

# TENNESSEE CONCRETE MAGAZINE

AWARDS 2025  
Volume 39, No. 1

**GRAND  
CHAMPION**  
PRIME 801 CHURCH

Project's Ready Mix Producer  
— IMI —





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**Josh Evans**  
*TCA President*

## Welcome to the Awards Issue **CONTINUING A RICH HISTORY**

I am excited and grateful for the opportunity to serve as your TCA president for 2025. It has been my privilege to serve on the TCA Board of Directors for the past few years. Your board is committed to continuing our rich history of supporting the concrete industry in Tennessee.

We are seeing great success in our Workforce initiatives like Skate 4 Concrete, Be Pro Be Proud TN, Concrete Quest, and Driver Dash. You can read more about what's happening in these programs by checking out the column from our Workforce Coordinator Joseph McDaniel.

If you did not attend our recent annual convention, you truly missed out on some exceptional learning experiences and you missed the chance to grow your professional network and to learn from your peers in our industry. Next year's convention will be held once again at the Franklin Marriott and the dates are February 4 and 5, 2026. Mark your calendar now so you don't miss out.

One of the highlights you missed was our Annual Concrete Design Awards luncheon. This issue of our magazine features the winning projects from across Tennessee as well as a number of individuals from the concrete industry, who were honored for their service and dedication to the industry that provides our livelihood. It is special to be in the room for the presentation of these awards, so don't miss your chance for next year.

Enjoy reviewing the winning projects and please make it a point to attend the next Eats and Drinks event in your part of the state. These are scheduled periodically throughout the year, and they are a great opportunity to make connections with your peers in a relaxed atmosphere. There is no charge to attend these events and TCA provides the refreshments. Don't miss out!

Continuing our rich  
history and seeing  
great success!

.....

Mark your  
calendar for  
the 2026  
Convention—  
February 4–5  
at the Franklin  
Marriott



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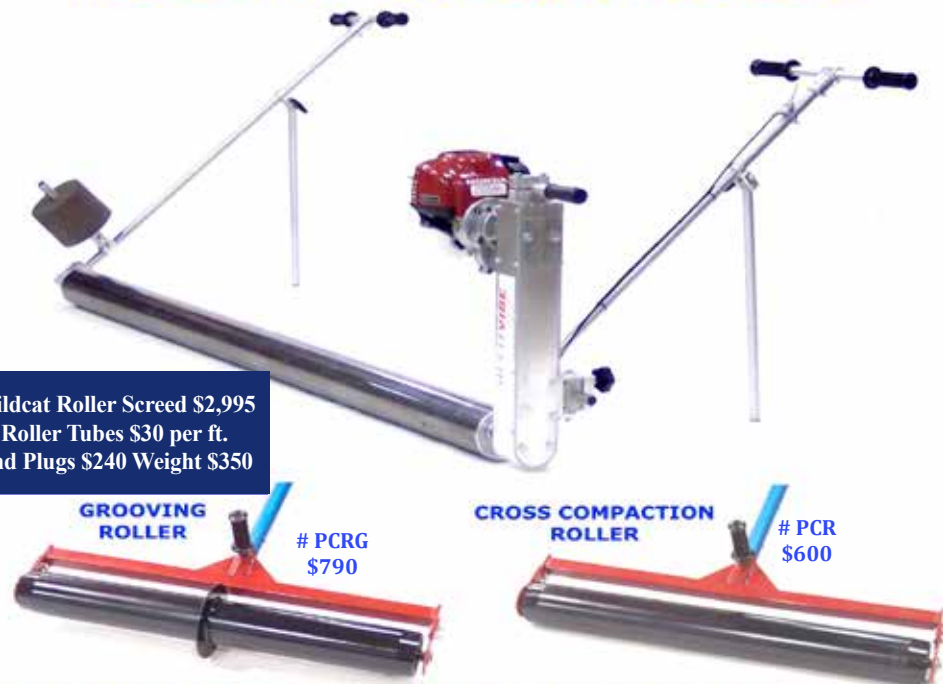


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**Alan Sparkman**  
TCA Director

Recapping

2024 Concrete

Production

Numbers

.....  
It is difficult to  
discern how the  
year will play out  
in terms of new  
projects.

.....  
Stay tuned for more  
information as 2025  
continues!

