

# TENNESSEE CONCRETE MAGAZINE

AWARDS 2026  
Volume 40, No. 1

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**Josh Richardson**  
TCA President

# WHY CONCRETE TEST CYLINDERS MATTER MORE THAN YOU THINK

Concrete test results are only as reliable as the cylinders they come from.

Reliable results come from trained technicians who follow standardized procedures on every job.

Consistency is quality control.

In our industry, we talk a lot about strength: compressive strength, flexural strength, early breaks, 28-day results. But the simple truth behind these measurements is that concrete test results are only as reliable as the cylinders they come from.

When a concrete cylinder is cast, it becomes the official representation of the concrete placed on that project. Owners, engineers, contractors, and producers rely on that specimen to validate compliance with the specifications.

Every year, projects are delayed and payments are withheld because the test specimens were made, handled, or stored incorrectly. When that happens, we are no longer measuring the concrete but are measuring the quality of our testing practices.

Improper consolidation, incorrect curing temperature, moving cylinders too soon, leaving them exposed on the back of a pickup truck—each of these seemingly small missteps can artificially reduce strength results, sometimes dramatically. Further, when strengths come in low, it can trigger investigations, core testing, structural evaluations, schedule impacts, and unnecessary costs.

Here's an example checklist to use in alignment with ASTM C31. I see the most issues arise with curing and transportation of cylinders, so I have added extra details for those.

## 1. Sample correctly

For acceptance testing, take your sample during discharge from the middle portion of the load, not the first and not the last. A representative sample is the foundation for every result that follows.

## 2. Mold with precision

Make cylinders using standardized procedures every time. Place concrete

in the proper lifts, consolidate correctly, strike off cleanly, and label immediately. Use molds and tools that won't distort specimens. Poor molds and careless handling can cost you strength before curing even begins.

## 3. Protect immediately

As soon as cylinders are made, put them in a secure, level location and protect them from sun, wind, rain, freezing conditions, vibration, traffic, and disturbance. Fresh specimens are vulnerable and should be treated as such.

## 4. Control curing conditions

Temperature and moisture control matter. Early curing conditions can impact measured strength, so protect cylinders from extremes and prevent moisture loss from the start. For concrete with less than 5,000 psi compressive strength make sure you initial cure environment is between 60 to 80 degrees. Concrete with a 6000 psi compressive strength or higher keep the initial cure environment between 68 to 78 degrees. Be sure to place a high/low thermometer in the curing box to monitor high/low temperatures during initial curing stage.

## 5. Handle and transport with care

Don't move specimens prematurely. When it's time to transport, prevent jarring and damage and get them where they need to go without delay. Travel time between jobsite to testing laboratory should be less than 4 hours.

## 6. Use qualified people and be consistent

Reliable results come from trained technicians following the same standardized procedures on every job. Consistency is quality control.

# Placing Pervious Concrete

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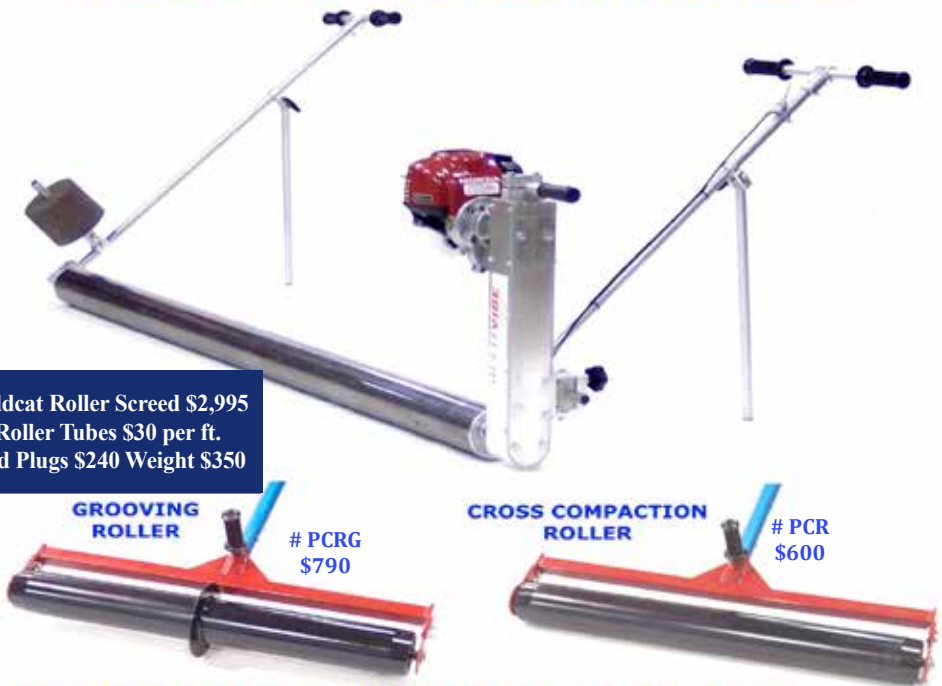


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**Kaylah White**  
TCA Director

Our industry has benefited from a dedicated and capable team. Building on that strong foundation creates exciting opportunities for the future.

.....

The Tennessee concrete industry has a strong legacy. Together, let's build on that success and position TCA for the next chapter.

