

TileLetter

SCHLUTER SYSTEMS

NO SECOND CHANCES

INSIDE A HIGH-STAKES
RENOVATION AT THE
DETROIT ATHLETIC CLUB,
WHERE FAILURE WAS
NEVER AN OPTION

STANDARDS AND METHODS

ENSURE SUCCESS for EXTERIOR TILE INSTALLATIONS

EXTERIOR
APPLICATIONS

Texas CTI
earns 9 ACT
credentials in
6 months;
PURSUES EVALUATOR
TRAINING WHILE BUILDING
A NEW BUSINESS



FLEXIBILITY

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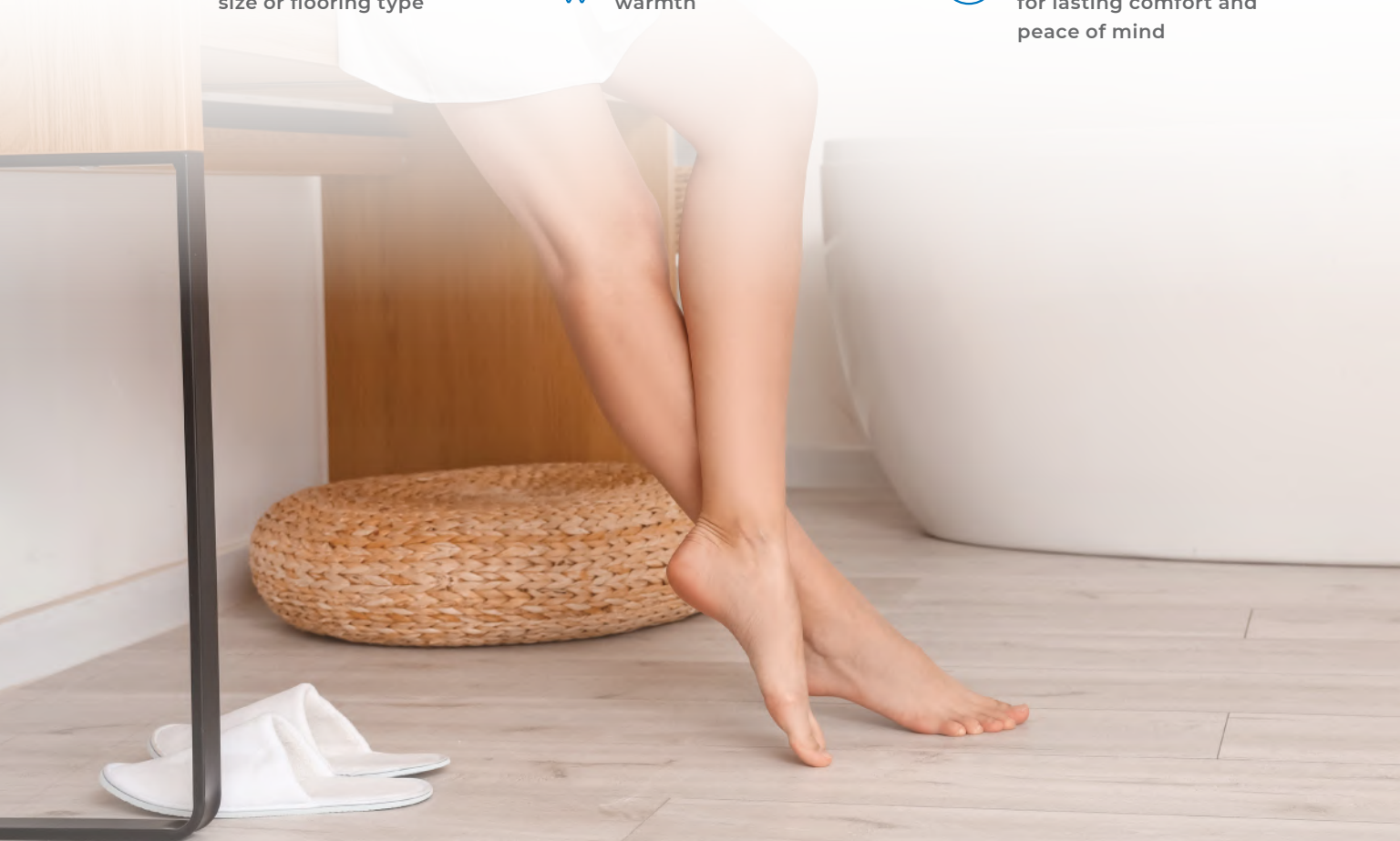
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- **Mapeheat thermostats** (available in three formats)
- **Mapeheat Mat** (in standard and custom sizes)
- **Mapeheat accessories**



