an offer for a paid position for the following summer. As a result, I graduated college with four summers of professional experience on my resume.

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