

# A NEW WAVE OF THE TRADE

THESE 11 TWIN CITIES BUILDING PROFESSIONALS ARE INSPIRING A YOUNGER GENERATION TO JUMP INTO THE LOCAL HOUSING INDUSTRY—HARD HAT FIRST.

The housing industry may be aging, but it's still a thriving field with ample opportunities to grow, learn new skills, and make a lucrative living. That's what these 11 construction professionals demonstrated when they recently participated in a Student Skills Demo at the annual Builders and Remodelers Show, partnering with Minnesota schools and students to build playhouses for charitable organizations. But their commitment to expanding the local labor pool goes far beyond this event. From scholarships and career days to mentorships and internships, here's how Twin Cities housing professionals are inspiring a new generation of trade workers.

WRITTEN BY: [TAYLOR HUGO](#)

## KIRK VAN SLOOTEN

SENIOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGER,  
STREETER CUSTOM BUILDER

Kirk Van Slooten recalls accompanying his contractor dad to assist on job sites as young as 12 or 13, spending summers and holidays picking up on the ins and outs of running a construction business. He gained beneficial on-the-job skills, of course, but also learned the importance of having a good work ethic, which served him well as he rose to his current position: head of construction for Streeter Custom Builder.

"College isn't necessarily the best road for everybody," says Van Slooten. "I always have felt that if you're going to college, there should be a goal to work toward a career. I see a lot of [kids] coming out of school

with a lot of debt and, really, they don't even end up with a job that has anything to do with what they're going to school for."

Now with three daughters of his own, Van Slooten hopes to inspire the younger generation, particularly women, to pursue careers in the housing industry. He points to benefits like retirement plans, health insurance, and paid holidays and vacations—plus the satisfaction of building something from the ground up. "I love the aspect of designing a home on paper and making it into something real," he says.





## PATRICK FREDERIKSEN

CLIENT CARE DIRECTOR,  
STREETER CUSTOM BUILDER

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Patrick Frederiksen knows what it's like to climb your way up in the housing industry. He started at age 12, working for a family friend who owned a handyman business. Executing small projects, remodels, and decks through middle and high school led to a job with a local builder upon graduation, where he worked for a year before starting with Streeter. He's never looked back.

Pulling from his own experience, Frederiksen—who is now in charge of client care through

Streeter's home warranty division—is trying to demonstrate that the housing industry is a viable career path for students on the verge of graduation.

“It seems like a lot of people nowadays are losing touch with hands-on abilities and being interested in doing manual labor,” he says. “It's a rewarding job, it's a rewarding career, and getting to see that is important. You can work hard all day, and at the end of the day, you can look back at what you've done and have some pride.”

## BEN BREEMEERSCH

FIELD SUPERINTENDENT,  
STREETER CUSTOM BUILDER

Ben Breemeersch knows how intimidating it can be for recent grads to jump into the housing industry: At 24 years old, he's in the minority age group among his peers—but that gives him even more incentive to share his career story.

Growing up in Duluth, Breemeersch was ready for a change of pace from the small town, prompting a move to the Twin Cities and a job in retail. He had an interest in pursuing a career in construction but wasn't sure which channel to pursue—until a coworker who also worked for a builder recruited him to be a laborer.

“The way you need to get into the industry is just

getting that experience and seeing what it's like,” says Breemeersch. “I took construction classes in high school but I never had the chance to look into what it would be like to actually be in the field.”

Today, he's proud of the position he's climbed to—a field superintendent for Streeter Custom Builder—during his six years in the industry, and he's inspiring the next generation to follow in his footsteps.

“I didn't know anything the first day I stepped on a job site,” says Breemeersch, who in the near future hopes to implement a field day for local schools to visit a job site. “I knew how to push a broom and clean a house, and that was basically it. Everything else is through asking questions and paying attention.”

