



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

Harold Hammerman “Spirit of Education” Award

Nominee: Rob Leonard,

Director of Safety and Education with F & S Building Innovations



Rob Leonard has been in the Construction Industry for about 40 years working in the Commercial and Residential Arenas specializing in both new construction and renovations.

From a very young age, it was no mystery that Rob wanted to work with his hands. If he wasn't sleeping or eating he was constructing something, repairing something or upgrading something, having more tools than his father at the age of 8. Throughout his childhood, he was driven by wanting to create and build.

As he went through school, Rob was disinterested and unmotivated by traditional subjects and textbooks. Because of this, he didn't feel passionate about school and wasn't interested in pursuing college.

As Rob was getting closer to high school graduation, Leonard met with his school guidance counselor to discover his options after high school. The school guidance counselor dismissed his wishes to pursue a craft career in construction and pushed him to pursue a four-year degree. Luckily, his counselor was still able to point Leonard to a construction program that he could enroll in while still in high school.

The program, World of Construction, would change his life.

As Leonard was navigating school and figuring out his career path, he was also amidst hard times and was dealing with a broken family. His experience in the program gave him direction and helped him find purpose during the most challenging time of his life.

His teacher and mentor through the program, Col. Steve Zolmij validated construction as a respectable career and helped Leonard discover a career path that made sense for him. By setting him straight and showing him the benefits of a career in construction, Zolmij changed Leonard's life.

Out of high school, Leonard began working in a variety of construction jobs including going through a plumber's apprenticeship program and was able to make a livable wage at a young age, by way of the aptitudes he was able to develop through the course of his young life. As he worked in construction, he was able to support himself, work with his hands and practice problem solving. Every day, Leonard was validated in his choice to pursue the skilled crafts.

Leonard was able to gain 10 years of meaningful experience under his Uncle, Joe Jacquelin, working at the family construction business. This allowed Leonard to grow as a carpenter and leader of a carpentry team which built and remodeled a variety of buildings. Later in his career,



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

he even started his own construction business, where he maintained membership in the local NARI organization. Through each of these endeavors, one thing shone through — his love of construction. Eventually, Leonard found himself at a design building firm that specialized in architecture, design and field construction. As a site manager, he discovered his passion for creating [passive houses](#), a German certification for energy-efficient buildings.

With the company's owner, Adam Cohen, Leonard began to develop panels that any carpenter would be able to install when constructing a building. The panels, which took nine years to develop, allow for the easy construction of passive houses.

The panels were a collaborative effort between [Prosoco](#), Cohen and Leonard. Once they were developed, [Build Smart](#) was born out of Lawrence, Kansas. As the lead expert on the panels, Leonard became a founding member and the Vice President of the company. During his tenure with Build Smart, Leonard would instruct members of the organization how to connect with Builders, how to estimate projects, how to assemble building components in a manufacturing and field setting. Leonard traveled the country doing field consultation and instruction, as well as presentations on new and existing construction building envelope systems and panelized construction systems. One of the presentations was at the North American Passive House Conference in Boston in September 2018.

Leonard further built his knowledge and respective credentials in the building sciences and deepened his increasing passion for instructing and informing others including consumers, builders and others how to navigate into or through construction projects.

Leonard's thirst for learning everything he could regarding construction inspired his blossoming passion to help others with either their project navigation, their general understanding of the construction industry, the renovation and performance opportunities within his building analyst work and consultation.

Leonard had a regular presence on the Daytime Blue Ridge Program on WSLS in Roanoke, Virginia as their Building Consultant on their regular contractor segment where he strived to reach a broad audience to help them make better construction choices including resourcing reputable contractors through NARI.

Still, the best position of his career was yet to come.

In February of 2019, Leonard accepted a position at F&S Building Innovations as the Director of Safety and Education. In this position, he is responsible for recruiting professionals and training craftspeople — all as he works to de-stigmatize the industry. Leonard has been instrumental in



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

developing a robust apprenticeship program at F&S. Congruently, he has developed a 'Train the Trainer' program which provides the proper tools to mentors- enabling them to provide apprentices a well-rounded, instructive and productive environment. Leonard is responsible for oversight and furthering the DOLI registered apprentice program at F & S Building Innovations. Leonard's passion for safety on the jobsite has spurred implementation of an aggressive safety training program which entails extensive training and weekly safety monitoring and oversight.

F&S Building Innovations has long recognized the need for proper training of construction trade professionals and heavily considered the benefits of a construction based trade school. Leonard was the perfect fit for this venture – that venture is the BUILD SMART INSTITUTE. Leonard has spent the last year in the development stage of Build Smart Institute. The Build Smart Institute will be a non-profit Construction Education Facility that will be licensed by the Home Builders Institute (HBI). HBI is affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). Leonard is one of two F&S Building Innovations employees that have recently been certified as HBI Certified PACT Instructors. The HBI PACT program is a Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training Program which consists of several instructional modules and the respective curriculum ranging from entry level programs through specialized construction trade programs, in which the students can obtain nationally recognized certificates. The Build Smart Institute will also continue to develop and deliver curriculum in a variety of construction specialized programs as well as Construction Management curriculum and instructional programs.