# A STRONG FOUNDATION AND AN EXCITING FUTURE

Selecting just one topic for my first column as Executive Director of the Tennessee Concrete Association (TCA) is challenging. Instead, I'd like to take this opportunity to briefly introduce my background and share a few thoughts on where our association stands today—and the opportunities I see ahead.

## MY PATH INTO CONCRETE AND ASSOCIATIONS

My journey into the concrete industry began at Middle Tennessee State University, where I graduated from the Concrete Industry Management program. During that time, I interned with Cheney Enterprises and had the benefit of strong mentorship. Those experiences, along with encouragement from a guest speaker employed with IMI, sparked my interest in material science.

With guidance from Dr. Heather Brown, I built a small focus in my degree path around geology and microscopy. My goal after graduation was to work toward petrography, but the 2008 recession shifted that path. Instead, I accepted a role with a local construction association, thinking it might be temporary.

Four years later, I was serving as Executive Director and ultimately spent 11 years building and strengthening that organization. Along the way, I discovered that association management aligned closely with my strengths: listening to member challenges, helping identify solutions, building meaningful partnerships, and advocating for the industry.

There are not many opportunities that would have convinced me to leave that role,

but the chance to lead TCA was certainly one of them. I am honored and excited to be here.

## A STRONG ORGANIZATION

During my first month with TCA, my focus has been simple: listen, learn, and understand. I have spent time with Alan Sparkman and some members, working to absorb as much knowledge as possible about the association and the industry we represent.

I have also been reviewing the Board of Directors' 2026–2029 strategic plan and considering how we will measure and achieve those goals. Alan and I will continue overlapping for another month to ensure a smooth leadership transition, introduce me to key partners, and help preserve the relationships he has built over the past 28 years.

What has been immediately clear is that TCA has been exceptionally well led. The staff and leadership team I joined are outstanding. From Alan's decades of promotion and industry advocacy, to the training and research led by John, the workforce initiatives developed with Joseph, and the organizational leadership provided by Darla and Kate, our industry has benefited from a dedicated and capable team.

Because of their efforts, and the continued engagement of our members, TCA is on very solid footing today.

## LOOKING AHEAD

That strong foundation creates exciting opportunities for the future. As I look

ahead, I see significant potential for growth in several areas, including membership engagement, workforce development, and innovative promotion that highlights the strength, durability, and sustainability of concrete across Tennessee.

I recently attended the annual meeting of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association and returned with several ideas that could translate well at the state level. By aligning our efforts with national partners and continuing to build strong relationships within the construction community, we can expand the impact of TCA's work.

Most importantly, I look forward to hearing from you. Associations are strongest when members are actively engaged, sharing ideas, identifying challenges, and helping shape the path forward. The Tennessee concrete industry has a strong legacy, and I am excited to work with you to build on that success and position TCA for the next chapter. I hope you'll come say hello at an upcoming member mixer or conference.

### Josh Richardson, TCA President

If you are looking to train your employees in standardized sampling and testing procedures, look to the Tennessee Concrete Association. The association hosts both review classes and certification testing for our industry. In 2025, TCA trained nearly 1,000 people in ACI and NRMCA standardized courses.

Our industry is judged by performance and performance is documented by test results. If we want fair, accurate breaks, we must do our part in the field. Get the cylinders right, and we protect the integrity of the concrete, the project, and everyone's reputation.



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# ❖ 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## GRAND CHAMPION

Windows to the Mountains

Project's Ready Mix Producer  
— Blalock & Sons —



# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## GRAND CHAMPION! BEST CONCRETE HOME

Project Name: Windows to the Mountains

Project Owner: Payton & Janessa Abernathy

Project Architect: Frank Gordon

Project RM Producer: Blalock & Sons

Project Contractor: Parks, ICF LLC

**W**indows to the Mountains is a highly complex, multi-level ICF project that overcame significant design and structural challenges through innovative engineering. The home features tall ICF walls, irregular geometry with multiple corners, and extensive glazing to capture panoramic views. Its most demanding element, the rooftop Super Floor deck supporting a full modpool, required advanced load-distribution detailing, waterproofing, and vibration control. Using 3D modeling, hybrid ICF-to-deck anchoring methods, and precision concrete placement, the team achieved structural integrity, energy efficiency, and architectural elegance. The result is a showcase of modern ICF versatility, combining resilience, luxury, and cutting-edge construction technology.



# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## ARCHITECTURE/ENGINEER AWARDS

### BEST ARCHITECT-ENGINEER NON-BUILDING STRUCTURE

Project Name: Donelson Pike Relocation

Project Engineer: Gresham Smith

Project Architect: Tenn., Department of Transportation

Project RM Producer: Irving Materials, Inc.

Project Contractor: Mas-Tec Civil

This project included the relocation of Donelson Pike and construction of a new Diverging Diamond Interchange with I-40 in Nashville, Tenn., adjacent to the BNA airport. Objectives required the construction of 4 bridges, 6 retaining walls, and grading that required 900,000 CY's of unclassified excavation, 1,293,000 CY's of embankment, and 439,000 tons of graded solid rock. Approximately



6,700 CY's of concrete structures and 29,000 SY's of 10" concrete pavement was placed on the project. Approximately 85,000 tons of asphalt was also placed on the project.



# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST COMMERCIAL BUILDING HIGH-RISE

Project Name: Society Nashville

Project Owner: Property Markets Group (PMG)

Project Engineer: CHM Structural Engineers

Project Architect: Baker Barrios

Project RM Producer: Irving Materials

Project Contractor: Baker Concrete Construction Inc.

