



CELEBRATING  
55 YEARS

# nerej

## **2023 Women in Construction: April Connolly, Father Bill's & MainSpring**

March 31, 2023 - Spotlights



April Connolly, LICSW  
Chief Operating Officer

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months?

Being the first hotel-to-housing conversion (for homeless individuals) in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is our most notable project. During the peak of the pandemic we began leasing a hotel to depopulate our overcrowded emergency shelter and decided to use the opportunity to expand housing for homeless individuals, purchasing the hotel and converting the rooms to efficiency units. This was a 'win-win' in the affordable housing industry with hotel rooms being designed to easily retrofit to studio apartments. In just over a year, we grew our housing portfolio for our vulnerable population by 69 units for under \$150,000 in cost per unit.

What made you interested in seeking a career in the AEC industry?

I work for a nonprofit organization that provides emergency and permanent housing to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Our core belief that Nobody Should Be Homeless drove our interest in entering the construction world. With a limited housing market and the stigma of homelessness, we could see the struggle our guests experienced trying to find a home. We figured out that in order to really address the root cause of homelessness, we would need to take a lead in building affordable housing targeted for our population. We now own or operate 700 units of supportive housing and have several projects in development.

How are you involved in community organizations and/or charities?

I've had the honor of being able to hand tenants keys to their first apartments after years of homelessness. People experiencing homelessness have to fight to receive fair treatment or the support they need to end their homelessness. Particularly in a housing market like Massachusetts, which is so expensive and has limited stock, it's next to impossible for a person experiencing homelessness to find a home. For Father Bill's & MainSpring to be able to build beautiful, safe, and affordable housing for our most vulnerable neighbors without homes, it is the most rewarding thing I contribute to.