

HELIX

The Masonry Magazine of Texas

Volume 25, No. 3

Fall 2021

***2021 TMC
Conference Review**

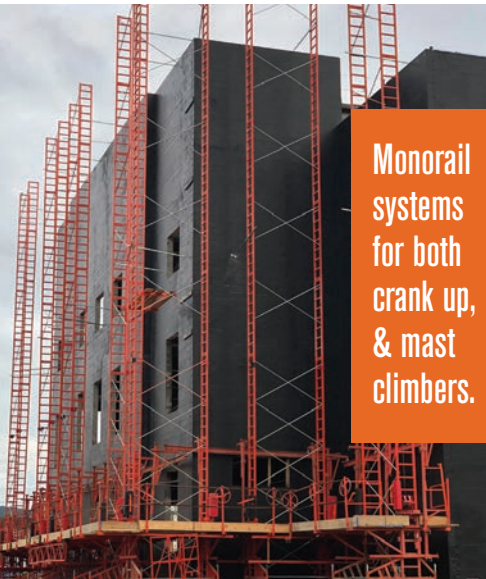
***2021 State Golden
Trowel Winners**

***High School
'Masonry ROCKS!'
Days Kick Off
& More!**

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State Wide Update

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A Message From Our Executive Director: Mr. Tony Topping

It has been less than a year since Texas Masonry Council turned its full attention to finding the next generation of masonry professionals with the ‘Masonry Rocks!’ career program. We started to venture to high schools Spring 2021 during the height of COVID restrictions – truly not knowing if we could host hands-on masonry demonstrations. Turns out, schools welcomed us to their campuses and were eager for the training we were offering!

TMC has organized and hosted high school “masonry days” in all parts of the state and has helped nearly 1,000 Texas students lay their first brick! Because of the in-person connection to masonry industry, dozens of those students now see a future in masonry. These masonry day events are growing in popularity, schools across the state are interested in hosting, and schools are starting to see what masonry in the classroom can do for their students; this program is helping to give students a real opportunity at a career they did not know existed, and TMC is here to make sure they find their way!

Of course, this doesn’t happen without our membership support. I appreciate the members that were able to travel to our annual convention in Austin, Texas in August! It was a huge success and we have big ideas and big changes in mind for next year within our association and at our next convention in San Antonio. Please pencil in the 2022 TMC Annual Convention and Golden Trowel Awards in your calendars for August 3-5, 2022.

Finally, I want to send a special congratulations to Paul Odom. Mr. Odom was recently inducted into the MCAA Masonry Hall of Fame and joins an impressive group of fellow Texans in the Hall. He is a longtime supporter of the Texas Masonry Council and has been an inspiration to me personally with his passion and care for those around him!

**Thanks for reading and supporting the
Texas Masonry Council!**

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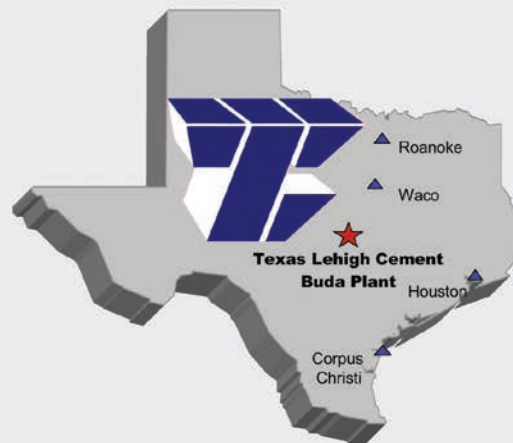
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Paul Odom: Texas Man, Texas sized *Legacy*

Paul Odom proudly claims himself to be an “artistic manipulator of the burnt clay product,” otherwise known as a mason! He got his start with Lee Masonry in 1979 as a laborer, apprentice, then estimator. Paul with Susie started P and S Masonry; Paul handling the field and operations. Paul’s hard work extends beyond his own businesses; he has been active in the industry serving as Central Texas Masonry Contractors Association President, currently serves as MCAA’s past-chairman, and is an active member of Texas Masonry Council’s Workforce Development Committee whose main purpose is getting trowels in the hand of every high school student in the great state of Texas!

When not working or participating in industry events, Paul is a devoted father and “YaYa.” He is also a talented woodworker, who constantly has a project in process!

**Congratulations Paul –
2021 MCAA Hall of Fame Inductee!**



Touching Lives

“Got to run – I have a special student I have to attend to!” Mr. Kaleb Blankenship says as he trots outside of the Construction Trades Classroom at Grand Prairie High School.