**S**ociety Nashville is a 17-story mixed-use development in Nashville's Gulch, featuring parking, retail, amenities, residential units, and a rooftop terrace.

Baker Concrete Construction delivered a \$33+ million concrete scope—including foundations, slabs, and elevated decks—totaling 36,000 cubic yards of concrete and 2,900 tons of rebar between July 2023 and February 2025.

Despite tight site logistics, restricted access, weather impacts, and structural complexities, the team maintained schedule and quality through detailed planning, innovative formwork systems, and strong coordination.



Using BIM and 3D scanning to enhance accuracy and reduce rework, along with a strong focus on safety and communication, Baker successfully delivered a high-quality project that contributes to Nashville's growing urban landscape.



# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST COMMERCIAL BUILDING MID-RISE

Project Name: Axle Logistics

Project Owner: John Clay & Drew Johnson/Joe Petre as rep.

Project Engineer: Facility Systems Consultants, LLC

Project Architect: Design Innovation Architects, Inc

Project RM Producer: Ready Mix USA

Project Contractor: Glenn E. Mitchell & Co. Inc

**G**lenn E. Mitchell & Co., Inc., in partnership with Merit Construction, delivered a six-story headquarters for Axle Logistics in Knoxville, supporting over 500 employees.

The post-tensioned concrete structure includes a below-grade basketball court, office floors, and a sloped roof. Early phases required complex below-grade construction, tight site coordination, and advanced waterproofing.

Key challenges included massive transfer beams, varied shoring systems, and a precision architectural concrete façade. The team utilized custom formwork and innovative dowel connections to ensure structural integrity and a high-quality finish.



Concrete work was completed in September 2024, with the building opening in June 2025.



# ❖ 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## CONTRACTOR AWARDS

### BEST FINISHING RESIDENTIAL

Project Name: Jorgensen Driveway

Project Owner: Will Jorgenson, owner of Magnum Assoc.

Project RM Producer: Harrison Construction

Project Contractor: M&S Concrete

Additional Companies Recognized: Chip's Concrete

**T**his was Will Jorgenson's personal driveway, the owner of Magnum Associates. They poured 45 cy of our Pine Bluff Pea Gravel mix with River Sand. The finishers did an excellent job of evenly exposing the aggregates.



# ❖ 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST FINISHING ARTISAN

Project Name: TVA Kingston Shotcrete

Project Owner: Tennessee Valley Authority

Project RM Producer: Harrison Construction

Project Contractor: Boulderscape, Inc.



**B**oulderscape, Inc., was contracted by Keller North America to install shotcrete on this huge wall at the TVA Kinston Gas Plant project. The wall was completed within three weeks, shooting and hand carving a total of 780 cy of coarse shotcrete. There will be a second larger wall to start in April 2026, adding another 1,300 of shotcrete to the project.

# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST SPECIALITY FLOW FILL

Project Name: Y-12 BETA Flowable Fill Project

Project Owner: Department of Energy / UCOR

Project Engineer: UCOR

Project RM Producer: Harrison Construction

Project Contractor: Premier Contracting & Technical Services

Additional Companies Recognized: United Cleanup Oak Ridge LLC (UCOR)

In 2025 we have delivered over 14,000 CY of flowable fill to the Y-12 BETA building. The flowable fill is being used to fill the basement. It is approximately halfway done and is expected to be completed the first quarter of 2026. The filled basement will give construction workers a good foundation to work off of when demolishing the building. On



the aerial photo, the blue square is the Y-12 ALPHA Building which was completed last year. The red circle is the Y-12 BETA Building being done now.



# ❖ 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## **BEST FINISHING—INDUSTRIAL SLAB ON GROUND**

Project Name: CMC Slag Road

Project Owner: CMC Steel

Project RM Producer: Ready Mix USA

Project Contractor: Al Blankenship Enterprise

**T**his project was unique in that it was a Slag Roadway that had to be removed and replaced in seven days. The removal took place April 23–24. The area was prepped for concrete on April 25. Concrete was placed on April 26. The slab cured three days and was placed back in service on May 1. This was a 550 yard project, 14" thick slab with 8,000 PSI Concrete and Fly Ash for long-term durability. Because of the extreme conditions—where loaders handled hot slag using log chains on their tires to prevent heat-related



blowouts—a jitterbug finish was applied to the surface to enhance traction and durability under abrasive use. Trap Rock was used for durability. The Trap Rock was hauled in from Sunrock Quarry in Butner, N.C.



# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST FINISHING COMMERCIAL SLAB ON GROUND

Project Name: F-9

Project Owner: F-9 Properties LLC

Project Engineer: TTL Inc.

