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## **2021 Ones to Watch: Jeff Sawyer, Co-Owner, TruNORTH Construction**

May 28, 2021 - Spotlights

Which project/deal was the “game-changer” in the advancement of your career? The “game changer” project for me was during my time running the architecture program for a home builder in Atlanta. The owner selected me to build our corporate office building. I had never overseen the building of a house at that time, never mind the construction of a 25,000 s/f 11-acre building. In retrospect, this project really changed my direction within the industry. It took me from my focus on architecture to a path toward development and building. I never revisited the architecture field again.

What advice can you offer to someone who is interested in a career in your industry? This industry can be a grind at times so I would say you really need to be passionate about it. Also, don't be afraid to continue learning throughout your career. Read about the business, the industry as a whole, and the nuances that make it interesting as often as possible. Never stop learning.

What led you to your current profession? My love of building things when I was a kid was definitely the catalyst to my career in this field. Legos and Lincoln Logs were always my toys of choice and once I was old enough, you could find me in the basement shop working on building miscellaneous things out of wood. When I got to high school, I took a drafting class and one of our assignments was to design our own house. That is what solidified my decision to pursue a degree in architecture. From there, the passion and interest became construction and I've stayed on that path ever since.

How do you contribute to your community or your profession? Community involvement is extremely important to us at TruNORTH. We focus on charities that have touched our families, friends, and/or employees in some way. We sponsor a non-profit (Open Doors Outdoors) that helps veterans and kids discover the healing potential of outdoor adventures. We also raise funds for the American Cancer Society through Real Men Wear Pink. Every October we all wear our pink shirts to create awareness while raising money for the cause. We also sponsor youth sports in our area, something that has become something of a passion as we all played sports as kids. Finally, we are supporters of the Cornerstone Cares Foundation based in Rockville, Connecticut. It is a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, food bank, and so much more. We initially sponsored a road race that takes place on Christmas every year and benefits the charity. That experience inspired us to volunteer our services on a quarterly basis. We gather the team and visit on a quarterly basis, tending to facility needs as they arise and covering the cost of materials, labor, etc. We're really looking forward to keeping that collaboration going.

Who or what inspires you? The truth of the matter is, I have always been inspired by my own drive to be successful, no matter what it is I am doing. I think it is important to surround yourself with positive people who will encourage and support you but that source of inspiration, the one that propels you forward has to come from within.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles? We try to do things and organize activities that will keep our employees engaged. For instance, we kicked off the TruNORTH book club not too long ago and we've all committed to reading a two books a year then have a roundtable discussion. It really creates a common language about the books, helps us to extend our conversation beyond industry talk, and connect us beyond the job site. We also organize a lot of events outside of work such as fishing trips, sports nights, hikes, evenings out, etc. We try our best to create and maintain a family-like atmosphere, one that gives our guys the freedom to have fun on the job while feeling as though they are connected to something larger.

Who was/is your mentor and how did s/he influence/help you in your career? My mentor is the owner of Venture Homes in Atlanta, Bob White. He taught me so much about the business side of things. He was the driving force behind my learning about the Total Quality Management business philosophy and the importance of continuous learning. TruNORTH, at its core is rooted in the philosophy that I learned working with Bob. I use processes and a lot of things we did as a leadership team at Venture Homes today to run our business. I would not be where I am without the leadership and inspiration I learned from Bob.

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