

## **GTC CHAMPIONS CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION WITH NEW OUTREACH POSITION**

“How many cubic feet of air do I need to pump into the new space without blowing out the windows?”

The geometry class at Rangeview High School in Aurora knit their brows. The question was being posed by GTC Executive Superintendent Joe Turecek (tur-EEK), who was in the middle of managing a two-story addition to their school. He had taken time from his schedule to go into the classroom and teach a few math problems related to the project. Many of the students hadn't even considered that air needed to be pumped into a building, much less that an overabundance of it could break windows. Turecek explained that the solution was easy, once you looked at the space as a series of shapes. (“I used Legos to explain this to the elementary kids,” he said.) Many of the students then correctly solved the problem. Turecek's motive for wanting to engage them in the work was twofold: in addition to loving what he does and wanting to share, Turecek was also keenly aware of the construction industry's looming manpower shortage. He was hoping to spark some career interest among the next generation.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that over 800,000 new personnel will be needed to fill spots in the construction industry nationwide, through 2028. Fifty thousand will be needed in Colorado alone, according to AGC Colorado's estimates. The leadership at GTC could see that efforts like Turecek's were good, but they weren't going to be enough to help fill those spots. GTC decided they could do more.

“We've always done outreach,” Todd Schroeder, GTC President, said. “Our superintendents have gone into classrooms from K-12 through higher education, when we were doing projects for that school. We've regularly attended college career fairs and had summer interns. We've participated in local charity events, like Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics, Race for the Cure, the Big Dig. But what we're doing now is different. We're identifying with the industry's concern of lack of manpower, and we're seriously looking at getting the next generation into construction.”

The firm decided to attack the problem from multiple angles. To do that, in the summer of 2019 they created a Director of Outreach position and sourced in-house dynamo Amy Powell, a GTC Project Manager-turned-Director of Training.

“We were fortunate to already have someone on staff who was so enthusiastic about this,” Schroeder said. “Amy has helped us enhance our existing program and take it to the next level.”

Though most of her career has been with GTC, Powell is no stranger to multiple facets of the statewide industry. She has a BS in Construction Management from CSU and is LEED-accredited. In 2016 she became the first person in Colorado to also become WELL-accredited. Powell is a founding member of BuildHER, a collaborative that encourages women to pursue construction careers, and she was a planning committee member of the 2019 Denver Improving Capital Projects Symposium. She runs a YouTube channel about construction called, “[The Girl in the Hard Hat](#).” She implemented and still runs the internal training program at GTC, and she is also currently pursuing her Master's in Education at CSU, with a special focus on being able to train the soft skills necessary to thrive in construction. Despite

her busy schedule, Powell took on the Outreach Program with the passion of an industrial-sized bulldozer.

In the first six months of its existence the program reached over 450 industry professionals and potential industry professionals at different venues across Colorado. Powell has managed to partner with local schools, where she has both presented and facilitated presentations. Already integrated at the collegiate level, Powell made a huge effort to target high schools.

“Doing high school outreach is what really kicked off [the next level] for us,” Schroeder said. “There’s been a huge uptick in interest at the high school level in non-college options for them, post-graduation. They want jobs that pay well, without having to take on the burden of student loan debt.”

So far, Powell has presented and/or done panels at Greeley West High School, Rocky Mountain High School in Fort Collins, Jeffco’s Arvada High School and Green Mountain High School, and Adams 12 Five Star Schools’ Bollman Tech and Mountain Range High School. Some of her presentations include bringing along a few of her coworker-Superintendents, who provide interactive trainings with essential industry equipment. Part of what she does in her sessions is to explain to students how the different career paths can work in construction, both for those who choose not to go to college, and for those who do.

For the college-bound, Powell has also successfully partnered with CSU and Aims Community College.

“GTC’s involvement has significantly increased our capacity to support and retain our current CM students and to recruit diverse populations of prospective CM students,” Molly Weisshaar, Academic Success Coordinator at CSU’s Department of Construction Management, said. “Amy in particular has been highly involved in supporting students both inside and outside the classroom. She has served on industry panels and given guest lectures in classes.”

Last fall, Powell created and led a five-day bootcamp for Communication in Construction to Construction Management students at CSU (getting Schroeder and two of GTC’s vice presidents also involved). She also participated in the university’s Summer Institute for Women in Construction and as a mentor for their Women Engaging in Construction program. In November, Powell was one of two recipients of CSU’s Construction Management Friend of the Department Award.

Through the new Outreach Program, GTC has been able to not only facilitate new relationships but also to strengthen existing ones. In 2017 GTC completed a \$24M project at Aims Community College’s Greeley campus, which included their award-winning Construction Management buildings. The firm’s relationship with the college has continued, outside of project planning.

“The partnership between GTC and Aims has benefited our Construction Management students and program in many ways,” Phong Tram, Program Coordinator and Academic Success Coach for Aims’s Construction and Engineering Technology Department, said. “Having Nicole Wempe [GTC Principal and part-owner] participate on our First Annual Women in Construction panel last year was an invaluable part of our event, which allowed the girls to hear from a woman in the industry on how she got her start and the many opportunities that girls have within the industry. [In November] Amy was able to connect us with Paul Jonez [GTC Senior Estimator, and current president of the local ASPE chapter], who was able to come out to one of our estimating classes and talk to our students about the real world application of estimating, which was quite exciting for our students. Paul has also made available to our

students the Estimating Academy coming up on March 6<sup>th</sup>, and several students are planning on going down and taking advantage of this opportunity. Amy and Nicole are also planning on coming out and participating on the panel for our second annual Women in Construction Academy in a few weeks.”

“We’re recruiting for the industry, not just our own company,” Powell said.

The results of GTC’s expanded Outreach Program so far have included some unexpected, immediate payoffs, internally.

“We’ve gotten a lot more GTC employees engaged in teaching classes at the high school and college levels,” Schroeder said. Not including Powell, at least fifteen GTC employees from both office and field positions have been involved in helping with the new Outreach. “This has generated a lot of employee pride, because our employees love what they do, and they want to teach the next generation.”

With the positive vibes flowing, GTC plans to expand their outreach efforts even more. “We’ll see where this goes,” Schroeder said, “but we’re going to continue to enhance the program. We’re going to look at where we will make the most impact.”

For more information on GTC’s Outreach program, please contact Amy Powell, Director of Training and Outreach at 720-340-6832 | [apowell@gtc1.net](mailto:apowell@gtc1.net).

For more information about GTC, please contact Brandon Dooling, Marketing Director at 303-772-4051 | [bdooling@gtc1.net](mailto:bdooling@gtc1.net).