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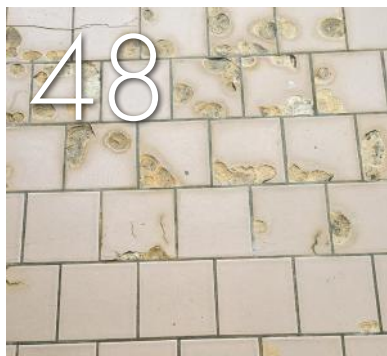
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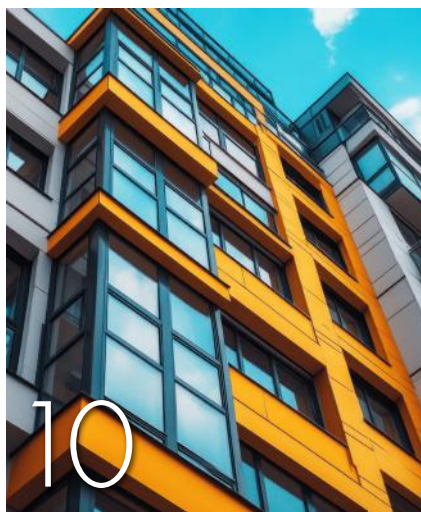
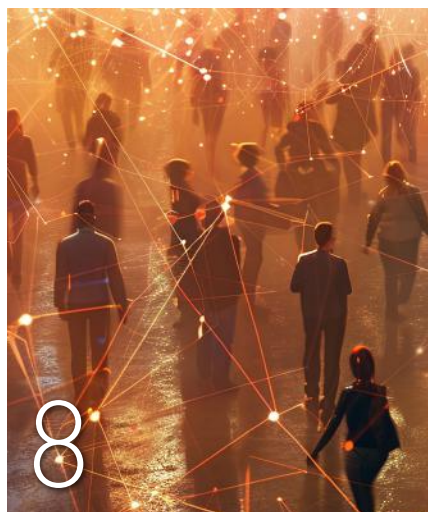
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Arctic Style X Tuxedo

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TileLetter

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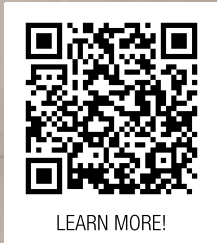
NTCA would not be possible without the dedicated service of our volunteer board and committee members, and regional and state directors. You can find information and a continually-updated list of NTCA Five-Star Accredited Contractors and NTCA Members at www.tile-assn.com – click on Find a Tile Contractor, a Five-Star Accredited Contractor or a Tile Consultant.

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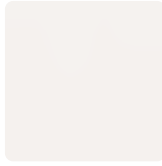


QUAD

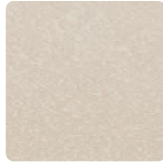
Ten **ON-TREND** finishes.



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STAINLESS STEEL



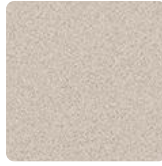
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IVORY



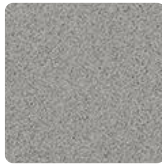
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Matt Weiner
Training Department
Manager



Randy Fleming



Chad Jones



Kate Koerber



Bill O'Connor



Amber Fox
Director of Strategic
Initiatives



Anthony Oliver



Robb Roderick



Alex Smith

2026 NTCA Workshop Programs *

To confirm dates and for more information visit NTCATraining.com

JUNE

- 2 **Floor & Decor** – Scarborough, ME
- 2 **Daltile** – El Paso, TX
- 3 **Daltile** – Derry, NH
- 4 **Floor & Decor** – Saugus, MA
- 9 **Daltile** – Lexington, KY
- 9 **James Hardie** – Los Angeles, CA
- 10 **Daltile** – Moraine, OH
- 11 **Daltile** – Brooklyn Heights, OH
- 16 **Floor & Decor** – Brookfield, WI
- 16 **The Tile Shop** – Greenwood Village, CO
- 17 **Floor & Decor** – Littleton, CO
- 18 **Daltile** – Loveland, CO
- 22 **Floor & Decor** – Apple Valley, MN
- 23 **Emser Tile** – La Vista, NE
- 23 **MSI** – Jacksonville, FL

- 23 **The Tile Shop** – Roseville, MN
- 24 **Floor & Decor** – Monona, WI
- 24 **Floor & Decor** – Fern Park, FL
- 25 **Emser Tile** – Lenexa, KS
- 25 **MSI** – Chicago, IL
- 25 **MSI** – Deerfield Beach, FL

JULY

- 13 **Floor & Decor** – Atlanta, GA
- 13 **Floor & Decor** – Thornton, CO
- 14 **Daltile** – Reno, NV
- 14 **Daltile** – Roanoke, VA
- 14 **Floor & Decor** – Colorado Springs, CO
- 15 **Daltile** – Loxley, AL
- 16 **Floor & Decor** – Covington, LA
- 16 **Daltile** – Albuquerque, NM

- 16 **Floor & Decor** – Virginia Beach, VA
- 20 **Floor & Decor** – Tolleson, AZ
- 21 **Daltile** – Beaumont, TX
- 21 **Floor & Decor** – Santa Ana, CA
- 21 **The Tile Shop** – Rockville, MD
- 22 **Floor & Decor** – Sugar Land, TX
- 22 **Daltile** – Las Vegas, NV
- 23 **Daltile** – Houston, TX
- 23 **Daltile** – Bethpage, NY
- 23 **Daltile** – St. George, UT
- 27 **Floor & Decor** – North Richland Hills, TX
- 28 **Floor & Decor** – Plano, TX
- 30 **Floor & Decor** – Humble, TX

