

Building Arkansas

Official Magazine of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas & the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers



Leading the conversations

How should engineers respond to the covid-19 pandemic? What does the engineering profession need to learn from the renewed awareness of racial inequality? New ACEC/A President Steven Beam, P.E., left, of Burns & McDonnell, and new ASPE President Daniel George, P.E., of B & F Engineering will lead those organizations during these changing times.

No calendar, but plenty to do

This issue of Building Arkansas is missing an element that appears in each issue: the calendar.

There's a good reason for that. With the world still in the grips of the covid-19 pandemic, it's impossible to know what the *immediate* future holds.

The word "immediate" is italicized for a good reason. While we don't know when the pandemic will end, and we don't know what the new normal will look like, we can be certain that many things won't change. This November, elections will determine if our lawmakers are pro-business and pro-infrastructure. Next January, Arkansas legislators will gather in Little Rock – or at least vote remotely – in what could be an historic session. And while all of this is happening, things will continue to be built in Arkansas.

For all of those reasons, it's just as important as ever – in fact, probably more



Angie W. Cooper
Executive Director

important – for engineers to get involved with our two organizations. The American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas serves our member firms. The Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers serves our individual engineers. Both are equally needed in this time.

The best way to get involved in these two organizations is to join one of their

committees in charge of everything from legislative issues to the ACEC/A's Engineering Excellence Awards banquet – held this year on March 5, right before the world changed. If it would have been the next week, it probably would have been cancelled. If you're interested in helping plan next year's event, please contact our new ACEC/A president, Steven Beam, P.E., at 479.725.5460.

These are crazy times, but eventually the new normal will arrive. However, it won't just happen. People from all walks of life will shape it. As a non-engineer, I'm hoping that engineers will play a major part. I'd rather have data driven, analytical types in position of influence than not.

ACEC/A and ASPE are two ways for engineers to get involved. Please do so now. There's no need to check your calendar. It probably will change anyway.

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Building Arkansas

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News and Features



14 Steven Beam, P.E., left, is the new ACEC/A president, while Daniel George, P.E., is ASPE's new president. The two take the reins during a time of change and disruption because of the covid-19 pandemic and demands for racial equality.

12 *Spotlight / Halff Associates a multidisciplinary firm*

Halff Associates has completed its acquisition of Marlar Engineering Company, but while the name has changed, the firm's commitment to its clients remains the same.

14 *Cover / George seeking more young engineers*

At 33, Daniel George, P.E., has already seen the benefits that come with active ASPE membership, and he wants others to enjoy the same experiences. Now that he's ASPE president, he said one of his goals is helping other young engineers see what the organization can offer.

16 *Cover / Beam leading during pandemic, change*

Steven Beam, P.E., the new ACEC/A president, has a lot on his plate. In addition to leading the organization during a pandemic and a time of social change, he's also the design project director for one of the Arkansas Department of Transportation's most important projects ever.

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18 *Affiliate Spotlight / Company offers leadership insight*

Michael Brown was serving as an executive pastor at a northern Indiana church where many of his members – including business leaders – had gaps and challenges in their work lives. He would help them with those gaps as part of his ministry. What started as a part-time sideline has become a full-time business: Insight Leadership Group.

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We are forever changed

Covid-19 has forever changed how we will operate our businesses, or at least I'm sure it has for my lifetime. This pandemic has affected everyone in some way or another. We are fortunate to work in an industry that is considered an essential service, allowing most companies to continue operations. I pray that you continue to be safe during these unsettled times and that you continue to exercise good judgment as you work to make the United States of America the best it can be for all.

As we work to move forward, we must start focusing on November, when voters will be asked to permanently extend the half-cent sales tax funding the Connecting Arkansas Program that expires in 2023. If Issue 1 passes, the Arkansas Department of Transportation will have another \$205 million annually for needed highway system preservation and construction. Cities and counties will continue receiving \$43 million each.

ACEC represents thousands of companies and is the voice of the engineering industry in Washington, D.C. and throughout the nation. With roots dating back more than 100 years, ACEC is a federation of 52 state and regional councils representing more than 600,000 engineers, architects, land surveyors and other specialists. Our primary mission is to strengthen the business environment for our member firms through government advocacy, political action, and business education.

I sincerely appreciate serving as the ACEC/Arkansas president the past year. I have been honored to serve with such a great board of directors and to work with great folks like Angie Cooper, the ACEC/A executive director; Steve Brawner, the Building Arkansas editor and publisher; and many others. I'm thankful to all of our members who have stayed strong during this pandemic. Hopefully, you have seen the benefit



James Montgomery, P.S.
ACEC/A Past President

of membership with all the resources, updates, and other benefits provided by ACEC, along with the congressional efforts to help and protect our well-being.

Each member firm and affiliate member deserves special recognition for being willing to support this organization, which serves the entire engineering profession – including firms who choose not to participate. I'd like to personally thank each of our members.