Project RM Producer: IMI

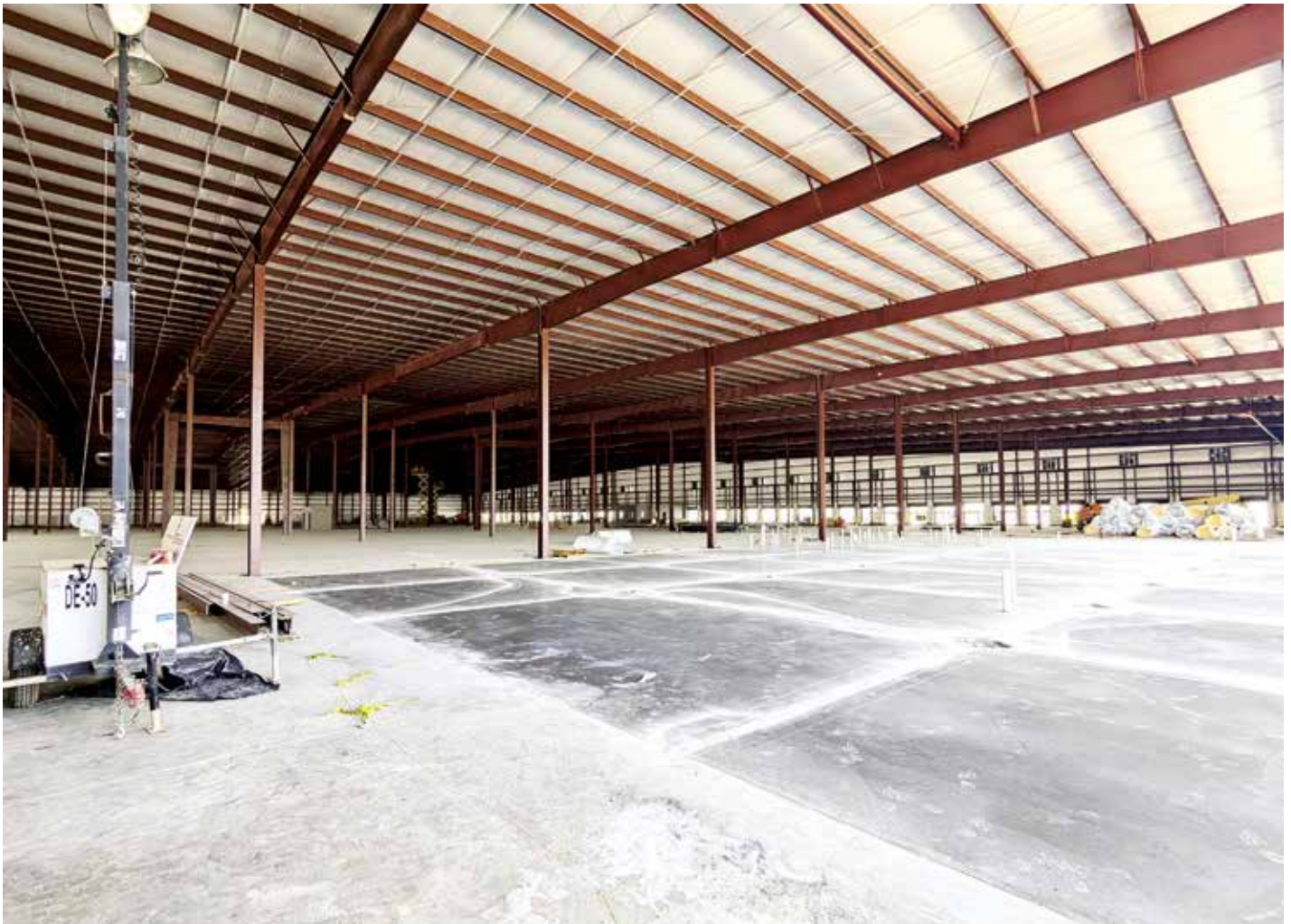
Project Contractor: Doss Brothers

Additional Companies Recognized: Summertown Concrete

**A** 500,000 sq. ft. warehouse in Lawrenceburg, Tenn., was completed in just five months, with 13,000 cubic yards of concrete placed by the Doss Brothers. Summertown Concrete served as the concrete contractor, with JC Concrete handling finishing. The project included multiple interior slab



pours exceeding 800 cubic yards each, along with exterior dock construction and paving.



# ❖ 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST SPECIALTY RAPID REPAIR

Project Name: CM/GC Project I-275 - Bridge over Elm Street/Bernard Avenue  
Project Owner: TDOT  
Project Engineer: Scott McKinney  
Project RM Producer: Mobile Materials Nashville  
Project Contractor: Bell Construction

**T**he Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) delivered its first Accelerated Bridge Construction (ABC) project in Region 1 using the CMGC method, replacing the aging I-275 bridge over Elm & Bernard Street in Knoxville. The original multi-span structure was converted to a single-span design to reduce cost and accelerate construction.

Coordination with the City of Knoxville allowed lane reductions, enabling off-line abutment construction with minimal traffic disruption. The bridge was then completed over two weekend closures—southbound lanes first, followed by northbound.

The project utilized precast abutments, box beams, deck panels, and approach slabs, all tied together with rapid-



setting concrete. Mobile Materials supplied over 70 cubic yards of concrete per weekend using on-site volumetric trucks, achieving 4,000 psi strength in under four hours.

This approach enabled rapid installation, minimized closures, and kept the project on or ahead of schedule.



# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST SPECIALTY TILE UP

Project Name: Beckwith South Warehouse

Project RM Producer: IMI

Project Contractor: Lithko Contracting

This project, consisting of three warehouses, was completed in just over a year with a total of 20,544 cubic yards of concrete placed. The scope included tilt-up panels, slabs, footings, and exterior concrete. Work progressed smoothly from start to finish, with winter conditions having no impact on the schedule. Concrete pours occurred three to four days per week, and the project team had a positive experience collaborating with Lithko throughout.