## 2025 — OPTIMISM HAS DIMMED

**T**he first quarter of 2025 is done, and we are looking ahead to the rest of the year. The consensus of many in the construction industry at the end of 2024 was that 2025 was going to be a stronger year for construction with interest rates continuing to decline and a new administration coming in at the federal level.

Optimism has dimmed somewhat over the first quarter of 2025, as tariffs loom on the horizon and interest rate reductions keep getting pushed further into the future. At a minimum it is much more difficult to discern how the year will play out in terms of new projects, as many people take more of a wait-and-see attitude about the whole economy. Longer-term, the construction industry is mostly optimistic about an increase in the construction economy as companies devote attention to re-shoring all kinds of manufacturing that will require a substantial amount of new construction at some point in the future.

Recapping 2024 in terms of concrete production, we see that our production dropped by about 10% when compared

to 2023 that ended four record years of concrete production in Tennessee. But, 2024 was still the fourth best year ever for concrete production for Tennessee and, in fact, was about 1.7% higher than our production in 2020. That was the first year Tennessee's production got back above 8 million cubic yards since 2007 and 2020 started our string of four record production years.

National concrete production peaked in 2005 at about 458 million cubic yards, then dropping to about 414 million yards in 2007 and a low of about 260 million yards in 2010. Production remained below the 400 million yard mark until 2022 when we produced slightly over 401 million yards. National production was essentially flat in 2023, staying just above the 400 million yard mark, and then dropping about 5.5% to end 2024 at over 377 million yards.

The chart below recaps the last five years of concrete production in Tennessee, along with a nearly complete shift to Type 1L cement over that same period of time.

Another important metric we can track that is closely related to concrete

**TABLE 1. PRODUCTION IN TENNESSEE SINCE 2020**

YEAR	CUBIC YARDS IN TENNESSEE	PERCENT TYPE I/II CEMENT	PERCENT TYPE 1L CEMENT
2020 RECORD!	8,382,547	98%	2%
2021 RECORD!	9,107,206	98%	2%
2022 RECORD!	9,257,608	61%	39%
2023 RECORD!	9,470,300	14%	86%
2024 4TH BEST EVER!	8,527,738	7%	93%

Continued from page 6—

production is housing starts. Nationally, residential construction consistently accounts for about one third of total annual concrete production but the ripple effects of residential construction make it a good barometer for total concrete production. The table below tracks housing permits for residential construction (courtesy of Market

Graphics). The other three markets tracked in this data include Memphis, Chattanooga and Clarksville with Memphis and Chattanooga typically each accounting for about 12% of annual starts and Clarksville for around 8% of the annual total.

Stay tuned for more information as 2025 continues!

**TABLE 2. HOUSING PERMITS FOR RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION**

YEAR	PERMITS	YOY % CHANGE	NASHVILLE % OF ALL	KNOXVILLE % OF ALL
2019	25,112	Base Year	56.5%	15.1%
2020	30,046	+19.6%	53.2%	15.1%
2021 Peak Year!	33,226	+10.6%	52.6%	17.2%
2022	29,620	-10.9%	54.1%	16.4%
2023	27,876	-5.9%	51.6%	20.1%
2024	30,162	+8.2%	49.0%	18.5%



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# ❖ 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## GRAND CHAMPION PRIME 801 CHURCH

Project's Ready Mix Producer  
— IMI —



## GRAND CHAMPION & ARCHITECT ENGINEER COMMERCIAL BUILDING

### PRIME 801 CHURCH

Project's Ready Mix Producer—  
IMI

**T**he Prime luxury apartments tower is located at 801 Church Street. This 38 story, 456-foot tall tower consists of 569,000 total square feet and almost 30,000 yards of concrete. McHugh utilized 17,350 cubic yards of a 3,000 one day Post Tension mix to expedite their pour schedule. The sheer walls, piers and columns were poured with 8,000 cubic yards of a 10,000 psi high strength concrete.



# 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS





# ❖ 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## **BEST ARCHITECT-ENGINEER COMMERCIAL ICF**

Collegedale SDA Spanish American Church

Project's Ready Mix Producer—

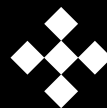
Javier Melendez, Ready Mix USA

**C**ollegedale Spanish-American SDA Church is building a new 425-seat, concrete-based facility to serve its growing Hispanic community and students at Southern Adventist University. With bilingual services, daycare, and ministry space, this project expands a 40-year mission.