In alphabetical order, they are: ACEC Business Insurance Trust; ACEC Life/Health Insurance Trust; AECOM; Ally Energy Solutions; AMARK Engineering and Manufacturing; American; B & F Engineering; BXS Insurance; Benchmark Group; Bridgefarmer & Associates; Brown Engineers; BT Environmental; Burns & McDonnell; CEI Engineering Associates; Clear Creek Engineering; Consolidated Land Services; Crafton Tull; Crist Engineers; Crow Group; CWB Engineers; Daniels Land Surveying; Engineering Services, Inc.; Environmental Technical Sales; Forterra; Frontier Engineering; FTN Associates; Garnat Engineering; Garver; Gaunt Engineers; Geotechnology; Grubbs, Hoskyn, Barton, and Wyatt; Half Associates; Harris Engineering; Hawkins-Weir Engineers; HDR; HSA Engineering Consulting Services; Iconic Consulting Group; Insight Leadership Group; Jack Tyler Engineering; Jacobs; McClelland Consulting Engineers; McGeorge Contracting; Michael Baker International; Mickle Wagner Coleman; Myers Engineering; New Water Systems; O.R. Colan Associates; Olsson; Ozark Civil Engineering; Pickering; Shupe & Associates; Springdale Water Utilities; Terracon; TLG Engineers; Turner Insurance and Financial Services; and W. William Graham Jr., Inc.

Again, thank you for allowing me to serve. Our new president, Steven Beam, P.E., took the reins July 1. I know he'll do a great job. Take care, and stay well.

ACEC

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Let's build a more diverse engineering profession in Arkansas

The killing of George Floyd was difficult to watch, and as a result hard but necessary questions are being asked everywhere about policing.

Engineers also should be asking ourselves hard but necessary questions. While no one is marching through the streets chanting, "Defund the engineers," our profession has not always been as inclusive as it could have been.

I have never witnessed an overt act of racism in our industry, but on the other hand, being white, I would not notice the subtle ones.

However, I do know that since becoming an engineer in 2007, I have had very few experiences working alongside people of color. And when I was an engineering student, most of my classmates were white males like me.

If any engineering firms are failing to hire people of color because of their race, that obviously is completely unacceptable. They're asking for a well-deserved lawsuit.

The bigger issue is not so obvious, but it must be addressed. We must cultivate a more diverse talent pool so that more people of color are walking through our doors ready to be engineers.

Every few months, I half-jokingly ask my children if they are considering a career in engineering. I know that simply earning an engineering degree will open many doors for them, inside and outside of our profession.

But that question comes from a place of being an engineer. I know how valuable and rewarding engineering can be.

Who is asking that question of children



Jim Vetter, P.E.
ASPE Past President

of color, particularly if their parents and grandparents never really had an opportunity to become engineers? If no one is asking, shouldn't current engineers take the lead?

We have hired a number of young engineers at my firm recently, and I'm often asked difficult questions by those I'm mentoring. I sometimes catch myself saying, "It's just

always been done that way."

What have we always been doing that results in few people of color becoming engineers? Let's find the answers to that question, and then do things differently. Let's search for, inspire, and cultivate talent in places we've ignored. And let's not be tentative because most of us are white. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 15.7% of Arkansans describe themselves as African Americans. The same percentage should be engineers. We can help make that happen.

I'm working with three females on one of my current projects, and it's been a good reminder that diverse teams lead to better engineering.

The same is true when our engineering teams reflect our racially diverse state and nation. Our designs benefit people from all backgrounds, and our profession will benefit when the designers are more diverse, too.

So let's not limit the current conversation about race to law enforcement. The title of this magazine is "Building Arkansas," not, "Building Roads and Bridges." Let's build an Arkansas where everyone has an opportunity to be an engineer.

In the News

Hammond now leading state Olsson office

Olsson Inc. has named Brad Hammond, P.E., leader of its Fayetteville office after he previously led Olsson's water/wastewater team there, the company announced in a press release May 7.

Hammond joined Olsson when it acquired McGoodwin Williams & Yates in 2018. Olsson has expanded the office's water/wastewater and power delivery teams, started a transportation team, grown the field services team, added a materials testing lab and implemented geotechnical capabilities.

Hammond has more than 25 years of experience in areas such as civil site design, street design, water/wastewater projects and master planning.

"Brad has been a major factor in the operation, growth and development of a future vision for this office," said Ron Mersch, vice president. "He shows the qualities and leadership required to be successful in our industry. Brad is an ideal person to lead our office as we continue to grow our presence in Arkansas."

Hammond earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Arkansas.



Hammond

With Hammond moving to office leader, Chris Hall has been promoted to team leader for the Fayetteville/Springdale water/wastewater team. He recently worked with Olsson's water/wastewater team in Springfield, Missouri.

Hall is a graduate of the University of Arkansas and has more than 20 years of experience in water/wastewater engineering.

Rick Herrick, P.E. who in the 1990s helped build Olsson's transportation practice from the ground up, has been tabbed to lead the Fayetteville transportation team.

Herrick has more than 40 years of experience working on public sector projects. He has experience at corridor planning and overseeing transportation-based development projects. Since 2016, he has led Olsson's growth strategy for public sector clients based in Nebraska. He also served as interim practice leader and was Olsson's client relationship manager for the City of Lincoln.

"I'm excited about putting together a team focused on providing safe and reliable solutions to improve the communities in and around Arkansas," he said.