# ❖ 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST SPECIALITY MULTI-USE

Project Name: Knoxville Multi-Use Stadium

Project Owner: Knoxville / Knox County

Project Engineer: GEMAA (Design Innovation & Barbara McMurray Architects collaboration)

Project RM Producer: Ready Mix USA

Project Contractor: Glenn E. Mitchell & Co., Inc.

This multi-use stadium, designed primarily for baseball, includes large foundations, retaining walls, slab-on-grade for a three-story structure, dugouts, and a retractable pitcher's mound. Additional work featured slab on metal deck, seating risers, paving, monumental entrance stairs, and other site concrete.

The 820,000-square-foot complex required 13,050 cubic yards of concrete. Work began in May 2023 and was completed in July 2025, totaling over 100,000 manhours.



Glenn E. Mitchell & Co., Inc. self-performed 98% of the concrete work, utilizing a rebar subcontractor to help accelerate the schedule.

A standout feature is the retractable pitcher's mound—one of only five in the world. While construction was straightforward, it demanded exceptional precision to ensure the system operated seamlessly.



# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## READY MIX & PRECAST AWARDS

### BEST CONCRETE PARKING LOT

Project Name: Sinclair Apartments / Shoppes of Warfield

Project Owner: Belew Rental

Project Engineer: McKay / Burchett

Project Architect: McKay / Burchett

Project RM Producer: Screaming Eagle Ready Mix LLC

Project Contractor: Reyes Concrete Construction

**T**his project consists of apartment units with amenities including a fitness center, pool, and playground, along with commercial retail space at the front. A total of 12,830 cubic yards of 4,500 PSI concrete was used, including 293



cubic yards of lightweight concrete in the residential portions, and 5,980 cubic yards placed in the commercial section.



# ❖ 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST FIBER PROJECT

Project Name: Discovery Lane

Project Owner: Paul Harrison

Project Engineer: Hodge Engineering

Project RM Producer: Harrison Construction

Project Contractor: Keith Edmondson Construction

**T**his commercial slab was originally specified with woven wire mesh, but the contractor opted to replace it with fibrillated polypropylene fiber, using Euclid's Fiberstrand F at a dosage of 1.5 lbs per cubic yard. This eliminated the need to place wire between pours and reduced issues with truck traffic displacing or catching the mesh, allowing for more efficient concrete placement and smoother workflow for the finishing crews.



# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## INDUSTRY AWARDS

### TCA EMERALD AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE SMALL 25,000 YD3 OR LESS

Project's Winner.....Ready Mix USA Boone's Creek Plant  
Plant Operator .....Patrick Schneider



**B**oones Creek Plant Ready Mix USA's Boones Creek Plant is located at 102 Watertank Rd in Gray, Tenn., and is operated by Patrick Schneider. This plant is celebrated for water conservation and won the "Water Saver of the Year" Award in 2020 and again in 2021 for achieving RMUSA East Tenn., the division's lowest fresh water usage per cubic yard of concrete (gal/YD3). By carefully controlling fresh water usage and re-using every drop possible, the Boones Creek Plant has steadily reduced their fresh water usage each year. Congratulations to Ready Mix USA and Patrick Schneider for their exemplary environmental leadership and commitment to sustainability!

### TCA EMERALD AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE MEDIUM 25,001-75,000 YD3

Project's Winner.....Ready Mix USA Morristown Plant  
Plant Operator .....Joel Baxley



**M**orristown Plant Ready Mix USA's Morristown Plant is located at 663 South Sugar Hollow Rd in Morristown, Tenn., and is operated by Joel Baxley. Since 2017, RMUSA has partnered with the Tennessee Environmental Council to distribute trees to employees and community members as part of Tennessee Tree Day. Every year, employees at the Morristown plant are granted free trees for their personal use and to plant at their facility. Since 2017 RMUSA/CE-MEX employees have planted over 3000 trees as a part of Tenn., Tree Day. Congratulations to Ready Mix USA and Joel Baxley for their exemplary environmental leadership and commitment to sustainability!



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our new  
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have united to  
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pioneering  
the future of  
construction, now.



## 2026 CONCRETE AWARD

### TCA EMERALD AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE LARGE >75,000 CY

Project's Winner ..... Ready Mix USA  
Plant Operator ..... Neyland Plant



**N**eyland Plant Ready Mix USA's Neyland Plant is located at 2200 Neyland Drive in Knoxville, Tenn., and operated by Adam Shue. This plant is celebrated for increasing water efficiency through the implementation of the "Mid-South Water Mission" across Tennessee operations and beyond. To conserve the availability of this vital resource, RMUSA prioritized water-related opportunities by identifying the region that was most significantly contributing to water usage costs in their ready-mix concrete division and working to increase water efficiency in the region through the implementation of maintenance fixes, operational improvements, including recycling water when possible; increasing awareness and setting water-related targets. Congratulations to Ready Mix USA and Adam Shue for their exemplary environmental leadership and commitment to sustainability!