# 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## BEST ARCHITECT-ENGINEER NON-BUILDING STRUCTURE

Tennessee High Stone Castle Renovation

Project's Ready Mix Producer—

Shelly Hudson, Ready Mix USA

**T**he \$3.6 million renovation transformed the Stone Castle into a modern marvel while preserving its historic charm. The project consists of repairs and renovation to the visitor side bleachers at Tennessee High Stone Castle. Work included demolition of the lower bleacher section and removal of the interior walls, foundation support and structural reinforcement for new concrete bleachers. New ADA walk paths including railings and ramps to make the stadium accessible for all fans



## BEST COMMERCIAL ARTISAN SPECIALTY MIX XAI

Project's Ready Mix Producer—

Josh Evans, Delta Industries

**T**his is a pad that was made to be seen from the air when flying into Memphis, both during the day and at night. The outer parts were poured using black limestone and an integral black color, which is a great contrast to the white sand and white limestone that was used to pour the logo. The logo was then seeded with a rare aggregate containing tritium so it could be seen in the dark! That's right ... Elon uses an aggregate that is sold by the pound, not the ton.





# ❖ 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## **BEST COMMERCIAL ARTISAN MOST UNIQUE**

### **Cradle of Country Music Pier 865**

Project's Ready Mix Producer—

**T**he Cradle of Country Music Park – Pier 865 project in downtown Knoxville features a cast-in-place concrete structure that serves as the base for an artistic sculpture celebrating the city's role as the "Cradle of Country Music." Constructed by Blount Contractors Inc., the project presented a unique challenge: rather than building from conventional drawings, the team was required to conform to a computer-generated 3D model created by the artist.

Located on a steeply sloped, triangular lot, the structure includes a prominent cantilevered deck and an entirely free-flowing design—lacking any flat, plumb or level surfaces. While some sections were formed using conventional wooden formwork, the curving underside of the cantilever required a custom solution.

Blount partnered with Reckless Industries of Maryville, Tennessee, a fabricator specializing in composite molds,

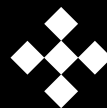
to machine the underside from Styrofoam blocks coated in fiberglass for durability and finish texture. The components were supported by a shored platform and integrated with the conventionally formed elements. The entire structure was poured monolithically.

Final exposed surfaces were finished with a light vapor-blast treatment and sealed with an anti-graffiti coating. The project exemplifies the versatility of concrete and the power of craftsmanship, collaboration, and innovation in transforming artistic vision into reality.





# 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## BEST COMMERCIAL ARTISAN RESIDENTIAL Concrete Slide

Project's Ready Mix Producer—Made Easy Concrete

**M**ade Easy Concrete and Paulk & Co have demonstrated exceptional innovation and craftsmanship in their collaborative project to create a custom concrete slide for a residential client. Inspired by slides in Central Park, this ambitious undertaking showcased the unique strengths of both companies. The form-building process was particularly noteworthy, involving the creation of plaster plugs from a temporary form, which were then used to make fiberglass forms that bolted onto the wooden formwork. This unique approach allowed for precise shaping of the complex slide geometry.

Paulk & Co's expertise in custom fabrication was evident in their creation of these fiberglass forms, meticulously placed piece by piece up the multi-level terrain to establish approximately a 30-foot base for the concrete pour. The screeding process utilized innovative fiberglass "sleds" that functioned like a slip form, ensuring a smooth surface throughout the slide's length. To address the compound geometry of the slide, many of the trowels had to be custom-built out of fiberglass, showcasing the team's problem-solving skills and attention to detail.

Made Easy Concrete's volumetric mixing capabilities proved invaluable, allowing for on-site customization of the concrete mix. This flexibility enabled the team to adjust the mix design on the fly, with truck operator, Harley, expertly managing a stiffer mix with more aggregate at the bottom on the ground, transitioning to a mix with less aggregate and more cement for the final layers. The use of volumetric trucks, and the technology available with these machines, allowed for this level of precision and adaptability throughout the pour.

After the slide was expertly formed, it was diamond polished and sealed with an acrylic sealant, resulting in a smooth, durable surface that will provide years of enjoyment for the client's children. This project exemplifies the power of collaboration, technical expertise, and innovative techniques in creating unique, high-quality concrete installations that bring joy and enhance outdoor living spaces.





