

Since 1996, the Spirit of Construction Foundation has recognized the leaders of the Greater Cincinnati construction industry with prestigious Lifetime Achievement Awards. Past winners have included 112 industry leaders.

"The Foundation is pleased to announce this year's Lifetime Achievement Award recipients. They have spent their lives demonstrating personal leadership, improving the construction industry, and inspiring those around them to do the same," said Bill Riddle, president of the Spirit of Construction Foundation.

This year's Lifetime Achievement winners are John Strawser of Valley Interior Systems, Jeff Read of Nelson Stark Company, and John Steel, Jr of Hilltop Basic Resources. A posthumous award will also be dedicated to Michael Giffie Sr. of GT Industrial Supply. The winners will be celebrated at the 29th annual gala, which will be held at the NKY Convention Center on Saturday, October 25, 2025.

John Strawser is a highly accomplished leader with over 39 years of expertise in the construction industry, specializing in the commercial drywall sector. As a former Chief Operating Officer and current Board Member of Valley Interior Systems, John has played a pivotal role in driving consistent growth, expanding operations to six locations, and fostering an exceptional company culture introduced initially by his father, Bill. Over the past decade, John has expanded his focus to workforce development and educating K-12 students about the opportunities the trades can provide, specifically with his leadership and mentoring of the CCAP program. His strategic vision, coupled with skills in business planning, stakeholder relations, and team development, has solidified his reputation as an innovative and results-driven professional.

Jeff Read is a business leader whose career is defined by innovation, customer loyalty, and employee appreciation. In 1992, influenced by his brother-in-law Mark Stark, Jeff transitioned from a career in Aerospace to Stark Plumbing. His leadership and strategic insight quickly saw him rise to Vice President and Principal in 1994, progressing to President in 2015. Jeff steered the company through significant growth, increasing sales from \$36 million in 2014 to \$100 million in 2021, launching a dedicated service division, and spearheading expansion into the Dayton market. Yet even as he drove business success, Jeff recognized the importance of industry involvement, as exemplified by his three-decade-long commitment to workforce development and ensuring Nelson Starks' position as a good community partner.

John F. Steele, Jr. has forged a remarkable career in the construction and concrete industry over several decades. Beginning his journey at Hilltop Basic Resources, Inc. in 1978 as a salesman, John quickly distinguished himself through his persistence, strategic vision, and willingness to tackle challenges head-on. His early hands-on experience laid the groundwork for a steady ascent: by May 1985, he had earned a seat on the Board of Directors, and in 1995, he took the pivotal step of acquiring the business from family

members. His leadership was further solidified in May 2004 when he was appointed Chairman and CEO, steering the company into new realms of innovation and growth.

Michael John Griffie Sr. was a beacon of integrity, innovation, and dedication—a man whose impact reached far beyond the boundaries of his profession and into the hearts of his community and family.

After graduating from Hughes High School, Michael pursued his passion for electrical engineering at the University of Cincinnati, earning his Associate Degree. He honed his skills as an electrician with the Local 212 before venturing into entrepreneurship, where he flourished as a business leader for over three decades. His leadership as President and owner of M-Pact Corporation left a lasting legacy in Cincinnati's skyline, with landmark projects such as Paul Brown Stadium, Children's Hospital, and FC Cincinnati.

Michael's entrepreneurial spirit didn't stop there. In 2009, he co-founded GT Industrial Supply, a company built on principles of integrity and service. Under his vision, GTI grew to multiple locations, standing as a testament to his unwavering drive and commitment to excellence.

The Spirit of Construction is a coalition of industry professionals and visionary companies dedicated to propelling the construction sector toward a promising future. Spirit is committed to illuminating the vital role our region's construction industry plays in community development, while shining a positive light on career opportunities for young people who will go on to shape the future of the industry.

Our Foundation brings this vision to life through strategic grant-making designed to move the industry forward. Investing in workforce development, community outreach initiatives, and scholarships ensures that the future of construction is both resilient and strong.