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The Masonry Magazine of Texas

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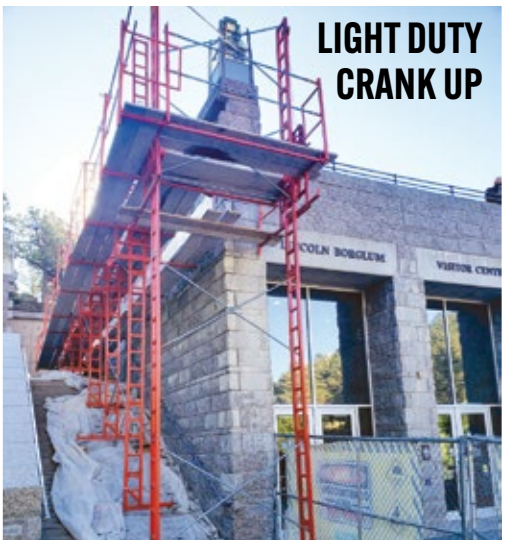
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Winter 2026

A Message From Our Executive Director: *Mr. Tony Topping*

As we head into the spring season, I'm proud to share the continued momentum across the Texas Masonry Council. The strength of this organization is built on leadership, education, and recognition — and this year we are elevating all three.

This spring, we will host the 3rd Annual Texas Masonry Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at the historic Alamo in San Antonio. There is no more fitting backdrop to honor the legacy of masonry craftsmanship and leadership in our state. The Class of 2026 — Stan McCarthy, Jim Wise, Danny Green, and Anton Shadrock — represents decades of commitment, integrity, and influence in our industry. Each of these men has helped shape Texas masonry in meaningful ways, mentoring the next generation while advancing the standards of excellence we all benefit from today. We look forward to celebrating them in a setting that reflects the permanence and strength of the work they represent.

In October, we will gather at the University of Texas at Austin for the newly renamed Concrete Masonry Architecture Symposium — formerly known as the Masonry Design Summit. This evolution reflects our expanding vision and growing engagement with the architectural and engineering community. By bringing architects, designers, and masonry professionals together for meaningful education and collaboration, we continue to strengthen masonry's position in the design marketplace.

And of course, we are approaching one of the most exciting seasons of the year — Golden Trowel Awards season. Our regional competitions will lead into the statewide finals, showcasing the best masonry projects across Texas. These awards are more than recognition; they are a powerful statement about the quality, craftsmanship, and pride that define our industry. I encourage every contractor, supplier, architect, and supporter to participate — submit projects, attend events, bring clients, and help us highlight excellence across the state.

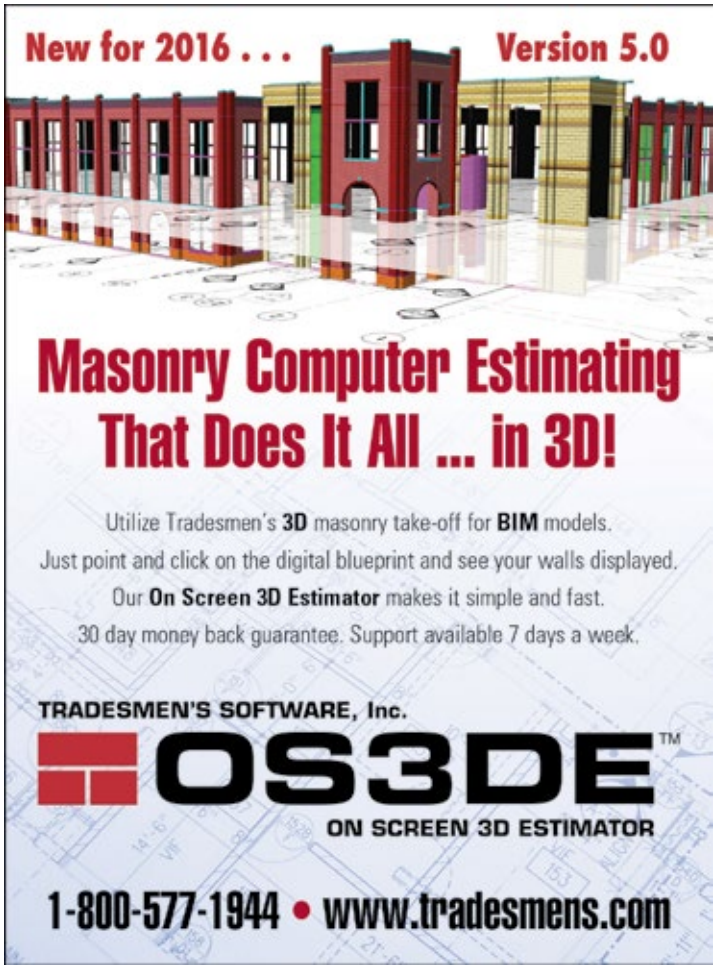
When we celebrate our leaders, educate the design community, and promote outstanding projects, we strengthen the entire masonry industry.