# ❖ 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## **BEST COMMERCIAL DECORATIVE** Lakeshore Park, Landscapes Phase

Project's Ready Mix Producer—  
Derek Moore, Ready Mix USA

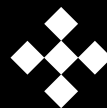
**A**l The Lakeshore Park renovation included a new baseball complex, soccer area walkways and parking, pickleball courts, a basketball court, sports green and seating area for small meetings, a 35-foot high sculptural mound, a new playground, three new pavilions, relocation of some sections of the perimeter walking trail, renovation of the Central Pavilion restrooms, new parking, sidewalks,

and lighting. Trowel Trades placed the architectural concrete, which included board formed walls and lightly exposed limestone/natural sand mix sidewalks requiring an acid technique. Primary challenges included meeting ADA requirements over varying terrain, and maintaining finish/color uniformity over a 18 month period with concrete being poured in all seasons.





# 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## BEST COMMERCIAL FINISHING COMMERCIAL INDUSTRIAL

### Cardinal Glass Building Addition

Project's Ready Mix Producer—  
Shelley Hudson, Ready Mix USA

**T**his project was a 225,000 square foot production warehouse addition to the Cardinal Glass plant. The addition was built on three sides of the existing facility with no interruptions to the customer's production or shipping schedules. The slab was finished using Euclid's Surfex Floor Hardener.





# ❖ 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## BEST COMMERCIAL FINISHING COMMERCIAL RESIDENTIAL

Lance Wild Home

Project's Ready Mix Producer—

Drew Cothorn, Harrison Construction

**T**his is Lance Wild's personal home. Lance is the owner of Wild Building. This was a normal mix pour with a graphite black color. The stamp used is slate. The concrete has not been sealed in these pictures, but they plan on using a black tinted sealer to finish.





# 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## **BEST COMMERCIAL READY MIX & PRECAST BEST CONCRETE PARKING LOT (LARGE $\geq 1,000$ CY)**

Bristol Ridge Apartments Phase 2  
Project's Ready Mix Producer—  
Duane King, Screaming Eagle Ready Mix

**T**his was the second phase of an apartment development which covers over 28.5 acres of land. Phase two includes 456 apartment units, a pool house and all-concrete pavement for the entire property. Between footers, slabs, sidewalks, breezeways and parking lot, this phase used 12,646.50 yards of concrete—to be exact. For this project, 4500 psi was the primary mix design used with the addition of some lite-weight concrete.





# ❖ 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

## **BEST COMMERCIAL READY MIX & PRECAST BEST CONCRETE PARKING LOT (SMALL <1,000 CY)**

Lebanon Washtopia Carwash

Project's Ready Mix Producer—

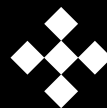
Jeff Edwards, IMI

**L**ebanon Washtopia Carwash where everything is concrete. This project used 700 yards that included pits and driveways.





# 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## BEST COMMERCIAL SPECIALTY SHOTCRETE

Thompsons Station WWTP Tanks

Project's Ready Mix Producer—

Joshua Wade, IMI

This project was a 500 yard dual holding tank system that was almost fully shotcrete. Crom Corporation and IMI poured the tank floor slabs in September followed by the wall for the next two months. the shotcrete was applied internally and externally by Crom to form the thick tank walls.



## BEST COMMERCIAL SPECIALTY FLOWFILL

Y-12 Alpha Flowfill

Project's Ready Mix Producer—

Pam Wrinkle, Harrison Construction

UCOR hired Premier Contracting and Technical Services to organize and oversee the delivery and placement of 31,760 CY of Flowable fill (2664 CY with fly ash, and 29,096 CY with Mastercell 25 admixture). The project began in April and ended the first week of November.

The flowable fill was used to completely fill the basement of this very old and dilapidated structure. The plan is to work off the filled basement to demolish the building and remove and dispose of the materials.



# 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS

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

Project's Winner.....ReadyMix USA Boone's Creek Plant  
Plant Operator ..... Paul Phillips

**R**eady Mix USA's Boones Creek Plant, operated by Paul Phillips, has won the Emerald Award for Environmental Excellence in the Small Plant category. Located at 7503 Chapman Highway, Knoxville, Tennessee, the plant is celebrated for its Monarch Butterfly habitat, innovative water reclamation system, and comprehensive dust and fuel management practices. Congratulations to ReadyMixUSA and Paul Phillips for their outstanding environmental leadership!



