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2023 Women in Construction: Melanie Smith, Vantage Builders

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Melanie Smith
Superintendent

What made you interested in seeking a career in the AEC industry? One of my personal heroes, and the person who I most credit with getting me interested in the construction industry, is my grandfather. He was a carpenter by both trade and hobby. He'll be 95 this year and still works part time! I remember growing up and being happiest in his basement, among all the woodworking and other tools. I loved being able to understand how things work and the feeling of pride I had when I saw the results of a project. I have found that I am happiest when I am learning and being able to help solve problems, so when I finished college a career in construction was the perfect fit. It has given me the opportunity to apply my interest in learning new skills and using my communication and problem-solving skills every day.

What tips or advice would you offer to other women who are considering entering the construction industry? Do you like working with your hands, solving challenging problems, and being able to see how your contribution has helped build something tangible? Then AEC is for you: don't be afraid to jump in and get your hands dirty!

I think people don't realize the tremendous amount of variety presented by the AEC industry. You can enter the industry with a range of education, whether it's a college degree, trade school, high school diploma or a master's degree. There are a wide range of jobs available, including on-site or project management or on the business side. As a superintendent, my job varies tremendously day to day. I might be running a meeting, organizing the coordination of building systems, sweeping floors, or planning a crane lift during any given week, or even all those things in the same day! That variety keeps the job interesting. And you can't beat the pride you feel when you see a project from concept all the way through to completion.

How are you involved in community organizations and/or charities? I am a part-time adjunct professor at SNHU in the Construction Management Program. It has been tremendously rewarding to connect with the students who are interested in the construction industry. I am able to pull from my experience to teach not only construction concepts, but also to provide real-world examples of how I have put those concepts into practice on the job site, and that really gives students critical insight into the AEC industry. I really enjoy being present when students connect how concepts they are learning relate to real life in the industry. I also volunteer for our local Little League and Soccer programs. I enjoy being able to spend time with my kids while being able to coach and mentor through sports. I still remember impactful coaches from when I played youth sports and I'm glad to have the opportunity to give back to my community.