Olsson has completed transportation-related projects in Northwest Arkansas,



Hall



Herrick

such as Monte Ne Road in Rogers and the Maple Street Bike Track in Fayetteville. Building a team dedicated to transportation projects in Arkansas allows the firm to provide a wider range of services for freeways, streets, aviation, rail, traffic engineering, bicycle and pedestrian, transportation technology and mass transit.

"Growing our transportation team in Fayetteville gives us the opportunity to serve our Arkansas-based clients and those nearby more quickly and more efficiently," said Hammond. "Rick Herrick is the ideal person to lead this new team. He is an experienced manager and engineer who has overseen numerous transportation projects throughout his career."

Herrick earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Olsson 94th on ENR annual list

Olsson Inc. ranks among the top 100 design firms in the United States for the third consecutive year, placing 94th on the 2020 annual ranking by Engineering News-Record.

Olsson moved up two spots on ENR's Top 500 Design Firms list after growing revenue by nearly 13 percent in 2019. ENR ranks companies based on revenue for design services performed during the previous year.

The firm first cracked ENR's Top 100 Design Firms list in 2018 at No. 98. Olsson

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son made its first appearance on ENR's Top 500 Design Firms list in 1996, and it has been included on the list every year since.

"We work hard to provide our clients with innovative and sustainable designs combined with outstanding service," said Brad Strittmatter, P.E., CEO of Olsson. "Together with our clients, we've been successful because we continually strive to improve the communities in which we live and work."

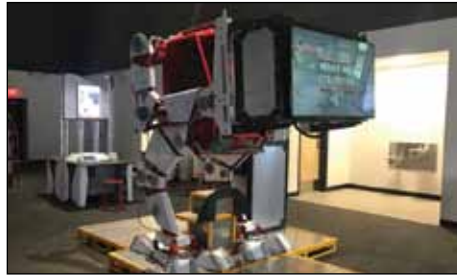


Strittmatter

Olsson opened for business in 1956 as a one-man shop serving clients in southeastern Nebraska. Since then, it has grown to nearly 1,300 employees and over the last year worked on more than 6,900 projects throughout the United States. It is based in Lincoln, Nebraska, and has an office in Fayetteville.

B&F lead designer for Mid-America's new Exhibit Hall

B & F Engineering, Inc. served as the owner's representative and project lead design professional for the new Traveling Exhibit Hall at Mid-America Science Museum in Hot Springs.



The museum took occupancy on April 23. The new structure adds 5,180 square feet of dedicated exhibit space, making Mid-America the largest venue for science exhibits in the state.

French Architects of Hot Springs, Brown Engineers, LLC, and GTS, Inc. were all integral members of the design team.

The inaugural exhibit "Bionic Me" arrived May 22. "Bionic Me" consists of twenty-two exhibits that give visitors a look at how technology can potentially benefit the human body. It uses the senses to explore and engage people to the possibilities of science. Families can interact with all the exhibits of "Bionic Me," including using a virtual jet pack, controlling things using the mind, or even racing a Paralympian.

The museum celebrated 40 years of operation in 2019.

The Traveling Exhibit Hall Construction was funded by a bond issue authorized by city voters in September 2018. It was completed on schedule and within budget by general contractor Integrity Construction of Arkansas.

ENR gives Garver regional award

Following a year that included a company-wide celebration with employees, clients, and communities across the country, Engineering News-Record Texas & Louisiana has named Garver its 2020 Design Firm of the Year.

The magazine noted Garver's growth and last year's Garver Chain Reaction Challenge, which both recognized the firm's centennial year and encouraged the next generation of engineers.



Hoskins

Garver President and CEO Brock Hoskins, P.E., said, "The last year really was a great year for Garver, and we were happy to share it with

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In the News (Cont'd)

so many of those closest to us. We look forward to continuing to work alongside these communities and our valued clients on the critical projects they need to keep growing.”

Garver's growth last year was also reflected in its opening new offices in Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Arkansas Business says Garver is tops

Garver was named Business of the Year during the 32nd Arkansas Business of the Year Awards event in Little Rock earlier this year.

Arkansas Business Publishing Group annually honors the state's top businesses, executives, and nonprofits.

Garver, founded in Little Rock in 1919, is the state's largest and oldest multi-disciplined engineering, planning, and environmental services firm with nearly 800 employees spread across the United States.

In accepting the award, President and CEO Brock Hoskins thanked Garver's past and current employees and recognized other category finalists.

“I'm extremely proud of our employee-centered culture that makes our firm successful, so I want to thank our employees, past and current, for their passion and building Garver into a strong company,” Hoskins said.

Garver's Mueller inducted into class

Garver Transportation Team Leader Todd Mueller, P.E., has been included among the most recent class of Arkansas Academy of Civil Engineering (AAACE) inductees.



Mueller

Mueller joins 12 others in the latest class who were inducted during its 40th anniversary.

AAACE now has more than 200 active members who mentor, support, and work

with students and faculty within the civil engineering department.

Mueller, based in Garver's North Little Rock office, has for more than a decade delivered integral transportation improvement projects to communities across the state. He graduated magna cum laude from the University of Arkansas, and he is also active in the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers, Arkansas Society of Civil Engineers, Arkansas Public Works Association, and the Little Rock Engineers Club.