## **TCA EMERALD AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE MID: 25,001-75,000 YD3**

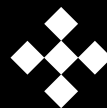
Project's Winner.....Ready Mix USA Morristown Plant  
Plant Operator .....Joel Baxley

**R**eadyMixUSA, operated by Joel Baxley, has won the Emerald Award for Environmental Excellence. Recognized for outstanding environmental stewardship, ReadyMix-USA has implemented innovative practices such as reusing returned concrete, managing process water with sediment basins, and partnering with Carson-Newman University on educational initiatives. Congratulations to ReadyMixUSA and Joel Baxley for their exemplary environmental leadership and commitment to sustainability!





# 2025 CONCRETE AWARD WINNERS



## **TCA EMERALD AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE MID: 25,001-75,000 YD3**

Ready Mix USA  
Neyland Plant

**R**eadyMixUSA, operated by [add name], has won the Emerald Award for Environmental Excellence. Recognized for outstanding environmental stewardship, ReadyMixUSA has implemented innovative practices such as reusing returned concrete, managing process water with sediment basins, and partnering with Carson-Newman University on educational initiatives. Congratulations to ReadyMixUSA and Joel Baxley for their exemplary environmental leadership and commitment to sustainability!



## **FRONTLINE AMBASSADOR AWARD**

Ed Silver  
Harrison Construction



**E**d is one of Harrison's best delivery professionals and has shown exemplary leadership. He trains numerous drivers in our fleet and is looked up to by all of them who have appropriately nicknamed him the "Godfather." The team members he has trained have been complimented by customers for their professionalism

and skill which is reflective on Ed's training. He recently won the TCA / Rocket Start squeaky clean award for his attention to cleanliness. His attention to detail and safety is what Harrison looks for in an ideal team member. He assures the safety of all of his fleet once he and the rest of his family approaches a jobsite. He is a model leader for our company.

## **FRONTLINE AMBASSADOR AWARD**

Keith Davis  
Screaming Eagle Ready Mix



**K**eith Davis is an employee that every company in America would be fortunate to have. Keith does not complain, does not miss work, does not come in late and most importantly in our world, does not tear up equipment!!!! Keith came to Screaming Eagle from Texas 7 years ago now and it has been a complete plus for both parties. Keith has been in the concrete world for 36 years now and has covered all aspects of the business, first as an operator then batch services, then sales, then operations and now finally back to operator. Keith can give you his own thoughts as to which task he deems the best fit. I can tell you from my experience as Keith's employer and immediate boss that no matter the position or task placed upon him he would excel at it because that is the character of the man. He is a shining example of what a dedicated employee should be to the company they work for. A true asset not a hinderance in any way. Willing to help others be the best they can be. Obviously Keith has a love for the concrete industry. 36 years is a long time. I am honored to nominate my employee and friend Keith Davis for The Frontline Ambassador award for 2025. Most deserving of receiving recognition for his dedication to his craft.



TECHNICAL DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE—JOHN B. PEARSON, P.E.

## CONCRETE SLUMP— DON'T SET YOURSELF UP FOR FAILURE

Concrete slump is one of the most performed concrete acceptance tests. Slump results are relied upon as one of the fresh property tests to determine if the concrete meets project specifications. Slump test results may also be used by Quality Control personnel to help determine if an on-site water or admixture adjustment is needed prior to discharge of a load of concrete. Many things can go wrong during the performance of a slump test, but this article will just focus on one item that is often overlooked. Many testing technicians use a small portable base with clamping devices to secure the cone, and a handle for carrying. Although these plates are very handy, the base surfaces can be quite

small and for some concretes may not be acceptable for use in testing. *ASTM C143-20 Standard Test Method for Slump of Hydraulic- Cement Concrete* specifically states that the base used in the slump test must be “large enough to contain the slumped concrete”. This means that on high slump concrete mixes the concrete could roll off the plate when the cone is removed, technically invalidating the test. Allowing the concrete to roll off the plate could result in a higher slump than if properly performed. Technicians and site personnel need to make sure that the tools to be used for a given project can meet the requirements of the test method for all consistencies of concrete that may be used. If higher slump concrete mixes are specified or anticipated alternative rigid, flat, level, moist, nonabsorbent surfaces that are large enough to contain the slumped concrete should be used. Portable base plates that can more easily meet these requirements for high slump concrete are commercially available.

