News Release

**Contact:**   
Joan Krause, Senior Editor  
GroundBreak Carolinas  
[jkrause@GroundBreakCarolinas.com](mailto:jkrause@GroundBreakCarolinas.com)  
864.979.3265

June 17, 2020

**2020 “GroundBreakers” Honored for Positively Impacting the Carolinas Construction Industry**

GroundBreak Carolinas, an organization focused on connecting design, construction, economic development, and commercial real estate communities, is pleased to announce the winners of its **2020 GroundBreaker Awards**. This annual awards program recognizes individuals who are having a significant impact on the construction community in the Carolinas. Selected from a well-rounded group of nominees from North Carolina and South Carolina, the 2020 Class of GroundBreakers include two women and two men representing both states. This year’s award winners are profiled below.

**Leslie Clark** is vice president of operations and SC director of government relations & divisions for **Carolinas Associated General Contractors (CAGC)**, a construction trade association made up of contractors and construction-related firms that perform work in North Carolina and South Carolina. CAGC members include small and large general contractors, specialty contractors, material/equipment suppliers, and service providers. Based in CAGC’s Columbia, S.C. office, each year Clark works with legislators on dozens, if not hundreds of pieces of legislation. In doing so, she successfully navigates through the bureaucratic and legislative maze to successfully achieve the best outcome for the industry. One of the most pivotal examples of her success occurred three years ago when her efforts in the SC Legislature were crucial to the successful approval of the Gas Tax, a huge step in increasing the quality of roads in South Carolina.

**Brian King** is founder, owner and president of **A M King**, a leading design-build firm headquartered in Charlotte, N.C. with offices in Greenville, S.C. and Chicago, Ill. Recognized as *Charlotte Business Journal’s* “Most Admired CEO” in 2018, King manages A M King with a commitment to quality, strong ethics, community service and developing managers and leaders. During a 35-year career, he has been responsible for the successful design and construction of hundreds of projects with a cumulative value exceeding $2.5 billion in more than 30 states and Europe. Integrity has been King’s guiding light since the company’s inception. “Always do the right thing. This is the same piece of advice I give to hundreds of college students I speak to every year,” he says. “It doesn’t matter if you are just starting your career or leading a billion-dollar company, it’s equally important.”

**Michael Nieri** is founder, owner and president of **Great Southern Homes**, a nationally ranked Top 50 homebuilder headquartered in Irmo, S.C. **—** known for its strong commitment to giving back to the communities, towns and cities it helps build. Inducted into the S.C. Housing Hall of Fame in 2018 for his work in and support of the state’s home building industry, Nieri has dedicated his professional life to providing families with well-built, affordably priced homes with signature style and quality throughout South Carolina. His entrepreneurial spirit was evident from the time he graduated from Clemson University in 1986. Under his leadership, last year the Nieri family became Clemson’s fifth Academic Cornerstone Partner with a gift of $5 million to the Department of Construction Science and Management in the College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities Which now bears his family’s name. This is the largest gift to date to both the department and the college.

(more)

*GroundBreakers (cont.)  
June 17, 2020*

**Patricia Lucas Smith** is the founder of Chix Dig It — Celebrating Women in Construction, dedicated to attracting the best and brightest women to the architectural, design and construction field – professional and craft. Based in Raleigh, N.C., Smith owned facilities maintenance and commercial paint contracting businesses for more than 20 years before founding Serving 4 Success, a non-profit organization that focuses on growing sustainable opportunities in local communities. Smith started the Chix Dig It program five years ago. Its signature fundraiser – the Chix Dig It — Celebrating Women in Construction luncheon – provides scholarships to young women who are pursuing a career in AEC. The annual June event rotates venues around the Triangle region. To date, Chix Dig It has been able to raise and distribute thousands of dollars to institutions of higher learning in North Carolina. Smith has plans to introduce Chix Dig It to a South Carolina audience in 2021 with an inaugural luncheon in the Upstate.

Watch for in-depth profiles on the 2020 GroundBreakers in upcoming issues of the *Carolinas Construction Connection* starting with the June 23 newsletter. Each of the 2020 GroundBreakers will also be prominently featured on the GroundBreak Carolinas website and associated social media platforms.

**About GroundBreak Carolinas**

GroundBreak Carolinas brings relevant insights, information, and resources to the Carolinas construction community, including a wide range of exclusive content intended to help design- and construction- related businesses be successful. GroundBreak Carolina contributors provide insights and perspectives from thought leaders in the two-state region. Launched in April 2017, GroundBreak Carolinas is the only platform that reaches key decision makers and influencers in the architecture, engineering, and construction (general contractors and specialty contractors) sectors, as well as the commercial real estate and economic development communities in North Carolina and South Carolina. Visit www.groundbreakcarolinas.com and subscribe to our newsletter at <https://groundbreakcarolinas.com/subscribe/>.

###

(4) Images distributed with news release





Leslie Clark Brian King



Michael Nieri Patricia Lucas Smith