This special student is Johnny Johnson, a legally blind special education student enrolled in the Principles of Construction class which serves as the prerequisite to the masonry pathway at GPHS. Johnson requested to enroll in the principles of construction class upon entering the ninth grade. Mr. Blankenship says, “I’ve never had a student with the challenges he has, but if he wants to be here, I won’t leave him behind!”

With his Instructional Aide, Johnny spent time at his training stand spreading mud and laying brick at the Grand Prairie Masonry Days on September 2nd, 2021. Johnny’s Instructional Aide, said, “All [he] has been saying since yesterday ‘I get to go to the shop - Shop day!’”

With the help of a dedicated teacher and exceptional Instructional Aide, Johnny Johnson gets to have the same experiences in Construction Trades as his classmates – and TMC’s Masonry Days were no exception!



Johnny Johnson with Mr. Blankenship, laying a brick using additional means beyond sight to create a level course



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State Golden Trowel Winners

Golden Trowel - Block:

Arlington Fine Arts and Athletic Facility

Mason: DMG

Architect: HKS Inc.

General Contractor: Adolphson & Peterson Construction

Suppliers: Acme Brick Company, Advanced Architectural Stone, Inc., Blackson Brick Company, Hohmann & Barnard, Inc., Texas Building Products



Honorable Mention - Block:

Clemens HS Additions and Renovations

Mason: Ericstad, Inc.

Architect: Marmon Mok Architecture

General Contractor: Bartlett Cocke General Contractors, LLC

Suppliers: Best Block, I-10 Building Materials, Ltd. / Stone Source



Golden Trowel - College & University: *Brockman Hall for Opera*

Mason: Camarata Masonry Systems, Ltd.

Architect: Allan Greenberg Architect

General Contractor: Tellepsen Builders

Suppliers: Best Block, Mustang Metal and Supply Co., Siteworks, Inc.



Honorable Mention - College & University: *TCU Neely School of Business*

Mason: Skinner Masonry LLP

Architect: Hahnfeld Hoffer Stanford

General Contractor: Linbeck Group, LLC

Suppliers: Acme Brick Company, Advanced Architectural Stone, Best Block, Builders Equipment & Supply Co., Hohmann & Barnard,



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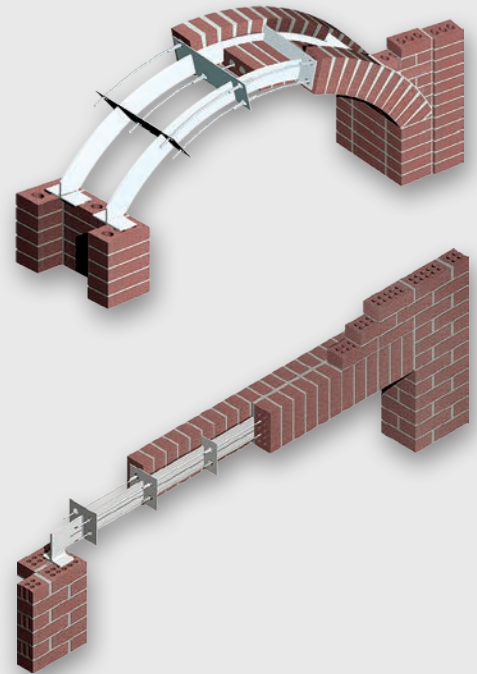
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**Honorable Mention -
Everyday Excellence:
VIA Brooks Transit Center -
Art Installastion Project**

Mason: Shadrock & Williams
Architect: Kersey Ceramics, LLC
General Contractor: Vertex
General Contractors
Suppliers: San Antonio
Masonry and Steel

**Golden Trowel -
Everyday Excellence:
Intelligista Coffee**

Mason: C.W. Oates Masonry, Inc.
Architect: Magic Architecture
Artist: Erin Elizabeth Curtis
General Contractor: Franklin Alan
Suppliers: Continental Cut
Stone, Elgin-Butler

**Golden Trowel -
Government and
Institutional:
Grapevine Main Rail Station**

Mason: Skinner Masonry LLP
Architect: Architexas
General Contractor: Manhattan
Construction Co.
Suppliers: Acme Brick Company,
Builders Equipment & Supply Co.,
Hohmann & Barnard, Inc., Holcim,
Prosoco, Inc., Spec Mix / Quikrete, Spec
Rents, Texas Building Products

**Honorable Mention -
Government and Institutional:
Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church**

Mason: City Masonry
Architect: Perkins & Will
General Contractor: Tellepsen Builders
Suppliers: Acme Brick Company,
Best Block, Brand Safeway, Lhoist North
America, Spec Rents

Golden Trowel - K-12 Education:

Waxahachie High School

Mason: Wilks Masonry

Architect: Corgan Associates, Inc.

