

A Legacy of Changed Lives

Bryson Constructors' Work Is Transforming People and Communities around Metro Atlanta and Beyond

By Allen Allnoch

Bryson Barnes smiles at the memory of growing up bearing the name of his father's successful construction business.

Founded by Steven L. Barnes, Bryson Constructors, Inc., has built an impressive portfolio of high-profile projects around metro Atlanta and the Southeast Region, and earned a long list of local and national accolades in the process.

"It got confusing when I was in middle school and high school," recalls Bryson Barnes, who at age 30 works as a project manager and is in line to succeed his father as head of the East Point-based company. "There are jokes about it, but at the same time, I know what's been placed on my shoulders. I wake up every day excited, because I know I can change somebody's life."

Steve Barnes, who also has a daughter, Bria, says he did not start the



Bryson and Steve Barnes on site at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, where Bryson Constructors completed 60,000 square feet of owner executive suites and administrative offices.

that. "I tell people all the time, if he would have started a garbage company, I would have drove the garbage truck around all day until I learned how to manage more garbage trucks. I've seen

national reputation for business leadership and inclusion through his business procurement practices, with awards including National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC) 2009 Contractor of the Year, the Build Georgia Merit Award in 2013 and 2014, and the 2017 Historical Urban Restoration Construction of Excellence Award. In June 2019, Barnes was inducted into the NAMC Hall of Fame.

Bryson Constructors' Atlanta-area projects include Mercedes-Benz Stadium, where it managed the buildout of 60,000 square feet of owner executive suites and administrative offices; and a three-phase renovation of State Farm Arena, the second-largest such project in NBA History. The firm also has completed more than \$200 million in work at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and continues to have a hand in multiple HJAIA projects.

what my dad has done, and seen him do it for the right reasons. He doesn't do it for the glitz and the glamour; it's honestly to help people."

People, Performance, Results

Steve Barnes' generous spirit and firm-but-fair management style have endeared him to countless employees, clients and partners since the company's launch in 1989. He has gained a

The company's success is built on three strategic principles: People are the primary resource, performance is uncompromising and results matter. Steve Barnes explains:

"I've never sold us as a minority firm. We're a good GC firm that happens to be a minority. I've always said it's our people, and closely related to that is our performance, and then our results. My people know they have to perform, and the results say we're doing something right."

Bryson Constructors takes seriously the impact of its industry on society, understanding that the built environment influences both the physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals and the community. An attitude of positive social responsibility is one of the firm's core values, expressed as, "Lift As We Build."

This concept applies to investment in workforce development, as well as seeking opportunities to work with smaller local firms, including ones owned by women and minorities. At Mercedes-Benz Stadium, for example, Bryson Constructors hired more than 100 individuals from Atlanta's Westside community, thereby strengthening the local workforce.

Steve Barnes believes in passing the baton to the next generation, and he is doing just that by investing in young people. As an NAMC board member, he advocates for more opportunities for minority firms, as well as bright, energetic young men and women with enormous potential to have a positive impact in the industry.

"There are tremendous opportunities in this industry and Bryson Constructors has been successful in managing projects in a manner that opens the door of opportunities for so many others," Steve says. "We have a diversity and inclusion model that works for our clients and our firm."

Addressing a Critical Industry Issue

Bryson Constructors' leadership in this way comes at a crucial time for the con-

struction industry at large, which is facing a significant labor shortage as older workers retire while a thriving economy drives new projects.

Bryson Barnes serves on the board of the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia (CEFGA), which along with Associated General Contractors (ACG) Georgia, is working diligently to address this issue. He and the firm have hired dozens of graduates from CEFGA's Construction Ready program, a four-week training curriculum that has placed more than 1,000 men and women into the workforce since 2014.

Dontavious Greene is a good example of Bryson Constructors' investment in local skilled labor. The 25-year-old Atlanta native went through Construction Ready in August 2019, was hired by Bryson Constructors and has been working on a pedestrian bridge project at Hartsfield-



Steve Barnes was inducted into the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC) Hall of Fame in 2019.

Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

"Bryson Constructors is a firm that lifts people and gives them a chance to learn a trade and skills, and that has created a career opportunity for me," Greene says.

Steve Barnes has story after story of people such as Greene who have found meaningful work at his company. As he discusses the legacy he's building, those stories, he says, are at the heart of it all.

"One day a young man came and knocked on my door," he recalls. "He was there to pick up a check. He said he had just bought a car, and he told me how he came to work for the company. He was referred by a superintendent, Doug. I had hired Doug when he was going through some adjustments after the stadium project. It hit me – we hired this gentleman who is now growing and developing in our environment, and he brings in another gentleman who is now growing in our environment. We are making an exponential impact in the Atlanta market."

"The legacy is about not just my own children, but all of my kids. My legacy is not because I started a company; my legacy is because we changed people's lives."

As construction work in the healthcare, technology, housing, aviation, sports and entertainment arenas grows, Bryson Constructors is seeking more opportunities to partner with industry leaders and firms who see value in the diversity and inclusion model. In addition to working with leaders on the labor shortage problem, Bryson Barnes is taking the lead as the company seeks to expand its portfolio and pursue CM-At-Risk opportunities.

"My father has flown under the radar for so many years, working at a steady pace to build the company," Bryson Barnes says. "The Mercedes-Benz Stadium was a signature project for the firm and we delivered. It's created ways for us to grow, and that's what I've been tasked with, expanding our footprint throughout the Atlanta market and Southeast."

Steve adds, "Our Value-Added Partner [VAP] model has worked successfully on mega-projects such as Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Partnerships with organizations like CEFGA and our client commitment translates into performance and positive results. Our business partners recognize that when Bryson Constructors wins a project, the community at large wins, too." ❖