“I've dedicated my career to improving infrastructure in communities throughout the state, and I wouldn't have been able to do it without the education and guidance I received at the university,” Mueller said.

Martin is on UAMS advisory board

Garver Arkansas Water Team Leader Jerry Martin, P.E., has been appointed to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Public Health Advisory Board, a



Martin

position from which he will have the opportunity to promote the impact that improved water and wastewater infrastructure has on public health.

Martin joins a diverse group representing education, state government, health care, and law. With more than a dozen distinguished leaders on the board, Martin will collaborate with them to improve health and promote the well-being of communities through education, research, and service.

“The board exists to promote the importance of public health, and there's no larger benefit to public health than providing access to clean and sustainable water supplies,” Martin said. “I'm excited to share ideas with our community leaders on how we can combine all our expertise to improve public health throughout the state.”

Guppy now VP of human resources at Crafton Tull

Crafton Tull has promoted Courtney Guppy to vice president of human resources.



Guppy

A graduate of Missouri State University, Guppy held positions in HR at Mercy Health System of Northwest Arkansas as well as Walmart corporate before joining the Crafton Tull team

as director of human resources in April 2019. She is very involved in the Northwest Arkansas community, volunteering for The Sunshine School Sunshine Gala, running in the Bentonville Half Marathon, biking the Razorback Regional Greenway, and attending First Baptist Church of Bentonville with her husband and two children.

President and CEO Matt Crafton said, “Courtney is a great addition to our firm. Her skill set, knowledge, and energy make her the perfect fit to manage our human resources department.”

MCE moves its Fayetteville office to new location

McClelland Consulting Engineers (MCE) is expanding its business with a new office location. Its Fayetteville office moved from College Avenue to a new location at 1580 East Stearns Street.

The move occurred July 10, and the office was to be fully operational July 13. Phone numbers and email addresses remain the same, as does the firm's website address and social media accounts. The office's number is 479.443.2377.

MCE said in a press release that it hopes this new facility will offer it the opportunity to better serve its Northwest Arkansas communities.



APRIL LESTER, construction materials testing laboratory supervisor, performs a plastic limit and liquid limit test on soil. The test determines a soil's plasticity index, meaning how dry it can be before crumbling apart. It also tests its fluidity, or how wet it can become and still hold together.

MCE Little Rock office offering geotechnical

MCE's Little Rock office at 7302 Kanis Road is now offering geotechnical en-

gineering services through its new construction materials laboratory.

The lab is currently staffed and offers field and lab testing for construction materials testing, as well as on-site construction observations. It also is currently going through the process to become an accredited laboratory through the Arkansas Department of Transportation.

MCE helps Benton Utilities install power poles

MCE assisted Benton Utilities and power pole designer Fisher-Arnold with a topographic survey, geotechnical engineering, and geotechnical construction observation for the installation of two deep foundations to support the electrical power poles on the west and east banks of the Saline River south of Interstate 30.

The photo shows the process of drilling and constructing the foundation for a



65-foot-tall, self-supporting power pole. To reach a sufficient depth into bedrock, the nine-foot-diameter foundation for the west pole needed to be placed 51 feet below the ground surface. After the hole was drilled through the soil and rock,

In the News continues on page 12

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ACEC/A Member Spotlight

Halff Associates a multidisciplinary firm

Company completes merger with Marlar Engineering by changing name of state office

Halff Associates has completed its acquisition of Marlar Engineering Company, but while the name has changed, the firm's commitment to its clients remains the same.

The two firms came together after James Arbuckle, P.E., came to Arkansas to open a Halff office in January 2017. Arbuckle had known Mike Marlar, P.E., president of Marlar Engineering, for many years, and during one of the first conferences Arbuckle attended, struck up a conversation about joining forces.

Meetings led to discussions and eventually an acquisition. Halff was a much larger operation. The employee-owned firm was founded in 1950 by Dr. Albert H. Halff in Dallas and now operates 23 offices, including 13 in Texas, six in Florida, and one each in Oklahoma and Louisiana. Marlar Engineering, meanwhile, had a strong project history and relationships in Arkansas. Marlar, a water-wastewater engineer, had a team of 15, including survey crews and inspectors.

The local office was known as Halff+Marlar for about 18 months but now is known as Halff Associates. It employs 35 employees in Arkansas, including 12 professional engineers, three professional surveyors, a professional landscape architect and five engineers in training. It maintains an office in the Kirkpatrick Plaza in Little Rock as well as the former Marlar office in North Little Rock. Mike Marlar is still very active in the company.

Arbuckle, the firm's operations manager and office manager, was Halff's only employee when he opened the office, but it was always his vision to have a multidisciplinary operation. Doing so provides more balance and protects against the valleys that can come with a particular type of work.

Its projects cover the range of civil engineering. These include the McCain Street Bridge in North Little Rock, a just-completed wastewater treatment plant in



DIVERSE PROJECTS.

It was always operations manager James Arbuckle's goal for Halff Associates' Little Rock office to be a multidisciplinary firm. Pictured are three of its projects: the master plan for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park in Arkadelphia, the McCain Street Bridge in North Little Rock, and a newly completed wastewater treatment plant in Bull Shoals.