General Contractor: Gallagher

Construction Services

Suppliers: Acme Brick Company, Best Block,
Prosoco, Inc., Spec Mix



Honorable Mention - K-12 Education:

Kirby Middle School - Renovations Project

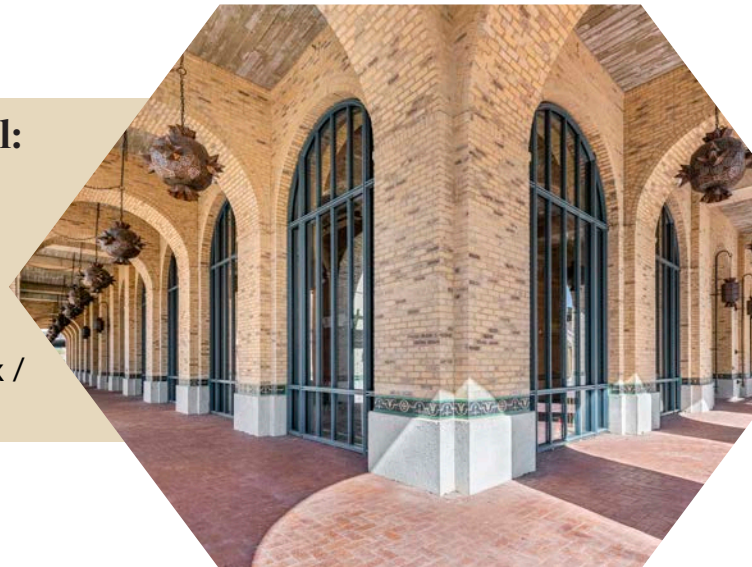
Mason: Rick Stone Masonry

Architect: PBK Architects

General Contractor: Bartlett Cocke General Contractors

Suppliers: Acme Brick/Featherlite, Best Block, I-10
Building Materials, Ltd./Stone Source, San Antonio

Masonry and Steel



Honorable Mention - Industrial & Commercial:

Broadway Office Development

Mason: Shadrock & Williams

Architect: Don B. McDonald, Architect

General Contractor: Joeris General Contractors

Suppliers: Acme Brick / Featherlite, Best Block,
I-10 Building Materials, Ltd. / Stone Source, Spec Mix /
Quickrete, Spec Rents



Golden Trowel - Industrial & Commercial: *Freedom Place at Old Parkland*

Mason: Dee Brown, Inc.

Architect: Craig Hamilton Architects

General Contractor: The Beck Group

Suppliers: Advanced Architectural Stone,
Best Block, Blackson Brick Company, Prosoco,
Spec Mix, TNT Equipment Company, Inc.

**Honorable Mention -
Multifamily Residential:
*Camden Downtown***

Mason: Brazos Masonry
Architect: ZCA Residential
General Contractor: DE
Harvey Builders
Suppliers: Acme Brick,
Spec Rents, Hohmann & Barnard

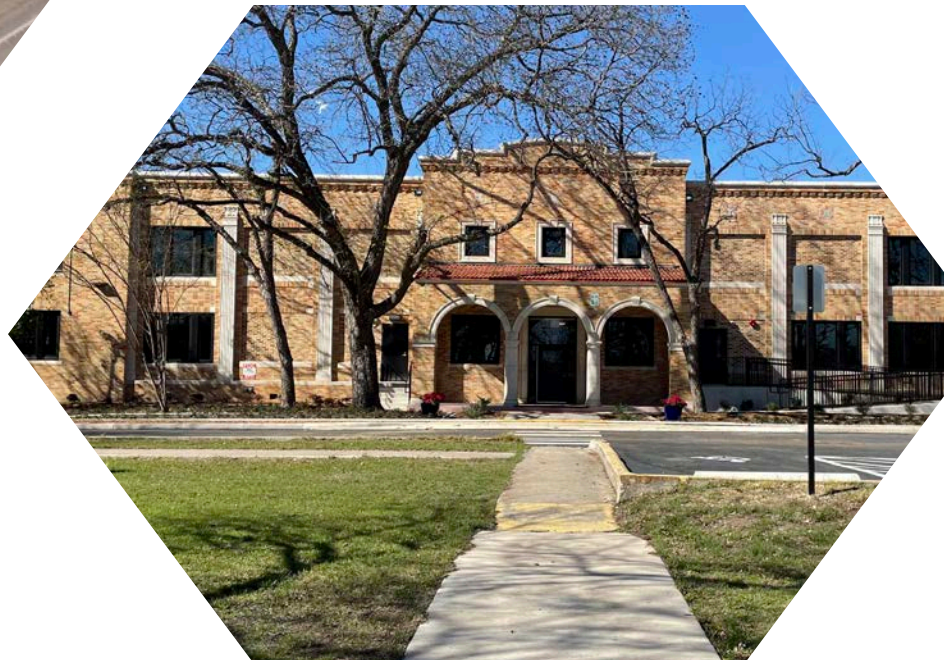


**Golden Trowel - Multifamily
Residential:
*Crescent Bishop Arts***

Mason: Galindo & Boyd Wall Systems,
Architect: WDG Architecture Dallas
General Contractor: Andres
Construction Services, LLC
Suppliers: Acme Brick Company, Builders
Equipment & Supply Co., Hohmann & Barnard,
Prosoco, Spec Mix / Quikrete, Texas Building
Products, TNT Equipment Company, Inc.

