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2022 Women in Construction: Fawn Pellegrini, RA, Senior Project Manager - Studio Leader at JCJ Architecture

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Fawn Pellegrini

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? Being project manager for the Boys & Girls Club of Hartford South End project was an amazing experience. The work the B&GC does for communities is extraordinary, and this project was an example of the remarkable teamwork we dream of having on every project. The Boys & Girls Club of Hartford recognizes that every dollar saved is one that can go toward assisting another child. This became our mantra and everyone who touched the project embraced the concept of maximizing both value and quality. It was an amazing experience that I will take with me through the rest of my career.

When you're not busy, what is your go to book or podcast to help you unwind? I enjoy a good cup of hot cinnamon tea with a blanket on my lap, my dog by my feet, and a good mystery novel. As architects, we are problem solvers. I sometimes wonder if that is why I am so drawn to mysteries and the resolution at the end!

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? When I was 14 years old my family moved to a 350+ year-old rural farm house. As our contractors worked on restoring the home and barn, we discovered the shadow of the original stairs against the current dining room wall. I remember staring at the markings on the wall and wondering about who had lived in the home before us. That was probably the original spark of my interest in architecture. Part of the excitement of architecture is that it encompasses many disciplines. I am always challenged and learning something new.

Within your firm, who has helped you succeed within the industry? How have they helped you? I've been with JCJ for 17 years. I've had an active role in shaping my own professional growth and the opportunity to explore different project roles and building types. This gave me a solid foundation from which to build my personal path, which led into management. Two individuals who have contributed greatly to my development are Scott Celella and Douglas Roberts. Scott and Doug, both Principals, have given me new challenges when I needed them, pushing me outside my comfort zone. Those were the moments that offered the most professional and personal growth. I'm thankful to still work with them.

What tips or advice would you offer to other women who are considering entering the construction industry? Don't try to change who you are. I was told this career would be challenging for me as a woman. I'll never forget two comments: "You should wear black or navy blue to match the men" and "If you smile or laugh too much, people won't take you seriously." I wear the colors I enjoy and I love to laugh. Our industry can be stressful. Smiles go a long way to help teams stay positive. If you have passion for this work, then enjoy it. That genuine effort will shine and be seen and respected by others.