Thank you for your continued commitment to this industry. Together, we are preserving a proud legacy while aggressively building the future of masonry in Texas.

Please note our mailing address has slightly changed. Please update your records with our new suite number:

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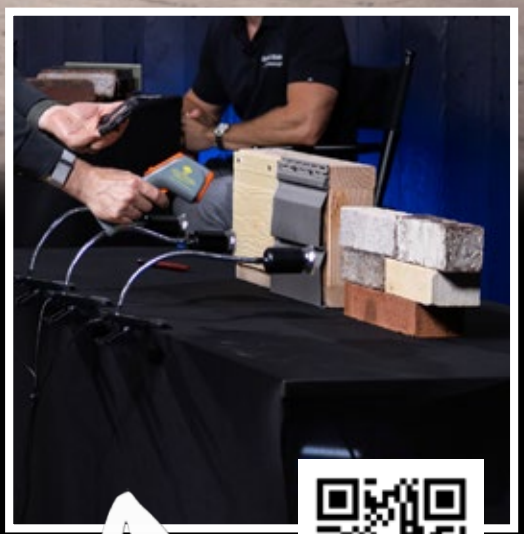
Tony Topping
Executive Director
Texas Masonry Council



Red River Brick™ X



Red River Brick, part of the General Shale brand network, recently teamed up with Matt Reisinger of the Risinger Build, — respected builder, educator, and host of The Build Show—for a live studio panel discussion to dispel the rumor that "brick is too expensive."



Plus, see a live demo on how vinyl, fiber cement, and brick compare when faced with high heat!

youtube.com/@buildshow

Construction Law



Change Work: Protect It. Price It. Get Paid.

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. He can be reached at scutler@cutler-smith.com.

On almost every masonry project, the scope moves.

Openings shift. Details change. Someone else misses something. The superintendent says, "While you're here, can you just…"

Change order work is inevitable.

Getting paid for it is not.

Too many solid, profitable jobs turn into margin killers because extras were performed without proper documentation, and it is too easy to fall into the trap of "moving in the minute" when the GC demands it. The difference between contractors who get paid and those who fight for months comes down to one word:

Discipline.

Here's how disciplined contractors protect their right to payment from day one.

Step 1: Protect Yourself Before the Job Starts

Your leverage is strongest at bid time — use it.

Before you submit your proposal:

- Review the full set of plans and specifications whenever possible.
- Know exactly what you are including.
- Know exactly what you are not including.

On your bid, list the specific plan sheets and spec sections you relied on. State clearly that work shown elsewhere is excluded. Describe your scope with enough detail that no one can later expand it through interpretation – no one knows your work better than you do, so use that fact to your advantage.

Avoid generic exclusions. Specific language wins disputes.

Finally, require that your accepted proposal be incorporated into the subcontract and

define your scope of work. If your proposal controls, your exposure shrinks.

Step 2: Clean Up the Subcontract

Before you mobilize, slow down and read the subcontract carefully.

Confirm: - The plans haven't changed since bid day. - No additional sheets or specs have been added. - Your proposal defines the scope.

Most subcontracts require written change orders before extra work is performed. That clause is not filler. It is routinely enforced.

If you perform extra work without written authorization, you may be volunteering it.

Also pay attention to:

- Who is authorized to approve changes?
- "Pay-if-paid" provisions.
- Limits on overhead and profit percentages.
- Language that requires you to proceed without clear payment terms – or any agreement to pay at all!

If the contract requires written authorization, operate accordingly. Train your foremen accordingly. And, as you know, I'll always say: don't sign a bad subcontract! Almost every boilerplate subcontract is thick with sub-busting terms, and there's never a better time to fix it than before you've signed.

Step 3: Set the Tone in the Field

Establish expectations at the preconstruction meeting.

Field Checklist: 6 Steps to Protect Change Order Payment

When extra work is requested, do this every time:

1. **Confirm It's Extra** – Compare the request to your defined scope.
2. **State It Clearly** – Tell the superintendent it's outside your contract.
3. **Confirm They Want It Done** – Get verbal direction to proceed.
4. **Establish Your Price** – Include labor, material, equipment, overhead, and profit.
5. **Get Written Authorization** – Formal change order or signed field memo.
6. **Follow Up Within 24 Hours** – Send documentation to the GC's office and request issuance of a formal change order.

Consistency wins. If your crew follows this process every time, your chances of getting paid increase dramatically.

Professionally — not confrontationally — make it clear that your company follows the contract and requires written authorization for extra work.

Sooner or later, a superintendent will ask your foreman to perform additional work.