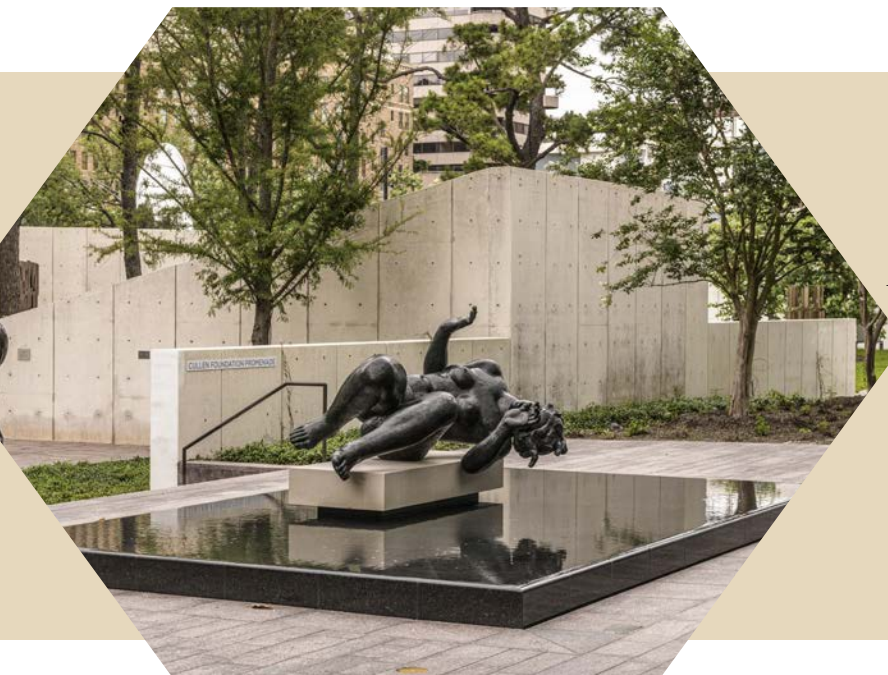
**Honorable Mention -
Restoration:
*San Antonio State Hospital,
Building 521 project***

Mason: Shadrock & Williams
Architect: Chesney Morales Partners
General Contractor: Vaughn Construction
Suppliers: Acme Brick /
Featherlite, I-10 Building
Materials, Ltd. / Stone Source



Golden Trowel - Restoration: *Hall of State*

Mason: Dee Brown
Architect: Gensler
General Contractor: Phoenix 1
Restoration & Construction
Suppliers: Continental Cut Stone,
Prosoco, Inc. Spec Mix / Quikrete,
TNT Equipment Company, Inc.



Golden Trowel - Hardscape & Landscape: *Museum of Fine Arts Houston Kinder Exhibition Building!*

Mason: Camarata Masonry Systems
Architect: Kendall/Heaton Associates, Inc.
General Contractor: McCarthy Building
Companies, Inc.
Suppliers: Mustang Metal and Supply Co.

Honorable Mention - Hardscape & Landscape: *Granite Park 7*

Mason: SPSD, Inc.
Architect: TBG
General Contractor: Austin Commercial
Suppliers: BESCO
Blackson Brick Company
Spec Mix



Voices From The Field:

Rudy Rivera - Metro Masonry, at Grand Prairie High School Masonry Day:

What are we doing out at Grand Prairie High School today?

"We're teaching these kids a skill to have outside of high school; it'll help them get a job and make money! If they like [masonry], they can stick with it and learn and move up quick!"

Did you see any future masons out here today?

"I saw a couple who were pretty good and really liked it!"

Would you recommend other companies getting their teams involved?

"Yeah it's good teaching kids, like I actually enjoyed it - I enjoyed teaching them what to do and what I know! Or what little I know, but when you can start to teach it that's when you start to master it."



"...I enjoyed teaching them what to do and what I know!"

- Rudy Rivera, Metro Masonry

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Meet *Cori and Ignacio*

The Texas Masonry Council staff has grown by two outstanding individuals.



