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Led by the hand



Harrison Construction owner, Lonnie Harrison

Lonnie Harrison can trace his construction career all the way back to a fateful volleyball game that shattered his pinky, breaking it in four places.

"Yeah, it's funny how things evolve in life," Harrison, Manager of **Harrison Construction** in Fort Worth, says. "Out of high school, I went to work for a hardware store/warehouse in a small town in Illinois. I worked there for seven years and then I broke my pinky and had to have pins in it. My boss would not let me work in the warehouse, so I was sent home. I had a friend who had a construction company that framed houses. I started going to work with him and the next thing you know, I'm finding great enjoyment framing houses, learning and having a skill."

Two years later, Harrison was working full-time building houses for a general contractor and then for a carpenter's union. In 2000, he married and moved to Texas. Harrison worked for Beck-Ford Construction in Houston and then served as a project manager for Cooper General Contractors in Dallas, building for national restaurant accounts.

Harrison's career was gaining serious steam, but the blow of the recession in 2008 caused him to consider his options. He took a step back and helped his wife operate day care centers before construction came calling again.

"Amazingly enough, I had customers come back to me that I had built for who wanted me to build their restaurants," he

continued on Page 16

continued from Page 1 — Harrison Construction

says. "My wife and I opened up Harrison Construction in 2011 and started doing that; it was just me and a superintendent that I hired. Five Guys Burgers and Fries was still growing so we reestablished our relationship with them and started to build for them in Texas. We have continued to base our business structure on restaurants and now we're doing retail, shopping centers, and shopping center remodels. Those are our core businesses that are products we can produce and be profitable."

As his company achieves impressive success, Harrison stays true to what drew him to construction.

"In my heart of hearts, I am still a superintendent," Harrison says. "That's what I enjoy doing most is actually running the day-to-day of a project – although I don't always get the time to do that as much as I would like to. I enjoy making something from nothing or taking something that is unattractive and making it into something new for customers to be able to use and for business owners to be able to make profit from. I still enjoy the fulfillment of building."

As Harrison Construction celebrates its eighth year in business, Harrison is making plans to take his company to the next level. He and his four-man crew are focusing on remodels for a national gas station chain. He is concentrating on increasing his project size from $400,000 to $750,000 as well. Harrison also wants to expand into building medical construction, something he spent five years doing when he worked for a general contractor. Finally, growing his company's facility service side is another goal Harrison hopes to achieve in the near future.

A broken pinky may have got him into construction, but he has six other reasons to stay.

"We are a family-owned business; it is solely owned by me and my wife Mindy," Harrison says. "We have six kids ranging from 17 to 6. One of the reasons we own our own company is because we wanted to have a family. In the construction industry, you are either gone or you are working 80 hours a week. So, this allows us to be in the business together."

Harrison Construction is a general contractor located in Fort Worth. –mjm

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Pages 1 and 16. www.constructionnews.net