When that happens:

1. Decide whether it's outside your scope.
2. If it is, say so clearly.
3. Confirm they want it done.
4. Establish your price.
5. Get it in writing.

If time doesn't allow for a formal change order, obtain written field authorization. A simple signed memo describing the work, date, and time is enough.

It doesn't have to be pretty. It has to be signed.

Documentation protects profit.

Step 4: Follow Up Relentlessly

Once field authorization is secured, send it to the GC's office and request a formal change order immediately. Then follow up.

Do not agree to perform extra work; "sort it all out at the end." At project closeout, leverage shifts away from you — and negotiations get tougher.

Subcontractors who consistently and aggressively follow up on change orders get paid. Subs who let changes and extras stack up fight an uphill battle and usually end up giving away money.

The Bottom Line

Unpaid extras can quietly turn a good masonry project into a bad one. But contractors who:

- Define scope clearly,
- Aggressively negotiate the Subcontract,
- Insist on written authorization,
- Train their field crews,
- Document every request,
- Follow up promptly,

dramatically improving their odds of collecting every dollar earned.

The system works — if you work it.

Protect your rights early. Stay disciplined in the field. And your change order work is far more likely to show up where it belongs: in your bank account.



How TMC is Reaching the Next Generation of Masons

By Ashton White **Photos by Texas Masonry Council**

Advocacy, outreach, and education have never been more critical to the future of Texas masonry. As the state continues to grow, so does the demand for skilled trades. Industry leaders, schools, and organizations are working together to make sure the next generation is prepared, informed, and inspired to explore careers in masonry. Promotion is the foundation for everything else, including training, safety, funding, and public perception.

The Texas Masonry Council (TMC) plays a key role in connecting contractors, suppliers, and educators to strengthen the industry and reach new audiences. Without these connections, many of today's training and outreach programs would struggle to find the support they need to succeed.



Outreach Events

One of the most effective ways TMC engages students is through events such as Masonry Days and Masonry ROCKS events. These hands-on experiences bring together hundreds of high school students to learn the basics of masonry, such as spreading mortar, laying brick and block, building a scaffold, and networking with professionals in the field.

These events go beyond simple demonstrations; they give students a real sense of what it feels like to build something with their own hands and to take pride in the work they create. School counselors, principals, and CTE directors are often in attendance as well, helping to spread the message about the value of masonry to the entire educational community.

Educational Partnerships

Beyond single-day events, long-term partnerships are taking shape. High schools across Texas are adding masonry programs to their career and technical education tracks. At the college level, the University of Texas at Austin has partnered with TMC to incorporate masonry into design and construction education. Architects are earning AIA and CEU credits to deepen their understanding of the benefits of masonry construction. Through SkillsUSA, more schools are introducing students to the





trade, even those that do not yet have full-time masonry programs.





SkillsUSA

SkillsUSA has become an essential part of raising awareness and setting high standards for masonry education. The organization supports students in developing technical abilities, leadership, and teamwork through competitions at the district, state, and national levels.

These contests demand precision, craftsmanship, and time management, which are skills at the heart of the masonry trade. Thanks to TMC's Workforce Development and Training Coordinator, Ashton Fairchild, student participation and skill levels in Texas continue to grow. Last year, more than 80 students competed in district masonry contests, with 30 advancing to the state competition.

Challenges and Support

There are still challenges to overcome. The skilled trades continue to face misconceptions that a four-year college is the only path to success. Many schools face limited budgets, shortages of instructors, and a lack of materials

and tools. To help bridge that gap, TMC provides free training, tools, and materials to schools interested in starting masonry programs.

Ashton offers training specifically for teachers to build on their masonry knowledge and skills. Local contractors and suppliers play a significant role by adopting schools and serving as mentors, helping instructors access resources and giving students direct connections to future job opportunities.

Conclusion

Texas stands at a pivotal moment for the masonry industry. With strong advocacy, focused outreach, and expanded educational partnerships, the trade can continue to thrive and attract new talent. The success of Masonry Rocks events and the growing enthusiasm for SkillsUSA competitions show that young Texans are ready to build something lasting.

For those who value craftsmanship, community, and the strength of our built environment, supporting these efforts is not just important; it is essential. Together, we are not only building walls. We are building futures, communities, and a legacy, one brick at a time.



Ashton is a two-time SkillsUSA National Masonry Champion and the first female to win this title back-to-back. She currently travels to schools all across Texas to introduce them to masonry. She is an industry advocate and enjoys teaching the next generation of masons.





In Memory of
Paul Van Odom

Paul was born on April 5, 1958, in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, to Travis and Bette Odom. The son of an American Airlines pilot, Paul moved often during his childhood, shaping his adaptability, steady work ethic, and appreciation for people from all walks of life. Paul earned the rank of Eagle Scout—something he rarely spoke about, but something that quietly influenced the way he lived: dependable, service-minded, and committed to doing things the right way. He graduated from Hamilton High School in 1976.