*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).*

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**HOLCIM**





## WORKING TO GROW THE WORKFORCE OF THE TENNESSEE CONCRETE INDUSTRY



Skate4Concrete continues to be a great success with over 40 Tennessee schools incorporating the program. We estimate that we are reaching well over 1,000 students this year with this curriculum. TCA's Mini Skatepark Competition is upon us! We are hosting the competition at Middle Tennessee State University's Concrete Industry Management Program. We are on track to host six Tennessee schools representing 10 teams total, along with other industry pros attending the competition. Student teams will present their mini concrete skatepark creations and enjoy a tour of the CIM program during judging hour. We are excited to see who takes home the prize!



Concrete Quest, our gamification partnership with RocketStart, continues to see significant growth in the number of students signing up. There are currently 182 students enrolled in Concrete Quest, with more signing up every month. We have already awarded several students who have completed multiple levels in the game. Manny and I have been working to add more content to each level so students are encouraged to keep playing!



Driver Dash, another RocketStart partnership, is continuing to grow here in Tennessee with six TCA member companies now enrolled. Each month drivers are being awarded badges and points based on



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their performance on the job and top drivers are receiving gift cards and other rewards. The competition is heating up and any TCA Ready Mix producer can put up to five of their drivers in the Dash at no cost, so get your top five in the Dash now!

The BeProBeProud truck is on its third semester traveling to Tennessee high schools teaching students about opportunities in the trades by allowing them hands-on experience on state of the art construction simulators. Jason and Allison Lewis continue to do an amazing job operating the truck while simultaneously promoting the concrete industry through Concrete Quest. The truck has currently reached 64 Tennessee cities and approximately 17,000 visitors!

As always, we appreciate all your support and participation in these workforce initiatives. Please watch for emails about the Mini Skatepark Competition, Driver Dash Winners, bringing a concrete truck to a BPBP event, and more. Never stop telling your concrete story!

## SIDEWALK CHALK

by Isabelle Martin



**I**t was the typical sunny day, the concrete of the sidewalk warm underneath skinned knees. Brightly colored bits of

chalk littered the space around the girl, brightly colored plants and animals coming to life under her hand. The soft green grass of her lawn swayed in the slight breeze, and the sound of her mother calling her name cut through the normal sound of dogs barking and the soft rustling of leaves in the wind.

“Emma, come inside please!” Her mother called from the door, a worried look on her face. The wind had picked up slightly, and the clouds darkened.

“Coming Mom!” she ran inside, careful to gather up her chalk on the way. Breathing in deep the smells of her house, she ran to the couch and plopped down, gathering up their cat in her arms.

“Mom, why’d I have to come inside, it’s just a little rain.” she whined, missing the feel of the sun-warmed sidewalk.

Her mother glanced at her with a strained smile. “Let’s stay inside just to be safe, you know the weather has been acting weird lately. Better safe than sorry”

The wreckage was everywhere you looked, houses collapsed, and debris everywhere. A young girl sits on a boat with her mother, clutching a wet cat to her frame, and staring blankly out at the scene around them. She’s shivering, and holding

a blanket tightly around her. They pull up to a relatively ruined neighborhood, almost entirely underwater, and stop in front of an empty space. The girl shivers again, this time from dread.

“Mom, where is everything?” she asks, her voice small.

“Gone, Emma. It’s all gone.” her mother places a shaky hand on her shoulder, sinking down to sit beside her, and bundling the shivering girl and soggy cat in her arms. “But, we’ll rebuild. And we’ll rebuild stronger. Look-” her mother points at the sidewalk, barely visible under the murky water. “See how the concrete is strong enough to stay? We’re like that, strong enough to stay. And our next house will be just as strong.” She places a small kiss on her daughter’s head. Emma shivers and burrows into her mother’s side. *Strong like concrete.* She thinks, and she knows that regardless of what will happen, she and her mother will be okay. They’ll build their next house out of concrete, and always stay strong during hard times. Emma herself will grow up to learn more about geology, and perhaps she will start a program to make hurricane-safe houses for people like her. But one thing is for certain, she will always remain strong and steady, painting her life with joy, just like chalk on the concrete.

## SHAPING PERCEPTION

by Alex Jensen

**T**o me, concrete is more than just a building material; it is the foundation that dreams are built upon. In my family, concrete represents hard work, opportunity and perseverance.