Miss Cori Hancock joins us as the Marketing and Membership Coordinator; she will be connecting TMC members with students interested in internships, developing and producing TMC marketing material, and work to continuously grow TMC membership by sharing our programs with the public.

Cori has a unique background in agriculture and marketing communications. Prior to joining TMC, Cori has worked as a Client Success Manager for a marketing firm focused on promoting businesses within the trades, served as a Recruitment Coordinator for Auburn University's College of Agriculture, and has been a seventh and eighth grade environmental science teacher.

Cori earned a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture Education – Agriculture Communications option from California State University, Fresno and a Master's Degree in Agriculture Communications from Texas Tech University. Cori is a social butterfly and loves new experiences! She can often be found outdoors and exploring with friends – from new restaurant patios, to lakes and beaches, to sporting events and even to different countries, she is always on the go!

Mr. Ignacio Saucedo joins us as the Masonry Instructor Coordinator; he will be demonstrating and teaching masonry throughout the state with TMC's 'Masonry ROCKS!' workforce development program.

Ignacio (Nacho) Saucedo began working in the masonry industry at a young age with his father. While he worked on weekends and summer vacations, he pursued his diploma. After high school he began to work full time in the family business, working his way up from laborer to mason. Nacho managed several crews across the U.S. overseeing multi-family projects before taking over the company from his father in 2007.

After eighteen years in masonry, Nacho decided to change career paths but still remain in the construction industry! He began teaching Construction Trades to high school students focusing on carpentry and masonry in Conroe, Texas.

Nacho enjoyed his six years working in Education and now joins Texas Masonry Council to solely focus on the future of masonry, a cause he truly is passionate about!



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Highlights From Conference:

The 2021 Texas Masonry Council Conference was held in Austin, Texas on August 3rd through 5th. With over 200 attendees the conference was well attended from golf to game night to Golden Trowel awards!

On behalf of the Texas Masonry Council Board of Directors and staff, we appreciate all who joined us in building a better foundation for the industry - *and we look forward to seeing you next year!*



1. Spike Cam:

Mr. Sewall 'Spike' Cutler became a mobile host this year as TMC Golden Trowel awards introduced 'Spike Cam'. This roaming 'Spike Cam' allowed Golden Trowel honorable mentions and award recipients to be announced by industry allies, TMC new members, teachers, guests and friends of the masonry industry! (Pictured: Mr. Sewall Cutler and Mr. Antonio Mechler - CE King High School)

2. The Next Generation:

Our industry moves forward through wisdom of the experienced and the energy of the youth. This year we noted many young and emerging leaders taking on additional responsibilities within their workplace and our association! To continue to promote leadership development for the next generation the TMC team has decided to incorporate a young leaders session at convention 2022! (Pictured: Mr. Weston Shadrock and Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Smith)

3. Ranch Masonry Team:

Ranch Masonry celebrates their SpecMix 500 National champion, David Chavez! David Chavez has won two national titles in the Bricklayer 500. Owner, Arturo says, "It's never about me, my team is my family - we take care of our people and they work hard!" (Pictured: David Chavez, Arturo, and Tom Clark)

4. Keynote Speaker:

Mr. Ryan Shaver gave the Keynote Address at the 2021 TMC Convention. He shared advice, programming and the steps North Carolina is doing to improve their workforce development! Ryan shared great ideas for growth and workforce development in Texas! Thanks Ryan!

5. East Coast Visitors:

NCMCA staff and two time SkillsUSA Masonry National Champion Ashton White, was an honored guest at the Texas Masonry Council Conference! Both Ashton and Ryan attended throughout the week and shared great ideas for growth and development in Texas! Thanks Miss Ashton White!

6. Stealing the Show:

Many say this industry is like a big family - everyone knows everyone, and a phone call away is as far as we can get! Sometimes these phrases are actually true; Miss Anna Graves, the granddaughter of Paul Odom, stole the show in her fancy red dress and big hug for 'YaYa' as Paul Odom is recognized for his MCAA Hall of Fame Nomination!

Construction Law



Viruses and Mutations – They Aren’t Just for Diseases Anymore!

Spike Cutler

Attorney Spike Cutler, and the firm of Cutler-Smith, P.C., are staunch advocates for the rights and interests of construction trade contractors. Cutler provides legal counsel to a number of trade organizations, including the Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC) of Texas, IEC- Dallas, IEC – Fort Worth, the Subcontractors Association of the Metroplex (“SAM”), the Texas Masonry Council, the United Masonry Contractors Association of DFW, and the North Texas Stone Fabricators Association. He is also a member of the Attorneys Council of the National Subcontractors Alliance.

