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2022 Women in Construction: Megan Kefalis, Senior Project Manager at MIT Department of Facilities

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Megan Kefalis

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? It's difficult to pinpoint the most notable because of the pandemic, but maybe that is the accomplishment; working through it all. We completed a museum fit-out at Kendall Sq. which will serve as part of the new Gateway to MIT. This will be a tourist attraction and become a part of local history. I'm currently assigned to a mechanical infrastructure upgrade in a fully occupied, academic research facility, which presented various logistical challenges.

When you're not busy, what is your go to book or podcast to help you unwind? The Huberman Lab – Dr. Andrew Huberman is a neuroscientist and he discusses cognition, body chemistry, food...basically the science of the body and brain and how it all works. I love it because the human body is an intriguing machine, and this podcast digs deep into the science of our bodies, minds and nervous system.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? What I found empowering was constantly learning and growing in the industry. Each day presented an occasion to absorb more about the various parts of construction, from the earthwork to HVAC, and apply it the next day. Construction also provided a comradery that is unique; the job can be stressful, so positive attitudes and laughs were a great way to decompress. I also embraced the structure of the construction industry with its planning, designing and project management processes. Construction plans for the best, but issues always arise, so you have to problem-solve and be creative with your team of experts.

Within your firm, who has helped you succeed within the industry? How have they helped you? Sonia Richards was one of the very few working mothers I initially knew in construction. She exemplified true leadership, collaboration, and respect for others. Sonia provided priceless advice as a working mother and offered mentorship regarding daily challenges of work/home balance. She made a significant impact throughout my career with her professionalism and dedication to family. She led by example and empowered people to be dependable teammates while striving toward the best.

What tips or advice would you offer to other women who are considering entering the construction industry? Just go for it! Construction is an ever-evolving, collaborative industry. Every day offers an opportunity to learn and grow. Construction provides something concrete to show for your work – a new school, an updated research facility or a renovated hospital – it's all very rewarding. I've also always found that diversity is welcomed in the construction industry – teams appreciate the different perspectives. My advice: remain confident in yourself and your abilities, and respect others, regardless of their title because we all bring something to the table. And have fun with it!