Paul began dating Susie Bottlinger in 1978. After their first date, they knew they would be married. In 1980, they were married in Hamilton, Texas. Best friends and true partners in everything, they built a life, family, and legacy grounded in hard work, integrity, and service.

Paul began his career in masonry as a laborer, working his way through apprenticeship, management, and estimating—learning from those around him and earning respect through determination and humility. In 1987, he and Susie founded P and S Masonry, growing it into a company known across Central Texas for quality craftsmanship, safety, and a culture that treated employees like family. Their motto, "Our employees make the difference," was not just a slogan, but a belief Paul lived by daily.

Paul was committed to strengthening the masonry industry. He was a founding member of the Central Texas Masonry Contractors Association and served multiple terms as president of both CTMCA and the Texas Masonry Council. He also served on the executive board of the Mason Contractors Association of America, ultimately becoming Chairman in 2018–2019. He believed you should never stop learning from others, and invested time and energy in education, workforce development, and mentorship across the state and the nation. In recognition of his lifelong contributions, he was inducted into the Masonry Hall of Fame and the Texas Masonry Hall of Fame, honors he accepted with characteristic humility.

A true family businessman, Paul worked together with Susie to help guide the next generation. In 2013, they helped start Spec Rents in Hamilton, providing equipment and safety solutions for major projects in Texas. He was proud of the business and how it was built. In June 2014, P and S Masonry partnered with Brazos Masonry to form Legacy Masonry, where Paul and Susie stayed active until they both retired in 2022. Legacy has since concluded, but his legacy lives on through Spec Rents—a family business he loved.

Paul and Susie's favorite thing to do together was travel. They traveled the world, checking off their bucket list. Between trips, Paul was happiest on the mower, keeping the yard as he liked it, taking long walks with Sammy, and lending a hand at the flower shop.

Paul's craftsmanship went beyond masonry. He was also a talented carpenter, the kind of man who could build with his hands and make it look easy—always taking pride in creating something solid, useful, and lasting.

He was a man of strong faith and steady service. He was baptized as an infant in Oklahoma and confirmed at St. John Lutheran Church in adulthood. He served as an elder at St. John, and he and Susie spent many years teaching Senior Youth Sunday School and leading the Senior Youth group. He also served his community as a school board member for Hamilton ISD. Known for his kindness, generosity, and sense of humor, Paul believed that "it's always right to do the right thing," even when it wasn't the easiest path.

Paul is survived by his beloved wife, Susie Odom; his children, Elizabeth Graves (husband Garen), Emilie Reeves (husband Brian), and Alexander Odom (fiancée Emily); and his grandchildren, William Paul, Anna, Clara, Katherine, Harper, Cora, and baby boy Reeves expected in February. He is also survived by his sisters, Karen Tyson (husband, Lee Roy) and Lynn Roberts (husband, Curtis); his brothers-in-law, Clark Bottlinger (wife, Nancy) and Brent Bottlinger (wife, Sarah); and his sister-in-law, Theresa Bottlinger. Additionally, he is survived by many friends, nieces and nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews, and cousins who loved him dearly.

Paul was preceded in death by his parents, Travis and Bette Odom; Susie's parents, Brian and Velma Jean Bottlinger; and his brother-in-law, Mark Bottlinger.

Leader, mentor, craftsman, and friend, Paul's work lives on in the structures he helped build, the people he mentored, the faith he lived, and the family that carries his values forward.

A memorial service was held at St. John Lutheran Church in Hamilton, Texas, on Saturday, December 27, 2025. Paul's wish was to have a celebration of his life, and the family invited friends to join them for dinner and drinks at Wenzel Hall following the service.

Memorials may be made to St. John Lutheran Church, Senior Youth National Youth Gathering, or to the charity of the donor's choice.



In Memory of
Danny R. Green

To know Danny Green is to know his story.

Danny was born in June 1958 in Tarrant County, Texas, to Arthur Green and Norma Jean Green. At just three years old, his life changed forever when his mother was tragically killed in an accident. Following this loss, Danny's family moved around quite a bit before settling in Nashville, Arkansas, where he was raised, attended school, and developed a lifelong love of football.

It was in Nashville, Arkansas, that Danny learned the trade of bricklaying from his father, who had worked in masonry his entire life. On weekends, Danny and his brother worked alongside their father, learning not just the craft but the value of hard work and integrity. Arthur Green laid brick for nearly every house, mailbox, and fireplace in their Nashville, AR community. When Danny was 18 years old, his father passed away, and Danny courageously took on the responsibility of continuing the family business to help raise his younger brother and sister until they completed high school.