Since February of last year, we’re all more aware of viruses and the harm they do. The Covid 19 pandemic has forcefully taught many more than they ever wanted to know about disease.

Then, this summer, as we all began to relax, we learned yet another lesson in the propagation of a dangerous disease. Words like “mutation” and “variant” jumped into our lexicon and, again, we were compelled to redouble our efforts at protecting ourselves from the disease that threatened our very existence.

With these forceful and frightening lessons fresh in our minds, it’s worth noting that there are parallels between how disease behaves, and how some of the people with whom we do business behave. Bear with me, while I explain.

Mutating Contracts

It has been a blessing that, despite the economic upheaval wrought by the global pandemic, the commercial construction market has remained a generally strong, and commercial construction trade contractors have demonstrated that, with proper planning and practices, life and business can continue even in the presence of a viral pandemic. Nonetheless, some members of the construction community are more concerned with leveraging crisis as an excuse to shift risk than in behaving as a part of a coordinated and cooperative construction industry.

Many general contractors are leveraging the sense of crisis caused by the pandemic as an opportunity, or maybe even an excuse, to cram substantially worse subcontract provisions down onto the very trade contractors whose risk-taking and hard work enable the

general contractors’ existence. Some GCs are trying to repudiate previously negotiated subcontract accommodations, while others have tried to adopt a “no changes, ever” standard.

A very recent development provides a very good illustration of this concept in action.

A large general contractor (based back east) has begun issuing Subcontracts with a “Texas Addendum,” and the Addendum contains two key elements: a special indemnification provision tailored to Texas law, and a provision for accelerated arbitration of mechanics liens and bond claims.

The special indemnification language is notable, because besides incorporating routine language to accommodate Texas’ indemnification reform statute, it also has “Trojan Horse” language requiring that Subcontractors indemnify all the “indemnified parties” (including the general contractor, the project owner, and numerous other project participants) from any mechanics lien or bond claims which are filed.

Bearing in mind that virtually every Subcontract proffered to subcontractors in our modern marketplace includes explicit and binding contingent payment language, the only security for payment subcontractors have is through the mechanics lien process or, on public works, the payment Bond claim process. Hence, because the lien claim or bond claim is the only security the subcontractor has, requiring subs to indemnify against mechanics liens or bond claims creates the unworkable circumstance where the sub is required to indemnify and defend it at least one of the parties that is at fault for the subcontractor not being paid in the first place against the sub executing its only

payment-protection tool! This means, if you are not getting paid and you file a mechanics lien, the general contractor can demand that you indemnify them, or maybe even a deadbeat owner, against your exercise of the only payment protection rights you have. If it weren't so ridiculous, it might even be funny – but it's deadly serious.

Arbitrate What?

As for requiring subs to arbitrate mechanics liens and payment bond claims on an accelerated basis, we see a new low in honor and integrity. The process in this “Texas Addendum” calls for an arbitrator to be selected within three days of the Contractor’s demand, and arbitration hearing to take place within twenty days. To be blunt, it is legally and factually impossible to conduct a fair hearing to determine the validity of a mechanics lien or bond claim on a twenty-day cycle, because every lien and bond claim depends first upon a proper determination of how much money is owed, and that requires extensive investigation and discovery into the facts and circumstances of the project, changes, extras, conditions, the whole nine yards. You may be subject to a summary determination of your right to be paid without even a hint of due process to protect you from an unfair outcome.

Texas law already provides for an expedited procedure to invalidate procedurally defective mechanics liens, and that’s done quickly and efficiently through the courts we have already paid for; the sole purpose of the rocket-sled lien/bond claim arbitration process is to effectively deprive trade contractors of the value of a fair mechanics lien and payment Bond process.

Know this: if you consent to language such as we have described here, you are substantially harming the likelihood of being paid, and paid fairly, on the construction projects in question.

Don't sell yourself short, on this, or any other, sub-contract term.

OSHA and COVID

The United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has promulgated several standards and practices relating to mitigation of Covid infection risk in the workplace. Virtually none of these are set forth in actual regulations, and many in the industry believe that, when it comes to OSHA enforcement, “if is not in the regulations, is not a problem.”

But watch out!

Covid 19 is a hot button (and it should be, because it is a serious disease), and is also a political football. OSHA is a powerful agency, and while they do good work in promoting workplace safety, they are still subject to the whims of the political process (OSHA is an Executive Branch agency), so there are inevitable pressures on OSHA to target businesses like yours by an administration that has already shown it is hostile do business, especially if that business happens to be a merit shop business.