# 2026 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS ❖

## DRIVER DASH WINNERS



1<sup>ST</sup>

### DRIVER DASH WINNER— 1ST PLACE

Terry Parkinson  
Screaming Eagle Ready Mix



2<sup>ND</sup>

### DRIVER DASH WINNER— 2ND PLACE

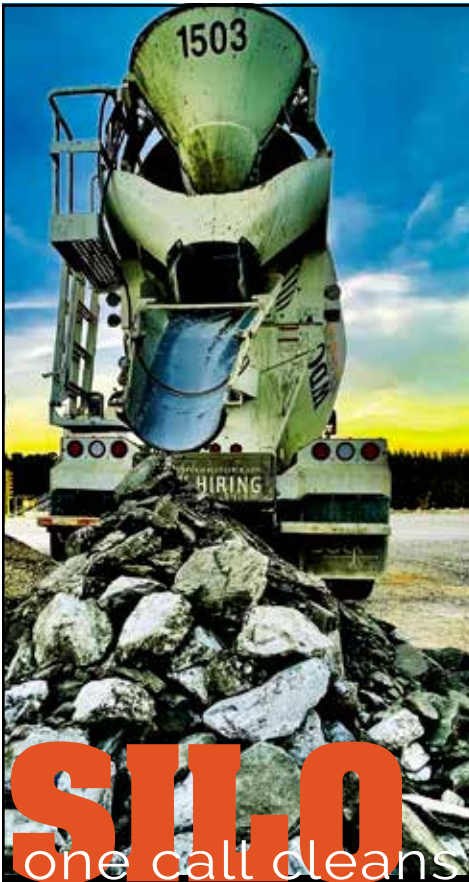
Sam Lee  
Harrison Construction



3<sup>RD</sup>

### DRIVER DASH WINNER— 3RD PLACE

James Shirey  
Harrison Construction



- Vacuum truck services
- Cement Silo Services
- Concrete plant cleanups
- Asphalt plant cleanups
- Dust collector and bag house services



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## TIME TO BREAK THINGS DOWN: Proper PostTest Disassembly of the Pressure Meter

In my experience, the pressure meter is the most complicated piece of equipment we use when testing fresh concrete. If you really understand how it works, you are much more likely to run the test correctly. Just memorizing steps without knowing why you're doing them doesn't work very well, which is why I always spend time in the ACI Concrete Field Testing Technician – Grade 1 review class talking through how the pressure meter functions.

Here, I want to focus on one small but important detail that can affect your results if it's done incorrectly: how you disassemble the meter after the test.

Behind the scenes, everything depends on two volumes—the volume of the air chamber and the volume of the measuring container. After the concrete is consolidated in the container, the lid clamped on, and water used to displace the air above the sample, the air chamber is pressurized to an initial pressure.

After closing the petcocks, when you open the main air valve and strike the sides of the meter with a mallet, the pressure equalizes between the air chamber and the container. The pressure drop in the air chamber is what lets us read the air content on the gauge, based on Boyle's Law.

People likely understand that hardened concrete buildup in the measuring container can throw off results, but water in the air chamber can do the same thing. The difference is you can see concrete buildup, while water in the air chamber isn't obvious at all. If there's water in the air chamber, your air content readings won't be accurate.

ASTM C231-26 warns that if you don't close the main air valve before releasing pressure from the container or the air chamber, water can get pulled into the air chamber and cause errors in future tests. That's why proper disassembly is so important. After the test, always make sure the main air valve is closed, then relieve the pressure by opening both petcocks before removing the lid. Once the lid is off and away from a water source the pressure can then be more safely released from the air chamber.

If water does get into the air chamber, it must be removed before the next test, or you're setting yourself up for bad readings. Taking a little extra care during disassembly goes a long way toward making sure your air content results are reliable.

### Chryso & GCP have united to create one brand

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*Have you ever considered using your industry experience and expertise by assisting with the administration of ACI certification exams? Supplemental Examiners assist with the administration of performance exams and Proctors assist with the administration of the written exam. TCA offers certification exams for over 20 ACI programs. If you have an interest in serving as a Supplemental Examiner or Proctor for one or more of these programs in East, Middle, or West Tennessee please email John Pearson, TCA Director of Technical Services at [jpearson@tnconcrete.org](mailto:jpearson@tnconcrete.org).*



# WORKING TO GROW THE WORKFORCE OF THE TENNESSEE CONCRETE INDUSTRY

It has been a great start to the year for the Tennessee Concrete Association's workforce initiatives. We are continuing to bridge the gap between classroom learning and industry careers through gamified education, hands-on opportunities, and statewide outreach.



Be Pro Be Proud TN continues to travel the state inspiring students to enter the trades. The mobile simulator truck

has visited 121 cities and has had roughly 37,000 visitors to date!



Driver Dash is continuing to encourage and challenge our frontline to be the best concrete delivery professionals, not only in their company, but in their state! TCA has three companies with drivers in the dash and they are performing better than ever as well as taking pride in their trade.

## MTSU COMPETITIONS (MARCH 13, 2026)



Skate4Concrete numbers have stayed consistent with 10+ schools across the state implementing the online curriculum and several also using the kits to build mini concrete skateparks in class. We expect a good turn out for our statewide Skate4Concrete (S4C) Mini Skatepark Competition at MTSU on March 13. Student teams will transport their custom-built skateparks to MTSU for a full day of networking, presentations, and the Concrete Quiz Bowl!



Concrete Quest continues to be a hit with around 250 total sign ups and 30+ students who have Completed Level 1 this school year. These great numbers are due in large part to Jason and Alison Lewis with BeProBeProud TN as they promote our program to students who come through the truck.