In 1983, Danny decided to return to Fort Worth, beginning a long, demanding, and lesson-filled journey as a masonry contractor in the DFW area. Through perseverance, grit, and countless challenges, he built what would become DMG Masonry—one of the most respected and successful masonry companies not only in Texas, but across the United States. Danny was immensely proud of his work, his crews, and the legacy he built brick by brick.

In 1990, Danny married the love of his life, his best friend, and his business partner, Lori. They shared 35 years of marriage and stood side by side through every season of life until his passing. Together, they raised two incredible children who, along with Lori, were with him at the end.

Danny was a devoted husband, a loving father and Papa, a respected boss, and a loyal friend. He was a man of quiet strength, deep loyalty, and unwavering dedication to those he loved.

He truly had a well-loved life.

Danny had deep faith in Jesus Christ and the resurrection. He lived this faith daily, having many talks about his faith and the hope of healing his Glioblastoma diagnosis. He shared the miraculous healing that the lord bestowed on him, giving him five more precious years to spend with his family. As we know, healing was completed on December 8th as he ascended to his heavenly home.

He will be missed more than he ever imagined—for a "simple bricklayer from Arkansas," he built a legacy that will stand forever, along with the incredible buildings he has helped create, and the many lives he touched.

Danny is survived by his wife, Lori K. Green, and his children, Megan Danielle Green and husband, Stephen Clay; and granddaughters, Danielle Green-Clay and Harper Green-Clay; Daniel Green and his wife, Brittany Green, and grandson Leighton Van Green, Brandi Green and grandchildren, Derrick, Adrian, and London.

Danny's siblings are Patty Jones, husband Doug Jones, and children Nicole Jones Bernard, and Carthel Jones; Mike Green and his wife, Louise, and children Jared Green and Brock Green; the late Gerry Cagle, wife DeVonne Cagle, and children Josh, Jeremie, and Jordan.

So many family members, nieces, nephews, and many amazing friends. Danny's memorial was held on Friday, December 12th, 2025, at 1 pm at First Methodist Mansfield.

Acme Brick Company Wins Six Awards in National Architecture Competition

Acme Brick Company won six awards in the Brick Industry Association's 36th annual Brick in Architecture competition, which honors the best projects in brick design from around the world. Acme's winning projects are:

BEST IN CLASS
Commercial
Amant Campus Gallery & Café, New York, New York

Architect: SO-IL Architects
Brick Manufacturer: Acme Brick Company
Brick Distributor: Belden Tri-State Building Materials
Mason Contractor: Vertical Spaces

GOLD WINNER
Thin Brick
Dorothy Martinez Elementary, Little Elm, Texas

Architect: Pfluger Architects
Brick Manufacturer: King Klinker
Brick Distributor: Acme Brick Company
Mason Contractor: BakerTriangle Prefab

BRONZE WINNERS
Commercial
Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Houston, Texas

Architect: Perkins & Will
Brick Manufacturer: Acme Brick Company
Mason Contractor: City Masonry LLC

Education K-12
Eagle Mountain High School, Fort Worth, Texas

Architect: VLK Architects
Brick Manufacturers: Acme Brick Company, Yankee Hill Brick, Summit Brick Company
Brick Distributor: Acme Brick Company
Mason Contractor: J&E Companies

Paving and Landscaping
Fairhope Municipal Pier and Park Renovation, Fairhope, Alabama

Architect: Goodwyn, Mills, and Caywood
Brick Manufacturer: Pine Hall Brick Company
Brick Distributor: Acme Brick Company
Mason Contractor: Harris Stone Works

Thin Brick
Fred Hill Elementary, Little Elm, Texas

Architect: Pfluger Architects
Brick Manufacturer: King Klinker
Brick Distributor: Acme Brick Company
Mason Contractor: BakerTriangle Prefab

This year's winning projects, 42 in all, will be celebrated live at the first-ever Brick Excellence Gala on April 9, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency Orlando.

About the Brick in Architecture Awards: The 2025 Brick in Architecture Awards drew a total of 120 entries among nine categories: Craftsmanship, Thin Brick, International, Residential Single Family, Commercial, Residential Multi-Family, Education (Colleges & Universities), Paving and Landscaping, Education (K-12), and Historic Renovation. For a complete list of winning projects, please visit https://www.gobrick.com/inspiration/2025-competition-award-winners

The competition was founded in 1989 by the Brick Industry Association (BIA), the nationally recognized authority on clay brick construction. BIA represents the nation's distributors, manufacturers of clay brick, and suppliers of related products. For more information, visit GoBrick.com.