While the OSHA recommendations specific to Covid 19 are not directly regulatory in nature, OSHA has long used the General Duty Clause obligations contained within the OSHA regulations as a basis for prosecution of employers and the assessment of substantial penalties. History also tells us that the Administrative Law Judges who sit in judgment on contested OSHA cases give deference to the local OSHA offices in adjudicating General Duty Clause citations. (The General Duty Clause is found at 29 USC 654 – see: <https://bit.ly/3BjlrTe>.)

With Covid continuing to affect our workplaces and our businesses, through both the physical impact of the disease on our employees, and the political impact of the business on the our operating environment, it serves trade contractors well to familiarize themselves with OSHA’s “recommendations,” and consider (1) incorporating the recommendations which can practically be woven into your business operations, and (2) as to those which cannot be practically adopted into your practices, documenting your good-faith efforts to otherwise mitigate the impact of the disease on your workforce. This process of self-evaluation and risk mitigation will serve you well, because you will be promoting safer workplace practices (always good for your people) and preparing yourself to defend against an ill-considered citation and penalty.

- ▶ General OSHA Guidance can be found at <https://bit.ly/3aaXAJh>.
- ▶ A useful OSHA “Q&A,” including some Construction Industry guidance is available at <https://bit.ly/3ahZLuA>.
- ▶ Regulations OSHA considers relevant to Covid 19 are at <https://bit.ly/3FohQ8L>.
- ▶ Feel free to contact me at SCutler@Cutler-Smith.com, and we’ll be glad to offer guidance and assistance in navigating these choppy seas. Stay safe out there, and whatever you do, don’t lick any doorknobs!

Sounds From The Students:

“We layed up a wall, I think it’s called a stretcher course – we learned how to clean joints and how to lay it and make it level!”

-Leo R., Grand Praire High School



“When you guys came yesterday I was like, this is saving me, I’m immediately going to take the opportunity!”

-Jose R., Killeen ISD Career Center



“The satisfying feeling of laying and spreading the mud, that was my favorite part about today!”

- Samara V.,
Grand Praire High School



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What does a **'MASONRY ROCKS!'** Day look like?

- Set-up mobile classroom on campus.
- With help of local contractor volunteers we set up stands, distribute brick, and mix training mortar.
- TMC gives a presentation explaining the use of masonry, tools of the trade, and career opportunities.
- Students join TMC and local contractors outside for a demonstration by a professional mason.
- Students grab a trowel at their training stand and start getting a feel for spreading mortar and laying their first few courses of brick.
- When finished with their initial courses they learn how to clean and perfect their walls and receive feedback.
- Bricks are cleaned and mortar put away for the next session.
- Day 2 students get to utilize their creativity by creating their wall with different patterns, bonds, and sometimes even different colors of brick.

Students leave with knowledge of masonry, know who their local contractors are, and know they can start a career in masonry right now!



TEXAS MASONRY
COUNCIL



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Waco-area students get glimpse of masonry skills in high demand

By Amaris E Rodriguez

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Some Waco-area students spent Tuesday learning how to spread mortar and lay bricks with a few players in an industry eager to hire up skilled workers.

The Greater Waco Advanced Manufacturing Academy hosted Masonry Day with the Texas Masonry Council, hoping to give high school students a glimpse of the trade and maybe spark a long-term career interest that the industry needs to sustain its workforce.

“If I had 70 bricklayers walk into my company today, I’d hire every one of them. We are that short on bricklayers,” said Mackie Bounds, CEO of Waco-based Brazos Masonry Inc. and chair of the Texas Masonry Council board.

Workforce development is his biggest issue, said Bounds, whose company employs about 400 people and has done work for Baylor University.

About 41% of masons are expected to retire in the next 10 years, and by 2025, some 31,400 new masons will be needed to replace retirees and keep up with growing demand, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

The average age of a mason in Texas is...

...between 40 and 45, GWA-MA Dean Dale McCall said.

“These guys are going to be retiring. They need a workforce, new students coming in to work so that they can resupply the masons,” McCall said.

Masonry Day benefits both students, who learn a sought after skill, and business in need of workers, he said.

“They are out there laying brick, putting mortar and different designs on their bricks,” McCall said. “They are learning how to lay bricks, do it quickly, and do it well.” Other building trades are in

a similar workforce situation, and GWAMA’s construction science program teaches students five phases of construction, one of which is masonry.

“We want them to see that part of what that means in building any type of building or home,” McCall said. “We are trying to give our students, through all those five areas, one area that may spark an interest in them and they may want to get a job.”

Bounds said jobs in the field pay well, even for someone still in high school.

“Right now, these high school kids, if they come work for us in the summer, we will pay them \$16, \$17 per hour,” Bounds said. “That is good money for a high school kid. After they graduate from school, we put them in an apprenticeship program and once they are in that program, they make anywhere between \$20 to \$25 an hour.”