In 2012, when my parents opened their truck repair shop, the slab of concrete that supported their building wasn’t just a

base for four walls to sit upon; it symbolized the strength and resilience that it would take to create a thriving business. My mom and dad built the truck shop from the ground up. The first step in building the original shops was pouring the concrete foundation. I remember watching all of the workers, fascinated as the gray mixture was spread and smoothed into place. My parents explained that this foundation had to be strong enough to support the weight of the entire building. At the time, I didn’t realize how closely this process mirrored the principles my parents were trying to instill in me: build a strong foundation in life, and it will support you through any challenge. As the shop grew, this concrete base became a gathering place. It wasn’t just a place for trucks to be repaired, but also for the members who made up this community. Truck drivers would stop by and share all of their different stories from their trips to different places throughout the country and this created a sense of camaraderie within the building. It created a family. Now to some people, concrete can symbolize something cold and lifeless, but in the shop, it was warm. Warm with the energy of



those working on the trucks or those who stopped by to lend a helping hand.

The lessons that I have learned from this concrete far go way beyond the shop. It showed me that hard work doesn't just show up. It starts from the ground up. I have seen my parents work day and night to make sure that the drivers had their truck to start their load early in the morning. I have also seen the community stand in to help us when we needed it most; whether they were there to offer tools, or just support in general. This made concrete become a symbol of mutual support and showed me that success is not just a solitary journey.

Concrete has also shaped my perception on education. Just like the strong foundation that my parents put down on their business, I have to do the same thing for my future. I have poured a lot of energy into academics and leadership these past four years striving to build a solid base for my aspirations. If it is organizing school events as Student Body President or participating in clubs like Future Business Leaders of America or Shamrock Corner, I approach every opportunity with the mindset of laying the groundwork for everything else to follow. Concrete has shaped me in ways that I never could have imagined. It has taught me the value of hard work, the importance of community and how powerful a strong foundation can be. As I continue to pursue my goals, I carry those lessons with me, knowing that with a solid base, there is no limit to what I can achieve. Just like the shop that proudly stands with a strong foundation of concrete, I stand here ready to support and uplift others, while ensuring that my foundation continues to contribute to the strength of the community that stands around me.

## SKATEBOARDING

by Noah Camping



Skateboarding is built on concrete. From skateparks, sidewalks, bowls, and ledges, skaters depend on concrete to be able to do the thing they love to do.

I started skateboarding in January 2022. After seeing videos of people skateboarding on the internet, I knew I had to try it. After googling, "skate shops near me," I came across Sixth Avenue Skate Shop in Nashville, where I got my first board. After I landed my first ollie, there was no going back. Nothing was going to stop me from becoming a professional skateboarder. I practiced every day for hours, often until dark. On Saturdays I would drive to Nashville to skate at Sixth Avenue Skatepark, which is adjacent to the skate shop. Every time I fell, missed a trick, or slipped out, it was concrete that broke my fall and left me with countless scrapes and bruises. But it was also on concrete where I landed my first kickflip, and concrete is where I continue to learn and hone tricks to this day.

From my perspective, besides the people who work to make and lay it, skateboarders are the people who appreciate concrete the most. For most people, sidewalks are simply things that are meant to be walked on and to take one from point A to point B, ledges are just decorative pieces that may occasionally be sat on, but provide no other utilities, and stair sets are only

useful for reaching a slightly higher or lower area, but to skaters, all these things mean so much more. Sidewalks have the potential to be the site for doing a sick manual, ledges represent a place to learn and perfect slide and grind tricks, and stairs are the ultimate place to test your bravery by sending tricks down them. Although these things may not have been designed with skateboarding in mind, when we come across a place that coincidentally is perfect for skateboarding, we treat it as if we have found buried treasure. Skaters see these places for more than what they are. To us, sidewalks, ledges, and stairs are not just everyday parts of the city, they are places where memories can be made by skating with friends, places where history can be made by doing a trick that's never been done before, and places where we chase our dreams of becoming fully fledged professional skateboarders.

Now, after three years of work, dozens of boards, thousands of tricks, and an abundance of falls and slams later, I am fortunate enough to have begun my journey as a professional skateboarder. I am sponsored by Sixth Avenue Skate Shop and through them I get shop flow for Alien Workshop Skateboards. Looking back on how far I've come, it's interesting to note how one thing that has always remained constant is concrete. Concrete has been there every step of the way since I started skating, and I wouldn't be where I am today without it.