We have also recently added the Concrete Disk Competition, designed for students who want to deepen their knowledge and skills after completing Level 1 of Concrete Quest. With the mail-in deadline for test samples coming up in just a few days on March 1, the live testing on March 13 is guaranteed to be an exciting day! Students will make a concrete cylinder and several concrete disks and they will be evaluated by the standards below.

- Resilience Testing: Concrete disks will undergo severe drop tests to evaluate durability, which is a great opportunity for students to see the real-world value of fiber reinforcement.
- Strength Testing: Concrete cylinders will be tested and the student with the highest compressive strength (PSI) will take the top score.
- Presentations: Students will also be scored on video presentations explaining their unique mix design and testing strategies.

We have also worked closely with Beech High School and others this semester doing in-class competitions and we hosted a field trip at TCA's campus for a hands-on Concrete placement with 30 students.

It has been an exciting semester so far and we continue to grow our expectations for the next generation of concrete professionals!

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## POURED INTO PLACE:

### How Concrete Builds Connection in Greeneville

by Emma Propst



**C**oncrete is so common in our lives that we rarely stop to notice it. It waits quietly under our feet, holding up sidewalks,

bridges, schools, and churches, shaping the places where we live, learn, and gather. In Greeneville, Tennessee, I have come to realize that concrete is more than just a material—it is the foundation of recovery, opportunity, and connection. Our community has been shaped, quite literally, by concrete's strength.

When Hurricane Helene tore through our region, the damage was devastating. Roads washed away and the I-26 bridge in Erwin was nearly destroyed. For almost a year, people struggled with detours and disruptions. Yet when the bridge finally reopened after eleven months of recovery work, it was a moment of hope. The new structure, made possible by concrete, was not just a road—it was a symbol of resilience. It reminded me that communities, like bridges, can be rebuilt one solid piece at a time.

Closer to home, Greeneville has seen revitalization projects that also rely on concrete. Depot Street, once worn and crumbling, now shines with new sidewalk pavers. I walk there and notice how businesses feel more welcoming, how neighbors stroll together in the evenings. A simple sidewalk can change how people interact, inviting connection where before there was neglect. Concrete does not

just shape streets; it shapes how we see ourselves as a community.

Concrete has also helped rebuild places of meaning. When Riverview Community Church suffered a devastating fire three years ago, it was hard for many families who had worshiped there for decades. The rebuilding process has been long, but concrete work made the foundation strong again. Today, the church is more than a building—it is proof that even from ashes, something lasting can rise.

Even our entertainment and recreation rely on concrete. After the Major League Baseball game held at the Bristol Motor Speedway this past August, crews had one month to reconstruct the midfield and track before the fall race in September. Concrete made that miracle possible. In a different way, the splash pad at Eastview Recreation Center and the skate park near Hal Henard Park also tell stories of concrete. They are not just slabs of stone; they are places where laughter echoes and friendships form. For kids and teens, concrete is not something dull—it is freedom, speed, and joy.

Education and opportunity in Greene County also stand on concrete. At West Greene High School, the new career and technical building is rising, with block work creating the walls where students will gain industry skills and certifications. The nearby future TCAT development in Tusculum offers life-changing chances for people to learn trades and find stability. Without masonry and concrete, these dreams could not take shape. Even Brights Zoo in Limestone depends on it—the giraffe enclosure, strong enough to house such extraordinary creatures, would not exist without solid foundations.

For me, all these places—the bridge, the sidewalks, the schools, the parks—remind

me that concrete is more than a building material. It is a quiet force that holds up our community's memories, hopes, and daily lives. It provides spaces for worship, learning, play, and healing. Without it, Greeneville would not be the same town I call home.

Concrete may not be beautiful in itself, but what it makes possible is. Its strength, endurance, and reliability mirror the spirit of our people. Greeneville has been shaped by concrete, and so have I.

## THE ROADS THAT RAISED ME

by Ethan Ericksen



**T**he first time I noticed concrete, I wasn't thinking about strength or structure. I was eight years old, sitting on the

front steps of our West Knoxville home, chalk in hand, drawing crooked rainbows across the sidewalk. Back then, concrete was just my canvas. I didn't realize it was also the foundation under our house, the street in front of it, and the school just a few miles down the road. I didn't know it was already shaping my life in quiet, permanent ways.

Knoxville is a city of roads and ridges, lakes and loops. Concrete is what connects it all. Every morning, my mom takes Pellissippi Parkway to her job across town. My dad drives Northshore Drive to work, winding past waterfront neighborhoods and office buildings that sit solidly on concrete foundations. And I drive to Farragut High School on roads that twist through West

Knoxville's busy intersections and growing suburbs. These streets are more than just routes—they're part of our daily rhythm, the backdrop to our lives.

Over the years, I've seen how new concrete projects have changed the face of our community. From freshly paved sidewalks in neighborhoods to the widening of Northshore Drive, these changes shape how we move, where we go, and even how safe we feel getting there. One of the biggest improvements came when a concrete median and new turn lanes were added near our local shopping center. What used to be a chaotic intersection is now organized, safer, and easier to navigate. It may seem like a small fix, but it made a big difference.

Another place where I've seen concrete bring people together is Lakeshore Park. The wide concrete walking trails curve along the river and through green open spaces, connecting runners, families, and people just out for a walk. It's become one of my favorite places in Knoxville—not just because of its beauty, but because of what it represents. Parks like Lakeshore make the city feel alive. The concrete paths there don't just guide your steps—they create a sense of place, a sense of community.