Bounds, who started working in masonry when he was 16 and opened his company at the age of 32, said the possibilities are endless for someone who is well developed in a trade.

“The opportunities for these kids are huge,” Bounds said. “When you learn a trade, that is something that

cannot be taken away. You can always use your hands to build with.”

Mauricio Lara, 17, a student in Mexia, said he has always been building alongside his father, which sparked his interest in GWAMA. He said he wants to pursue a career as a carpenter, and the program has offered him a chance to

polish his work and learn more.

“It’s a good life skill really,” said Lara, who recently helped his father level their home. “You don’t always want to count on someone to do it for you. It’s a waste of money.”

He has been in GWAMA three years and said it has solidified his interest in carpentry.

“I want to start doing residential homes and eventually work out to have my own residential home business,” Lara said.

McCall said a goal of GWAMA is to expose students to a path other than college. He said the push in the past 20 years for college education has contributed to the labor issues in the building trades.

“This is what is so great about GWAMA is that we are giving the students an idea that there is a different route,” McCall said. “It doesn’t mean four year college for all. It doesn’t mean two year college for all. You can come out of high school go into masonry and in two to three years you will become a master mason and be making upward of \$30 to \$40 per hour.”

Bounds also said the industry has not done enough to get the word out about the opportunities it offers.



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“We have not done a good job in sharing what the opportunities are,” Bounds said. “Not being out there, letting them know how much money you can make. You don’t have to be a laborer all your life.”

Bounds said there is a group of people who are hardworking and willing to work, but they cannot be legally hired.

“There are a lot of people capable of working. But we are not able to hire them due to the fact that they are not legal, and that is very hard on us,” Bounds said. “They have a lot of talent, tons of talent and they can do the work as well as anybody but they are not available for us to hire and that would be an instant fix, but now we have to look at long-term.”

While organizations such as the Texas Masonry Council work to educate future potential laborers, the current lack of employees across all trades is affecting projects, Bounds said.

“You go out on job sites to-

day, jobs are being built slower because of the manpower shortage in the construction industry,” Bounds said. “When I hear people say ‘I can’t find a job’ that frustrates me. There will be a trade that hires them. I think that what we are doing here today is ahead of the other trades.”

While wages might have at one time been a deterrent, Bounds said current pay is competitive.

“Maybe at one time that was the issue but over the last six, seven years, no,” Bounds said. “Wages that laborers get paid, they really can’t go anywhere else and get that money, not knowing what they are doing. ... These kids coming out of high school, they will be making \$18 to \$20 an hour the first day out of high school.”

Bounds said the average laborer starting out of high school is paid about \$42,000 per year, with no college debt to pay off, and that pay increases as years go by, with many superintendents making six-figures a year.

Brazos Masonry CFO Pete Groetzinger said as long as the state of Texas keeps growing, the need for workers in the building trades will grow as well.

“Texas is growing. It has been for 20 years,” Groetzinger said. “Every time you grow, what do you have to do? You have to build schools. Once you build schools you build retail shopping centers and it goes on and on and on. As long as Texas is in a growth mode, construction will be growing with it and you can’t build these structures without people. So we have a constant shortage of good workers.”

McCall said a handful of students have already expressed interest in working during the summer as masons.

“Every one of these kids can achieve what I did,” Bounds said. “I just hope one of these kids one day will either run my company or be one of my competitors. Nothing would make me happier to know they started right here.”

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“So my dad said, you’re getting a job this summer – you’re going to learn to say yes sir, and no sir... and guess where he put me: the masonry world. He put me with a guy that was tough, he would curse me like you have never heard. At times he made [the job] sound pretty good... but I wasn’t making the 14 or 15 dollars an hour okay? I was making four dollars an hour and it ended getting up to about five and a half.

You know what I had when I got back to school? I had a pocket full of money, I had me a nice mustang – what else did I have? – a bunch of girlfriends!

I started at a young age; I went to college for a short period of time, and then my dad said ‘look I’m not paying for college for partying, you’re either going to get an education or you’re through’ and I was through. So what did I do? I went back to an industry that I grew to love, and that was the masonry world.”

*- Mackie Bounds, Brazos
Masonry & Texas Masonry
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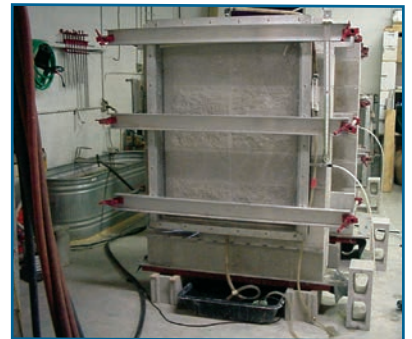


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