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2021 Ones to Watch: Krista Manna, Owner, KR Architecture & Interiors

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Who or what inspires you? My family inspires me the most. My grandfather gave me the chance to be his helper and taught me the ropes. My mother always knew I would go into design, and she left me an inheritance that enabled me to start my business. My father worked in a different industry but was still an inspiration to me. He was a color lab technician but was also an after-hours/weekend tinkerer around the house; fixing what needed to be fixed. He fixed broken faucets, tiled floors, built a deck and a host of other projects. I became his assistant and learned a great deal from him. The skills I learned from him have served me well in my profession and inspires me to always strive to learn more.

Who was/is your mentor and how did s/he influence/help you in your career? I would have to say that my mentors are the same people who inspire me; my grandfather, Bill Zautner, and my parents, Patrick, and Laura Wilkie. They encouraged and believed in me and I would not be able to serve my clients as well as I do without the skills that they helped me to cultivate in myself.

What advice can you offer to someone who is interested in a career in your industry? Be passionate about your choice of career! Realize that your objective is to make the lives of your clients easier. I love what I do; I work with both commercial and residential clients to help make their dreams come true, and I love the personal connection that makes it all possible. It can be a home remodel, a new office, or a relocation – our work helps our clients to achieve the goals that will make life easier, better, more enjoyable, and effective for them.

What led you to your current profession? I was drawing floor plans for fun at a very young age. At five or six years old my favorite pastime in the fall was to go out and rake floor plans in leaves and pretend to play house in them. My mother knew then that I would go into something in the architectural field. As a tween and teen, to pass the time I would draw scaled floor plans of my room and re-arrange furniture to optimize the layout. In high school I worked for my grandfather who was a housing developer. I poured sidewalks, picked up shingles, swept, etc. I gained a good concept of what is involved in construction. By that point I knew I was interested in architecture, but summers spent with him helped to seal the deal.