About Acme Brick Company:

Acme Brick Company, founded in 1891, sells quality commercial building material and design products through over 50 Acme Brick Tile & Stone public showrooms across 13 states in the Southwest and Southeast and nationally through our extensive distributor network. Visit https://brick.com/find-brick-locations/ for a list of our sales offices and a complete list of our national distributors. For more information, visit brick.com.

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Tony Topping and the Fight for Better Building, Stronger Codes and Less Rebuilding

How one city planner-turned-advocate is reshaping the future of safe, resilient communities.

In the fast-growing towns of Texas, few people think about the codes that govern what gets built. Tony Topping does. He always has.

As Executive Director of the Texas Masonry Council and a regional leader in codes and standards, Tony spends his days in a world most people never see — city council chambers, floodplain committees, design standards workshops, and statehouse hearings where the long-term safety of millions of Texans is quietly decided. And for Tony, those decisions aren't academic. They're deeply personal.

"I'm a native Houstonian," he says. "I've lived through every flood this city's had. I've watched people rip out drywall again and again. And you start asking yourself — why are we still building this way?"

It's a question that launched his career and still drives it today.

From Urban Planning to a Mission for Resilience

Tony didn't start in construction. He began in urban planning, working inside the Houston city government, where he saw how cities grow and how policies shape the built environment for generations. He quickly learned that design standards aren't just "rules"; they're the invisible backbone of public safety.

That understanding led him to the Texas Masonry Council, where his planning background became an unexpected asset.

"I realized masonry checked every box planners care about: durability, safety, long-service life, and low maintenance. It gives communities a fighting chance when something goes wrong."

What hooked him wasn't the material — it was the outcomes. Schools that stay standing. Homes that don't burn. Neighborhoods that don't have to tear themselves apart every time the floodwaters rise.

Why Codes Matter More Than Ever

For Tony, resilience isn't a buzzword; it's the reality of living in the Gulf South, where fires, floods, and hurricanes are no longer seasonal but constant.

"Material choice affects everything about public safety. And codes are where those decisions live," he explains.

But in Texas, the landscape is complicated. A State law preempts local building standards, preventing cities from adopting many common-sense material requirements. Tony calls it "the biggest barrier to safer communities."

His work with **Region 4 Codes & Standards** — covering Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, and Arizona — focuses on strengthening local influence in building-code development. The wins are real:

- Adoption of stricter standards in flood-prone communities

- Upgrades to multifamily fire-safety design
- Recognition of masonry's role in high-wind and seismic zones

Building inspectors in these regions now play a more influential role in the International Building Code (IBC) process, a shift Tony fought hard for.

A Floodplain Victory That Changed a Community

One of the projects Tony is most proud of happened in Humble, Texas, after yet another proposed development in flood-prone areas.

"The city knew something needed to change, and they came to us looking for answers."

Working alongside local officials, Tony helped modernize Humble's development code for houses in floodplains — resulting in new construction in this development where first-floor structures are built with concrete masonry.

"It was simple," he said. "If the water comes, the house survives. You clean it, you move on. You don't lose everything."

The result: a community that now rebuilds faster, safer, and at lower long-term cost.

The Hard Part: Changing Policy in the Real World

If Tony sounds passionate, it's because he has fought for change where it matters most — close to home.

In Dayton, Texas, he spent five years helping the community adopt stronger, safer building standards. It was a deeply personal effort. His family roots run through Dayton, and he watched the town struggle every time a storm hit.

"We got it passed — good, smart standards that would protect people," he recalls. "And then the state overturned it."

But Tony doesn't describe the loss with frustration. He sees progress.

"The culture shifted. People understood why it mattered. And when that happens, the fight's not over. It's just beginning a new chapter."

A Future Built on Strength, Intelligence, and People

Ask Tony what keeps him going, and he won't mention regulations or political wins. He'll talk about communities — families rebuilding after floods, seniors in multifamily housing who need firewalls that truly work, and young architects trying to design buildings that will stand for generations.

That's why Tony fights for smarter codes, better standards, and more durable building practices. Not because the industry demands it — but because the future does.

The Beauty of Block

For Tony, the beauty of block isn't aesthetic — though that part is evolving fast.

"The beauty of block is simple," he says. "It's still standing when everything else is gone."

And for the architects, engineers, and community leaders he works with every day, that's the kind of beauty that truly matters.

Reprinted from Concrete Masonry Checkoff,
https://beautyofblock.com/2025/12/23/tony-topping-and-the-fight-for-better-building-stronger-codes-and-less-rebuilding/

TEXAS Architecture

Hosted by:
The University of Texas at Austin
School of Architecture



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Concrete Masonry Architecture Symposium

Co-hosted by The Beauty of Block and the Texas Masonry Council

October 1-2, 2026, Austin, Texas

THE BEAUTY OF BLOCK

Scan to Attend

Through project presentations and discussions, the Symposium will advance our understanding of both why and how concrete masonry has been used by architects in significant projects of the Americas.