Concrete is also behind the scenes in places we often overlook: the schools we attend, the hospitals we rely on, the grocery stores we visit every week. These buildings are part of the background, but they're also the infrastructure that supports us—literally and figuratively. At Farragut High School, I walk through concrete hallways, past sturdy support beams, into classrooms built to last. It's easy to forget how essential those walls and floors are to the learning that happens inside them.

I used to think of concrete as just plain, gray, and kind of boring. But now I realize it's the opposite. It's what allows life in Knoxville to keep moving. It's the reason

we can travel safely, gather in public spaces, and grow as a city. It doesn't ask for attention, but it deserves it. Because without concrete, none of this would stand.

In West Knoxville, concrete isn't just under our feet—it's under our routines, our neighborhoods, and our futures. It's the parking lot where my friends and I meet after football games, the sidewalk I learned to ride a bike on, the road I take to school every morning. Concrete has quietly shaped my life, giving structure to the spaces and moments that matter most. And I know it will keep building the path forward—not just for me, but for all of us.

## COMMUNITY SHAPED BY CONCRETE

by Blake A. Montgomery



As a 17-year-old certified pilot, I have learned that concrete plays a crucial role in air travel. Thousands of flights occur everyday; people

all across the world are constantly on the move. From a short flight across the state to a 16 hour international flight, I have learned that concrete runways below are what always brings these aircraft—no matter the size or shape—to a smooth and gentle halt. With 115 flight hours, I have briskly set my tires onto a long and smooth stretch of concrete well over 250 times.

We all take concrete for granted, especially the quality of concrete necessary for flight. Watching jets that weigh hundreds of thousands of pounds set down onto this gray, smooth surface that is a couple miles long, it is easy to forget just how necessary concrete is. Cracks and substandard joints can cause excessive stress on aircraft landing gear

potentially leading to aircraft damage and airport closures.

Passenger and cargo jets are constantly flying across the state, nation, and even the world. From sunshine and smooth air to cloudy, rainy days, there are planes moving across the sky above. As a pilot working towards my instrument rating, I have learned to not take the term “concrete” for granted. There are hundreds of pages of government regulations controlling concrete runways, and not having these strict regulations and protocols would lead to dangerous situations. Travel times would increase, packages would take longer to be delivered, immediate medical needs may not be possible to achieve, and the aviation world would eventually fade out. Concrete runways are the reason that many youth and adults are able to seek immediate medical attention from states away. Having thousands of these thick, smooth, and gray stretches lead to my job security and success. Could you imagine how times might be in our present world without these concrete strips?

I plan to attend Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. There, I will have the opportunity to learn about the construction and engineering processes involved in building and maintaining runways, taxiways, and ramp areas. Such a simple sounding word—concrete—yet it has such a global impact.

Leaving home, I walk outside on a concrete patio. Then I drive my Jeep, roaring down the concrete road. When I arrive at the airport, I walk on a concrete sidewalk to the FBO (Fixed-Base Operator). Everywhere I look there is concrete.

As I work towards my degree in aviation business, I know that concrete will be as much a part of my future success as the instruments I learn to fly on. Concrete is what makes inter-continental and global travel possible, keeping humanity connected.\*

# CIM UPDATE

by Jon Huddleston, Associate Professor & CIM Director

## ASSOCIATED SCHOOLS OF CONSTRUCTION COMPETITION

Since our last program update, we have been busy in the thick of competition season. In November, students from the Concrete Contracting Concentration demonstrated their skills at the annual competition hosted by the Associated Schools of Construction (ASC). This national event brings together construction and concrete management students from universities across the country to compete in real-world project scenarios that test estimating, scheduling, logistics planning, safety management, and presentation skills.



*MTSU CIM Presentation at ASC Competition*

The competition challenged student teams to analyze complex construction problems and develop solutions within strict time constraints. Teams then present their strategies and project plans to panels of industry judges—mirroring the type of work graduates will encounter in professional practice. The ASC competition, held annually with categories ranging from commercial and heavy civil to specialized construction disciplines, provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate teamwork, technical expertise, and leadership under pressure.



*Winners Announced at ASC Competition*

MTSU's students once again represented the program with professionalism and skill. Three students from the team brought home first place awards in Alternate Leadership and an additional student placed third in the Alternate Leadership competition.

## ACI FRP BEAM COMPETITION

While the ASC competition was winding down, rules were released for the ACI FRP competition that will be held in Chicago at the end of March. Teams from universities around the world design, construct, and test a concrete beam reinforced with fiber-reinforced polymer (FRP) materials. The goal is to create a beam that achieves the best cost-to-load performance ratio while meeting strict design and dimensional requirements.



*Student Test of FRP Beam Design*



*Break Result of FRP Beam Design*

For CIM students, preparation for the FRP beam competition involves weeks of design work, mix development, fabrication, and testing. Students evaluate material properties, reinforcement strategies, and structural performance to optimize their beam design. The process exposes students to emerging technologies in the concrete industry, particularly the growing use of fiber-reinforced polymer reinforcement in structural applications. Students ran flexural tests on four reinforced designs, while also doing cost and efficiency analysis of their mix design. Their final

designs for the beam and mix were submitted March 3 and now they await their opportunity at the convention to prove their concrete engineering prowess. I look forward to updating you next time on what I'm sure will be another successful competition.

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