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55 YEARS

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2020 Ones to Watch: Allison O'Neill, P.E., Senior Structural Engineer at Gale Associates, Inc.

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Allison O'Neill, P.E.
Gale Associates, Inc.

How do you contribute to your community or your profession? I enjoy volunteering as the Girls Ice Hockey Director for our community's town hockey program and coaching my daughter's hockey teams. I am also a volunteer on-ice coach for the Bruins Academy Learn to Play Hockey Program, which provides equipment and on-ice instruction for children learning to play hockey. I am also involved with my gym community as an indoor cycling instructor. Professionally, I have been involved in the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) Boston Chapter Board of Directors and I contributed to the latest edition of the National Parking Association's Parking Facility Maintenance Manual.

What advice can you offer to someone who is interested in a career in your industry? A career in architecture, engineering, and construction can be very rewarding, but it can be overwhelming to navigate. Seek out mentors and colleagues who can help you grow professionally. Ask questions. Be curious. Ask more questions until you satisfy that curiosity. Another piece of advice I would give is: considering that many architects, engineers, and construction managers are focused on calculations and details, never underestimate the importance of a well written letter, email, or report.

How have your life experiences impacted who you are professionally? Officiating ice hockey, teaching indoor cycling classes, and becoming a parent have shaped me as a professional. Years of officiating women's college hockey strengthened my decision making skills and my ability to function under pressure. Teaching indoor cycling classes has taught me that everyone is motivated differently, and how to adjust to various learning styles and personalities both professionally and in a class setting. Parenting has shown me life is not about the circumstances that are presented to you, but how you choose to react to these circumstances. There is always a choice, and that choice is yours.

Which project, deal, or transaction was the "game-changer" in the advancement of your career? Pinpointing a specific "game-changer" is challenging, as I attribute the advancement of my career to my commitment to building and maintaining a solid foundation of business relationships. My design approach is focused on clear communication. A turning point for me was a shift in mindset from "listening with the intent to reply" to "listening with the intent to understand" based on Stephen Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Altering my approach to communication has strengthened my relationships with clients and colleagues, and has resulted in a diverse portfolio of successful projects.