The *Symposium* is a 2-day event for architects to learn, collaborate, and share their experiences with concrete masonry. Up to 6 hours of AIA CEU credits can be earned.

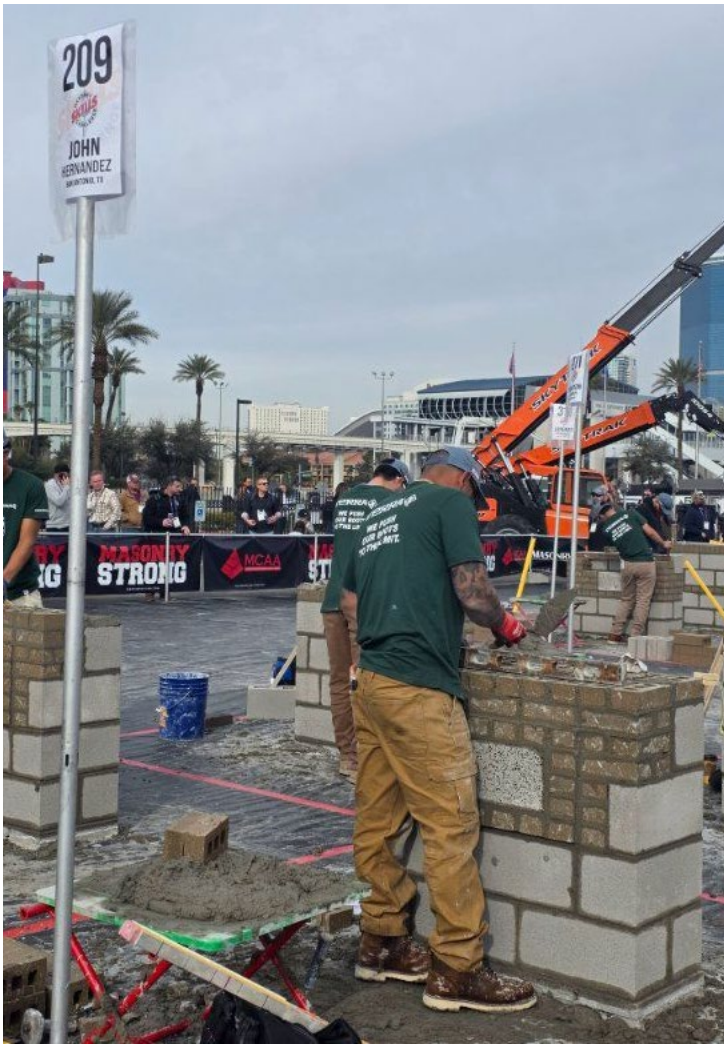
Travel stipends to cover lodging and travel to Austin are available through a partnership with The Beauty of Block and the Texas Masonry Council.

Session information and the full schedule will be available soon.

Texas Masonry Council | 25301 Borough Park Rd., Suite 116 | The Woodlands, TX 77380 | (713) 377-6334

Texas Showed Up Strong at SpecMix 500

Congratulations to our Texas qualifiers who recently competed in the **Mason Contractors Association of America (MCAA)** Masonry Skills Challenge, representing our state and showcasing the skill, discipline, and craftsmanship of today's masonry apprentices.





This is craftsmanship under pressure, and the future of masonry is on full display.



Texas Masonry Council is proud to support our members at **Brazos Masonry Inc** and congratulate Team Grande on an impressive 3rd place finish on the world stage. Events like this showcase the skill, speed, and craftsmanship that define our industry. Well done by the Brazos Masonry team - Texas is proud.

World of Concrete:

Always better when we come together. TMC was proud to connect and collaborate with fellow masonry organizations by strengthening relationships and working toward a stronger, smarter future for our industry.

When we work together, we elevate masonry as a whole.

Shown here: Tony Topping, Dawn Rogers, Julia Kuta-Wilson and Ryan Gray



Serendipity Produces Big Results for Acme Brick Company and Tarleton State University.



New Tarleton engineers at Acme: Ben Price, Kyle Thomas, Bell Pina, and Cooper Kelly (L. To R.)

In this instance, serendipity (the fact of finding interesting or valuable things by chance) was a casual meeting between Ed Watson, President and CEO of Acme Brick Company, and James Hurley, President of Tarleton State University. Both were attending a meeting with other business leaders on ways to partner with the new Texas A&M University School of Law in Fort Worth.

Out of their casual conversation came a discovery that Tarleton was producing engineering graduates with a "hands-on" practical approach to engineering challenges – exactly what Acme was seeking.