Bull Shoals, the master plan for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park in Arkadelphia, Stone Dam Creek Trail in Conway, and the Allsopp Park Trail Connector in Little Rock. The firm now has half a dozen projects with the Arkansas Department of Transportation, including several bridge replacement projects and its first planning contract for the department. It's also doing projects at Camp

Robinson and at the Little Rock Air Force Base.

The firm recently completed a truck traffic study for the city of Fort Smith, which wanted to reduce the number of trucks traveling through the downtown area. That project was especially challenging because of historic properties along Garrison Avenue and the riverfront area, but Halff recommended a plan to consolidate truck traffic into fewer routes along certain corridors.

Arbuckle said the firm's name is a source of occasional humor in the office.

"There's so many one-liners relative to the name 'Halff,'" he said. "However, we try to improve lives and communities by providing a 'complete' range of services."

In the News (Cont'd)

the rebar was placed into the hole and filled with 130 cubic yards of concrete (14 truckloads).

FTN announces three joining firm

FTN Associates has added Kelsey Criswell, E.I., and her husband, David Criswell, E.I., to its water resources team in the firm's Fayetteville office.

Kelsey is experienced in irrigation engineering design and evaluation, water resources engineering, and proposal writing. David has four years of experience in water rights, groundwater hydrology, and agricultural water use and management.

Both received their bachelor's degrees in biosystems and agricultural engineering from Oklahoma State University, and both attended Colorado State University, where they earned master's degrees in civil and environmental engineering.

Brynn Bodwell will be working at FTN's Fayetteville office. She completed her bachelor's degree in biological engineering, with a concentration in environmental engineering, from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.



K. Criswell



D. Criswell



Bodwell

Parks, founder of Benchmark Group, passes April 18

Paul Parks, P.E., founder and chairman of the Benchmark Group, died April 18.

Parks founded Paul C. Parks Engineering, Inc. in Rogers on April 3, 1978 as a sole proprietorship offering electrical engineering services. He later incorporated the business with the purpose of sharing ownership with his staff.



Parks

Under his leadership, the company grew into an engineering and architectural firm with more than 170 employees. It is licensed in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

Parks instilled a tradition of family first, quality practices, and customer service. He is survived by his wife, Janet, and their son, Charles Parks.

The full-service engineering and architectural firm is now led by its president, David P. Kimball, P.E.

Parks was born March 3, 1946, in Sioux City, Iowa, and after college worked in Omaha at the Union Pacific Railroad's office. He moved to Rogers after marrying Janet.

A private service was held April 24. Condolences may be sent to the Paul Parks family in care of Benchmark Group, 1805 N. 2nd Street, Rogers, AR 72756.

Former ACEC/A president Daniel dies

D. Gene Daniel, a former president of the ACEC/A, died June 8.

Daniel was technical director and president of Beaver Lake Concrete in

Northwest Arkansas after working in private practice as a civil engineer in Fort Smith. Before that, he taught at the University of Arkansas.



Daniel

After returning to his hometown of Claremore, Oklahoma, he returned to consulting and worked to correct issues with the concrete on the Big Dig tunnel project through the heart of Boston.

He was born Oct. 25, 1934, in Oklahoma City and graduated from Claremore High School in 1952. He earned a bachelor's of architectural engineering from Oklahoma A&M and a master's of science in civil engineering from the University of Arkansas. He was a professional engineer.

Daniel received the 2018 Richard D. Gaynor Award from the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association for his lifetime contributions. In 2011, he was named an Industry Influencer by The Concrete Producer magazine for his lifetime contributions and continued advocacy for the small producer. He was named a Fellow by both the National Academy of Forensic Engineers and the American Concrete Institute.

He and his late wife, Wilma, had three children. Raised on a farm, he loved working the land and taking family road trips to visit national parks (the Grand Canyon was his favorite), professional baseball (a St. Louis Cardinals fan) and state university bookstores (because that is where the technical books were).



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2020-21 ASPE President



DANIEL GEORGE, P.E., says being a chapter officer can help an engineer “come out of your shell a little bit” and learn about marketing and the structure of engineering organizations.

George seeking more young engineers

New ASPE president first became active while helping rebuild Hot Springs Chapter

By Steve Brawner
Editor

At 33, Daniel George, P.E., has already seen the benefits that come with active ASPE membership, and he wants others to enjoy the same experiences.

George, a project engineer with B & F Engineering and the 2020-21 ASPE president, first became involved in the organization at the Hot Springs Chapter level when he was invited to attend a meeting. At the time, the chapter was struggling and meeting irregularly, so he volunteered to be an officer along with Entergy's Paul Speers, P.E., and George's fellow engineer at B & F, Dustin Ward, P.E. Speers was the president.

They and others rebuilt the Hot Springs Chapter. For George, it offered

meaningful lessons in leadership and involvement.

“You go in, and you're going to go in front of your chapter as a chapter officer, and you're going to lead that meeting,” he said. “I mean, you kind of come out of your shell a little bit, and you're going to stand up in front of 20 engineers that you work around and you kind of say, ‘All right, guys, we're going to start the meeting. Here's who we've got.’”

“It kind of does a lot of different things for you. You get the marketing ... and learning how those organizations function, and all the things out there that they do, that if you're just cranking calculations all the time you may not see.”