It would be an understatement to say that concrete has shaped the skateboarding community. Skateboarding would not exist if it weren't for concrete. Me and millions of other skaters around the world owe it all to concrete. Because of it, we have a shared passion, something that brings us together, something that pushes us to our limits, and shows us that we are capable of more than we think. Concrete hasn't shaped the skateboarding community, instead, concrete is the most vital part of it. \*

# CIM UPDATE

by Jon Huddleston, Associate Professor & CIM Director

## STUDENT PARTICIPATION

It has been another whirlwind Spring semester for MTSU's CIM program and the students continue to show their dedication to their future careers. In an exciting and innovative display of engineering skills, Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) American Concrete Institute (ACI) Student Chapter recently made waves at the ACI Bowling Ball Contest held in Toronto, Canada. The event, part of the annual ACI Concrete Convention, brought together students from across the world to showcase their creativity, problem-solving skills, and concrete knowledge in an unconventional way — by designing and constructing a bowling ball out of concrete.

The ACI Bowling Ball Contest is a signature event designed to challenge students in the field of concrete design and mix formulation. The primary task is to create a concrete bowling ball that must meet specific criteria: it needs to be functional, durable, and able to roll. Students are also judged on the aesthetic quality, creativity, and engineering principles used in their designs. With a competitive atmosphere and a strong emphasis on hands-on learning, this contest encourages students to think outside the box and develop real-world applications for their concrete engineering studies. Students had to stretch their mental concept of

the material that so many of us hold dear, by experimenting with multiple fiber types, admixtures, lightweight aggregates and cementitious materials. In all, the students produced sixteen formulations and bowling balls before settling on the best combination of materials. They even became well educated in 3D printing as they chose to produce their own molds to meet the weight and diameter requirements laid out by the judges.



*ACI bowling ball team in Toronto*

Under the guidance of faculty advisors and with support from local industry sponsors, the students embarked on a three-month long journey to prepare for the contest. The team's dedication and teamwork were evident throughout the entire process. The chapter members used innovative methods to address challenges such as mix design, air content, and weight distribution, ensuring the final product was both functional and durable. Their efforts culminated in the creation of a bowling ball that was not only

impressive in its performance but also demonstrated a high level of craftsmanship and engineering expertise. The club has continued to climb the ranks in each ACI contest and while we haven't quite made the first-place podium overall since rebuilding the student club, the students did finish strong with a fifth place ranking internationally and first place among schools from the United States.

As the team returns to Middle Tennessee, they are energized and motivated by the experience and the knowledge they gained. The ACI Bowling Ball Contest in Toronto was a resounding success for MTSU, and the students left a lasting impression on the judges and attendees, showing the strength and innovation of their chapter. The desire in their eyes for a first-place finish internationally is evident

and it's only a matter of time before I get to write an update celebrating that accomplishment. A big thank you goes out to Buzzi Unicem, Master Builders, Irving Materials Solutions, and Stalite and congratulations goes out to this year's ACI team members; Foster Defranco, Dylan Horner, Hailey Mondelli, Hannah Neal, Nick Mercante, Mallory Weathers, Rachel Shawver, Zully Contreras, Taylor Florida, and Cayden Avant.



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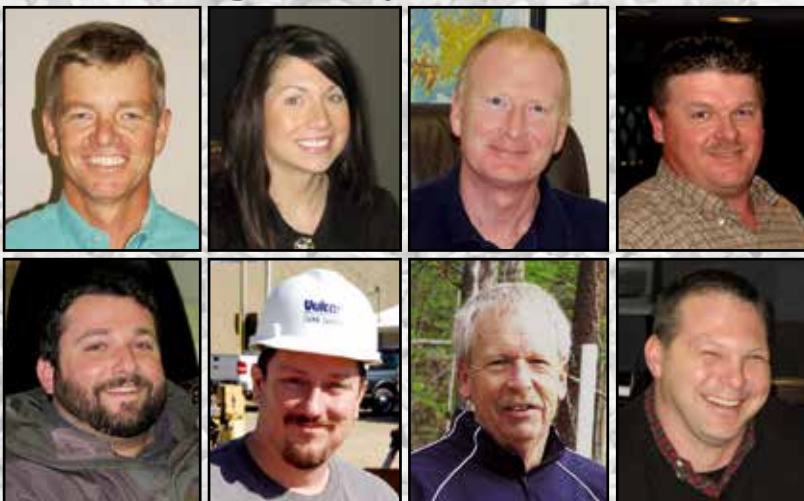


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