Although the primary objective of Build Smart Institute will be to educate, train and place career-ready candidates into functioning construction trade positions, the programs and opportunities that will be put forward by Build Smart Institute will also include Construction Industry career exploration workshops for 5th through 7th graders, PACT programs for 8th graders, PACT and specialized programs for apprentices and adult learners.

The Institute has already begun to take flight and will be taking on students by mid-2020. The Build Smart Institute will produce students that will have nationally recognized credentials.

Moving forward, Leonard is putting immense research and strategy into a program that will work to uplift, mentor and teach students in a way that properly sets them up for a career where they are best and properly placed. Completing research at the local, regional and nationwide level, he is discovering the best way to serve the community and the industry. During the course of these endeavors Leonard has the opportunity to meet with and collaborate various community leaders, local and regional government officials and legislators, CTE and Stem Instructors / Administrators, Pubic School Superintendents and Administrators,



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

DOLI directors, community colleges, Skills USA leaders, workforce development agencies, The Association of General Contractors and the Association of General Contractors of Virginia, various technical education centers, The Boys and Girls Club, the Build Your Future Program, the VTEEA, the NAHB, Science Museum of Western Virginia, various economic development agencies and chambers of commerce, NCCER and HBI.

Leonard sits on the Roanoke County Public Schools General Advisory Committee for Career & Technical Education and the Virginia Western Community College Building Trades Curriculum Advisory Committee. Rob has recently been asked to join the State of Virginia Skills USA Executive Team and also advising member for a new Roanoke Apprentice Leadership Group. Recent presentations have included speaking about construction as a career and construction education at the Leadership Roanoke Valley (part of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce) event and a Virginia Department of Education hearing as to the benefit of CTE and vocational education programs.

After everything the industry has done for Leonard, he feels this is his opportunity to pay it forward and change someone else's life.

Once Leonard accepted his current position of Director of Safety and Education with F & S Building Innovations, Leonard placed a call that was long overdue.

Over 40 years after meeting, he got in touch with his former teacher, Colonel Steve Zolimij, and told him how much Steve changed his life at a young age and set the foundation for a respectable career in construction in ways that Leonard could have never imagined. Moved by the conversation, the two remain in contact and Zolimij has proven to be a helpful resource as Leonard develops the Build Smart Institute and the respective programs from the ground up.

Overall, Leonard hopes to provide students with their best chance for success — regardless of what they want to do. Knowing what it is like to be pushed toward a formal four-year education, he doesn't want other students to be pushed away from a career in construction.

Rob Leonard, found his passion in high school. His pursuit throughout the industry led him to become the Director of Safety and Education at F&S Building Innovations, a position that will allow him to teach students about the industry and its benefits.

Throughout Leonard's professional and personal life he gets asked by various contacts as to how to best access a reputable construction company to perform remodeling and renovations.



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

Without hesitation Leonard responds to contact their local NARI organizations, as an organization that is affiliated with NARI is committed to working in a professional manner.

PHOTOS

Rob Leonard has developed a robust Apprenticeship program at F&S Building Innovations- recruiting and guiding apprentices in both residential and commercial construction practices.



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

Rob Leonard developed a 'Train the Trainer' program to build a spirit of mentorship for Lead carpenters and Superintendents responsible for leading and teaching the F&S Building Innovations registered apprentices.



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

Rob Leonard participated as an expert panelist and speaker in May 2019 for Leadership Roanoke Valley which is a 10-month program that helps leaders understand current issues in the community and their economic environment and build skills to work within them.



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

Rob Leonard is a willing participant in all community and business venues and events- always searching for more relationships that lend more knowledge.



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

At a recent Career Quest sponsored by Virginia Career Works, where over 5000 middle school students had the opportunity to be introduced to various career opportunities, Rob Leonard designed hands-on activities that allowed students to work with their hands using construction tools and fasteners. He was even more passionate the day of the event working with the students directly.



As part of Career Quest, Rob designed and assembled over 1000 kits that would allow students to take home and construct a simple structure to meet certain criteria. The winner received his own tools to further his interest in the trade opportunities.



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuildinginc.com

Rob Leonard's commitment to safety education has been course-altering in the F&S culture. He is passionate about educating those around him to insure they provide quality work – but safely.



Rob Leonard is Chair of the AGCVA Workforce Solutions Committee for the Roanoke District. This committee is committed to training and educating to further gainful employment in the trades.



Rob Leonard was instrumental in participating in the VTEEA - Virginia Technology and Engineering Education Associations Expo- taking the opportunity to present the 'Build Your Future' initiative for furthering of construction education.



2944 Orange Ave, NE Roanoke VA 24012
540-985-9160 Fax: 540-985-9166
www.fsfourseasons.com/ www.fsbuidinginc.com