After serving as Hot Springs Chapter president, George next served on an NSPE committee that screened candidates for vice president. He was the southwest region's representative and one of about half a dozen people on the com-

mittee. He became an ASPE officer when Speers, then the president, invited him to join.

Now that he's ASPE president, he said one of his goals is helping other young engineers see the organization's benefits.

“I think that would be one of them is to really get the word out about how we can benefit younger engineers to get into that role and go through that process and see everything that's out there beyond the calculations and the engineering,” he said.

Lessons from the pandemic

George was interviewed at B & F Engineering on June 16. At that point, most staff members had returned to the office after an unusual three months. Starting in mid-March, B & F limited its office to 10 people and tried to ensure they were spread out into their own spaces because of the covid-19 pandemic. About half the

staff had transitioned to work at home. For those who remained, temperatures were taken and logged daily. Travel was limited. Survey crews wore masks in the truck.

The pandemic was a challenging situation, but George said there were benefits for the engineering profession.

"If we're looking for good in it, I think from what I've seen is we had a lot of these things at our disposal like Zoom and some of this teleconferencing and all these things. But (we) might have been just not so apt to use it before because it's just easy (to say), OK, I've got to go across town to meet with somebody. Just go meet.

"This kind of forced using those things, and it's like, well, this is actually pretty helpful. ... I'm here, and one of our other engineers is at his house. We would share our screens with each other, and it was not the same, but we were able to still function, and it forced that, and we may not have been using (it) had we not been forced to."

Engineers will help shape the new normal because health and safety are their primary concerns. George said there could be changes to ventilation standards, for example.

"Occupancy is driven by so many square feet per person," he said. "Does that number go up because of this? Then that ripples down to, you need bigger buildings to accommodate the same number of people potentially."

Racial equality is the other big societal issue making a lot of news these days. Asked about the need for more diversity in the engineering profession, George said, "It's definitely something that's out there right now, and I think there's definitely improvement to be made and lots of ways to make things more equal." He said more aggressive outreach to minorities is needed. Engineers can help by going into schools and showing students what engineering is.

George grew up in Hot Springs as the son of a job site commercial construction superintendent. He liked construction and liked seeing the finished products but didn't want to stay outside in the field digging ditches and tying rebar. He wasn't artistic, so architecture wasn't an option, but civil engineering was. After graduating Lakeside High School in 2005, he attended the University of Arkansas, from which he graduated with a civil engineering degree in 2009. He'd interned at B & F the summer before his senior year and decided it would be a great place to work as well as a way to come home to Hot Springs.

Having that hands-on experience growing up in construction has proven helpful now that he's an engineer, George said.

"Some of these things you're designing, I was exposed to actually putting some of that together, so definitely early on when I started it was really helpful, but I think it still is," he said. "I've been

here 11 years full time this summer, but it's still helpful now having that actual application of the work."

When he first started working at B & F, he did mostly structural work, and since then he's done those types of projects as well as a lot of site development. Among his major projects was redesigning the roof at Little Rock's First Security Amphitheater. The new design replaced the fabric material with glulam wood. Among his more rewarding clients has been his alma mater, the Lakeside School District, where he's now the lead engineer. Projects involving B & F have "pretty much reshaped the campus over the last 10 years," he said. A new junior high, performing arts center, and other improvements are being constructed. Previously, B & F designed a roundabout at the campus entrance and designed other projects, including playground rehabilitation and drainage improvements. B & F also recently finished a project for the Hot Springs School District where one building on a 12-acre site houses three stories of classrooms, a basketball arena and an auditorium.

George and his wife, Brittany, a high school counselor at Hot Springs High School, have two children: Paisley, 6, and Wyatt, 3. They have a travel trailer and enjoy camping as a family. They can be at Lake Ouachita in 30 minutes, and it's been a good hobby to have during the pandemic. He also likes to fish and hunt deer.