Tarleton then hosted Acme leaders on Tarleton's campus in nearby Stephenville, Texas, to meet engineering students and discuss job opportunities at Acme Brick Company. Senior Ben Price was hired after he graduated, followed shortly by his friend Kyle Thomas. Both were involved in the reopening of Acme's Bennett plant, located west of Fort Worth, following a significant renovation. During that time, Cooper Kelly, another engineering student from Tarleton, was also working at Bennett as an intern. As Mike Shipley, Acme's Vice President of Production, puts it, "They hit the ground running and didn't stop."

Shortly thereafter, Tarleton engineering professors were utilized to evaluate Acme's needs in the production process. After meeting with Acme plant personnel at Acme's Bennett plant, the "Capstone Project" emerged with their recommendations for improvements and other manufacturing refinements.

To promote equipment reliability, the professors proposed creating a system to monitor major equipment and predict failures before they occur. A quality assurance program relying on Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) was also created to improve results for surface coatings of brick.

In 2025, Tarleton graduate Bella Pena joined Acme after learning from a professor that Acme was looking for engineers interested in PLCs (programmable logic controllers). Said Pena, "After I toured the facility at Bennett and met the people, choosing Acme was an easy decision."

Acme plans to add three or four additional Tarleton graduates this May. "This relationship with Tarleton and their outstanding graduates means that the future of Acme is in good hands.", said Acme's Mike Shipley.

Acme Brick Company, founded in 1891, sells quality building materials and design products for the home through over 50 Acme Brick Tile & Stone showrooms across 13 states in the Southwest and Southeast. The Bennett Plant is one of 15 Acme brick manufacturing facilities in four states. Acme is a wholly owned subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway, Inc. For more information, visit brick.com.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to stay updated with Acme Brick's latest products, insights, and company news.
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For more PRESS information, contact Ron Taylor/Ashley & Taylor Public Relations at (817) 874-8206 or ashleytaylorpr@gmail.com.

The Department of Labor AI Literacy Framework

The U.S. Department of Labor has released its **AI Literacy Framework** to advance AI skill development efforts across the country.

As AI adoption accelerates across industries, it is critical that all American workers build the AI skills needed to share in the economic benefits AI creates.

The Trump Administration identified AI literacy as a key priority in both America's Talent Strategy and the AI Action Plan, and DOL issued guidance last year prioritizing AI literacy across workforce and education funding streams.

DOL's AI Literacy Framework will complement this guidance by providing a foundational resource to inform program design and the deployment of AI literacy efforts, maximizing their impact for American workers. In most workplaces, indicating a need for "AI literacy" is not enough on its own: *employers will need to define the specific AI skills and depth of knowledge that are most appropriate for each role and context.*

Despite these variations, we believe that starting with a common foundation for understanding AI literacy across the workforce and education systems is essential to helping workers navigate an AI-driven economy.

The framework outlines five foundational content areas and seven delivery principles that DOL knows can be especially effective at equipping the American workforce.

The full framework document expands on each of these areas in detail and offers practical considerations for different groups, including workers, businesses, state and local agencies, and education and training providers.

DOL's AI Literacy Framework: https://lnkd.in/eCsmsiDN

WHAT TMC OFFERS TO ARCHITECTS

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TEXAS MASONRY HALL OF FAME

The Texas Masonry Hall of Fame Class of 2026 will be inducted on March 26th at the Alamo.

Presented by: Shadrock & Williams Masonry

The Texas Masonry Hall of Fame is more than just an accolade—it is a lasting tribute to the visionaries who have elevated the masonry construction industry across the Lone Star State. By celebrating their expertise, innovation, and leadership, the Hall of Fame preserves their legacy and inspires future generations to uphold and continue the highest standards of the masonry industry.

The Alamo provides a fitting tribute to the rich heritage of Texas masonry. This iconic mission-turned-fortress, with its enduring limestone walls and storied past, stands as a testament to the skill, resilience, and craftsmanship that have shaped the state's construction legacy. The Alamo's historic masonry structure offers a striking backdrop to honor those who have similarly built a strong, lasting foundation for the masonry industry in Texas.

Class of 2026:
Danny Green, Stan McCarthy, Anton Shadrock, and Jim Wise

Class of 2025:
Mackie Bounds, Kevin Camarata, Dennis Knautz, and Mel Oller

Class of 2024:
Buddie Barnes, Paul Odom, Lynn & Ricky Skinner, and Paul Yeatts

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Acme's inaugural Brick of the Year honors one of the world's great cultural capitals: the Lombardy region of northern Italy.

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This stunning new blend is available in velour or smooth texture, both in the versatile modular size. Ask your Acme representative about Lombardy today; our Brick of the Year will have your clients saying, "Bravissimo!"

Scan here to learn more.



Designed by VLK Architects, Eagle Mountain High School in Fort Worth features extensive use of our Brick of the Year.