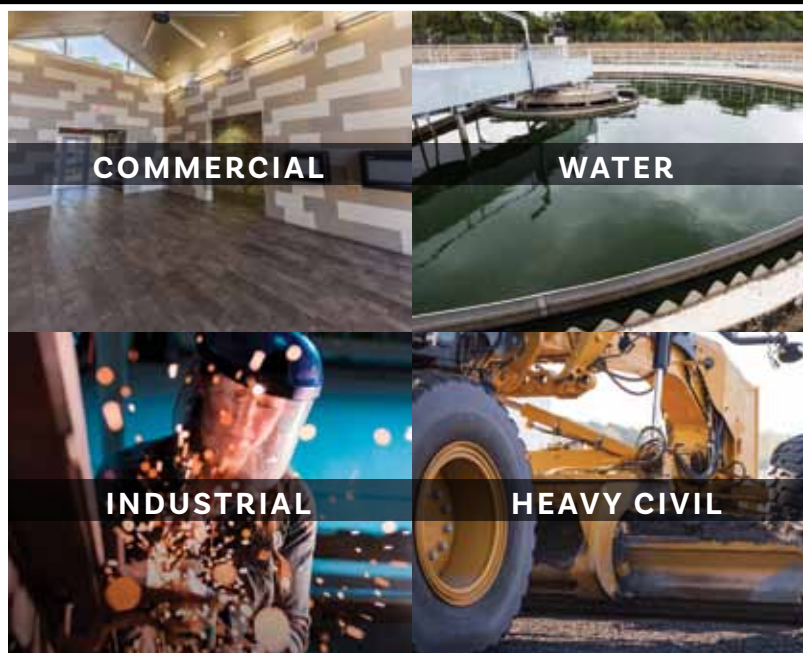


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2020-21 ACEC / A President



STEVEN BEAM, P.E., says the covid-19 pandemic has shown that engineers can work well remotely. He said the pandemic will undoubtedly affect future design standards, thought it's too soon to know exactly how. Meanwhile, he believes the engineering profession must become more inclusive and diverse, and he wants ACEC/A to advance that conversation.

Beam leading during pandemic, change

President says ACEC/A should lead in promoting diversity in engineering profession

By **Steve Brawner**
Editor

The new ACEC/A president has a lot on his plate. In addition to leading the organization during a pandemic and a time of social change, he's also the design project director for one of the Arkansas Department of Transportation's most important projects ever.

Steven Beam, P.E., of Burns & McDonnell has a major leadership role in the 30 Crossing project, which will replace the Interstate 30 bridge connecting Little

Rock and North Little Rock across the Arkansas River and will make other major improvements through the corridor.

The \$630 million project is ARDOT's first design-build project and its most expensive project ever. Burns & McDonnell is the lead design firm for design-builder Kiewit-Massman Constructors, a joint venture of Kiewit Infrastructure South and Massman Construction. The project has been the focus of intense public scrutiny and is currently in litigation. The current design will replace the bridge, which was built in the late 1950s, and create 10 lanes of traffic that includes three main through-lanes and two collector-distributor lanes in each direction. The

biggest design challenge, Beam said, is maintaining traffic in that busy corridor while construction occurs.

As project director, Beam is focused on financials and staffing. About 100 people are working on the project between Burns & McDonnell's team members and subconsultants.

"It's humbling and exciting," Beam said. "It really is one of those projects that's kind of career defining. ... It's just neat to be able to be a part of something that's a first, something that's that big and that important to a region and our state."

The subconsultants are HDR, McClelland Consulting Engineers, HG Consult and Iconic Consulting Group.

The last two are disadvantaged business enterprises, or companies where minorities or women own at least 51% of the company and control management and daily operations.

Beam takes over leadership of ACEC/A during a time of racial unrest across the country in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. While the public's focus has been on law enforcement reforms, he said the engineering profession also should be more inclusive.

Beam said ACEC/A could advance the conversation by promoting more usage of disadvantaged business enterprises, or DBEs. He said most states surrounding Arkansas have goals to engage those firms. The Missouri Department of Transportation's contracts require a certain percentage of a contractor's work be awarded to a DBE firm. There are federal requirements in Arkansas, and there are DBE requirements for construction contractors to meet, but there have not been as many state requirements for design services.

"The engineering profession itself historically has not been a very diverse industry," he said. "We're much better today than we were even 20 years ago, but we still are a predominantly male, predominantly white profession, and so I think that this just amplifies the importance of continuing those efforts to reach out to diverse communities, and a lot of it starts with attracting students into the profession."

A construction background

Beam, 40, comes from a construction background. His father and paternal grandfather were construction contractors, while his paternal great-grandfather was a heavy equipment operator. Beam had worked for his dad in his youth and liked the construction field, so he decided to earn his civil engineering degree at the University of Arkansas. Neither of his parents graduated college, but they always stressed the importance of earning a degree. His two brothers are a civil engineer and a mechanical engineer, and his sister has a Ph.D. and teaches genetics at the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Smith. He graduated in 2002, earned a master's of civil engineering degree in 2003, and later earned his MBA from John Brown University in 2010.

He worked part-time for Crafton Tull while earning his master's degree and then joined the firm full-time in 2003. He eventually managed the firm's civil engineering and surveying departments at its Rogers office. He made the move to Kansas City, Missouri-based Burns & McDonnell after it made him an offer to open a local office in Northwest Arkansas. The move would allow him to grow his own operation and team from the ground up and work for an employee-owned company, which Crafton Tull also became last year.

"It really does change, I think, the work environment, and you're surrounded with other people who realize that your success is good for them because it's good for the company, and we're all owners in the company," Beam said.

Beam's design experience is predominantly in roadways, as is the local office's, which also does water and wastewater work. As office manager, the bulk of his time these days is focused on project and people management. While he likes seeing the

finished product of his work, he takes more pleasure in its effect on communities.

"It was not getting that subdivision, the roads built and the engineering part of it, but it was being able to drive through that subdivision in two years and seeing the houses built and the kids out playing basketball in their driveways and families walking," he said. "It's the community development aspect of what we do, enriching people's lives with the work that we do, that really does drive me."

Working remotely worked well

Beam spoke to Building Arkansas from a mostly empty office in Springdale June 17. At the time, Washington County had become one of the nation's covid-19 hotspots. He and all but two staff members had been working from home.

It had gone well. The office had been using videoconferencing tools beforehand, so it didn't face a learning curve when employees moved offsite. In fact, many employees said they preferred working from home and were more productive because they weren't spending an hour each day commuting.

"We within our transportation practice really did not see any downtick in our productivity measured either by hours that people were working nor progress on our projects," he said. "And so we have some pretty large projects that we have been monitoring that progress really closely, and all of those projects

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Affiliate Member Spotlight

Company offers leadership insight

Group helps leaders assess strengths and weaknesses and enjoy both work and life

Michael Brown was serving as an executive pastor at a northern Indiana church where many of his members – including business leaders – had gaps and challenges in their work lives. He would help them with those gaps as part of his ministry.

“One of them was a VP of HR for a national credit union, and he said, ‘Michael, you could charge for this.’ And I said, ‘OK, I will,’” Brown said.

What started as a part-time sideline has become a full-time business for Brown, who has a master’s degree in strategic communication and leadership and is still a minister – now at Thrive Christian Church in Fayetteville, which he started.

He founded Insight Leadership Group seven years ago. It helps leaders and managers become transformative and healthy leaders enjoying their work and home lives. It helps them improve their performance by providing data-driven soft skill leadership development in areas such as emotional intelligence, networking, navigating conflict and team building. The company’s Cultural Health Assessment helps leaders and companies find the gaps in their organizations so they can develop talent and systems with a targeted approach. Another tool, the Core Strengths 2.0 Inventory, determines how leaders lead when things are going well and how they lead amidst conflict, and it helps them find their voice.

“It’s very telling in terms of what are some new ways organizations need to look at problems in order to be more effective, more efficient and more profitable, as well as to highlight what they do very well,” Brown said. “And then once they have all that information, we’re able to put together a very effective leadership training experience for each organization.”

The training helps leaders better serve their companies and also better manage the stresses of their responsibilities.

“I love helping leaders and organizations develop, and helping them not only get work done but work in a way that al-



INSIGHT LEADERSHIP. Michael Brown, founder of Fayetteville-based Insight Leadership Group, and Laura Tronzano, his business partner, are shown facilitating group trainings. Brown started offering work-life leadership training while pastoring a church in Indiana and eventually started Insight Leadership. Tronzano has a background in human relations.



lows them to sleep at night without regret,” Brown said. He later added, “We’re able to go into organizations and help them develop their people and help their people be healthier and help people love their life at work,” which affects their home life.

The ACEC/A affiliate member has experience working with the engineering community, including the ACEC/A-ASPE Emerging Leaders program that serves up-and-coming members of the profession. Brown said engineers value people, care for employees, and change their behavior when they realize a new way of doing something is more effective.

“Another strength is clearly their intelligence, the ability to be very analytical,

to nail down the root of a problem and then start to build that strategy on how to solve it,” he said. “That’s a great strength to have.”

An area where some engineers might need to improve is in soft skills involved in communication and collaboration. Laura Tronzano, the firm’s chief people and experience officer, said one engineer training participant seemed distracted and had to leave a session a couple of times. Afterwards, he shared how he had responded over email to a client who was being stubborn about when and how to meet.

“He read us his response and he said, ‘You know, this isn’t what I would have normally typed,’” she said.

Beam

Continued from page 17

have stayed on schedule. We're not having any sort of quality issues or communication issues amongst the team."

Beam said his firm's engineers have become better collaborators as they work with remote teams, multi-office companies, and subconsultants or other consultants on multidiscipline projects.

As office manager, Beam had selected the firm's new 3,400-square-foot location, which is across the street from its old one. The Springdale operation had simply outgrown its old location and needed more space for its 13 team members, 11 of them professional engineers, so it made the move around the first of the year. Now Beam knows employees often can work just as well at home. He doesn't regret making the move, and he's glad that the company can be more flexible in its work arrangements in the future.

"The way that I look at it now really is that we don't have to be as constrained by our facilities to really enable our growth," he said. "Prior to this, I would have thought, 'OK, I can see 20 people in this office, and so I'll be here until I need more seats than that, and then I'll look for something else.' But having gone through this experience and seeing how it's working as well as what it is, I think that we'll be able to have some flexibility."

Beam said the pandemic will have long-term effects on the engineering profession, thought it's too early to tell what those will be. Decisions are being made from a limited data set, and engineers and architects are waiting on the medical community to provide more information. For example, not enough is known about the risks of outdoor spaces or how long the virus resides on surfaces – information that could lead to designs with more sensor-operated doors. He expects more attention to be paid to occupancy levels, entrances, and how people congregate and

move through open areas. Air circulation will be another consideration.

He doesn't know if the changes will be codified into design requirements, but they will be considered by responsible designers.

Beam has other goals for ACEC/A. He said the last couple of years have been some of the most challenging for the industry regarding licensure, and he wants to continue to protect it. He wants to get more input from members about what the organization can do for them. He'd also like to formulate a strategy for reaching non-member firms in the state's four corners.

"I'm of the opinion that, let's get input from as many people as we can. ... If we get broad participation, we're going to be a better organization for it," he said.

Beam and his wife, Sydnee, have two sons, Tate, 13, and Dax, 11, who keep them busy at the ballparks. He said he loves the outdoors and enjoys hunting, fishing, kayaking and canoeing.

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