2026 NTCA Regional Programs *

Register online at NTCATraining.com

JUNE

- 4 **Floor & Decor** – Kansas City, MO
- 4 **Floor & Decor** – Albuquerque, NM
- 11 **Daltile** – Urbandale, IA
- 11 **Floor & Decor** – Fullerton, CA
- 18 **Floor & Decor** – Woodbury, MN
- 18 **Floor & Decor** – Henderson, NV
- 25 **Floor & Decor** – Chicago, IL

JULY

- 16 **Floor & Decor** – Pleasant Hill, CA
- 23 **Arizona Tile** – , CA
- 23 **Louisville Tile Distributors** –
Louisville, KY
- 28 **Floor & Decor** – Mission Viejo, CA
- 30 **Daltile** – Nashville, TN



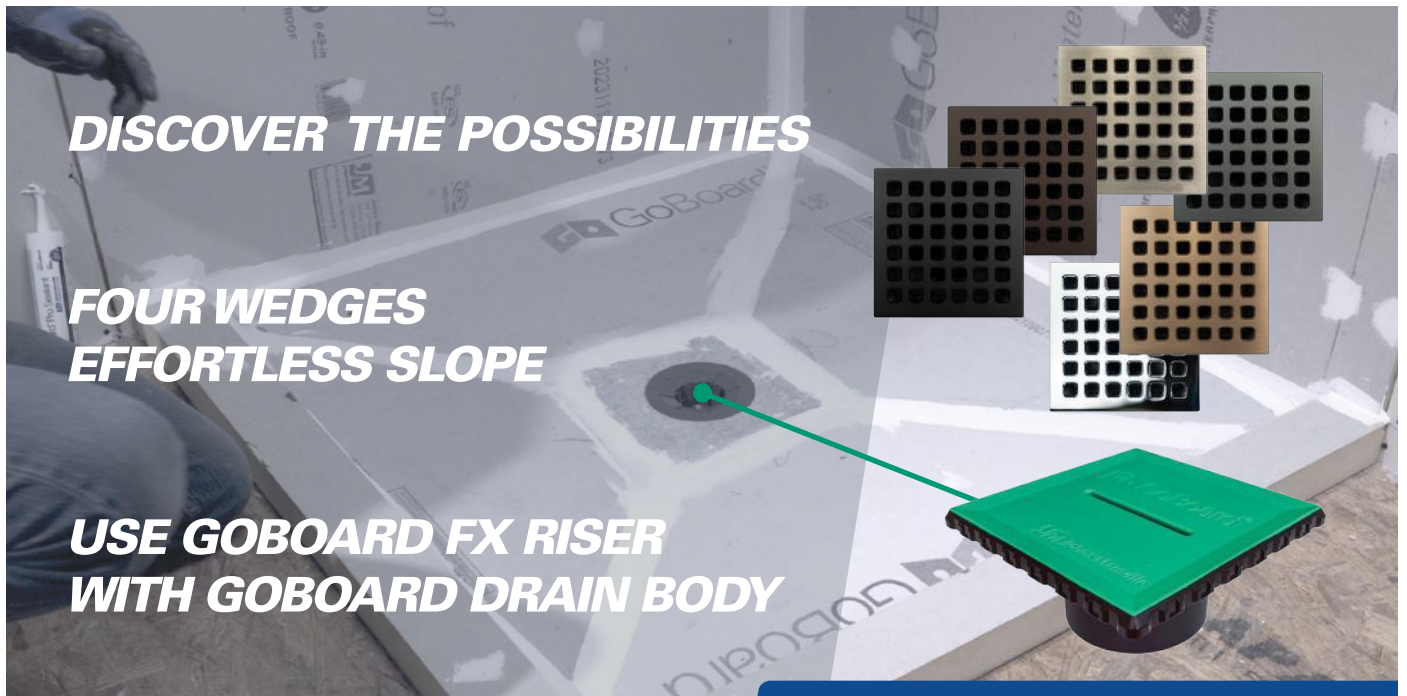
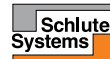
NTCA maintains an ongoing list of training events through an interactive map on its website. Check it out by scanning.



**Dates are subject to change*

Industry Supporters

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DISCOVER THE POSSIBILITIES

**FOUR WEDGES
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WITH GOBOARD DRAIN BODY**

GO with the FLO.

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We're all CONNECTED

"Life is not what you alone make it. Life is the input of everyone who touched your life and every experience that entered it. We are all part of one another."

— YURI KOCHIYAMA



Lesley Goddin

Recently I learned about Indra's Net or Indra's Web, a metaphor of "interbeing" as explained by the late Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. In Indra's Web, the universe is conceptualized as an infinite web of jewels. At the intersection of each strand of the net is a shimmering jewel that reflects every other jewel, connecting us all in one big team.

Last month at Coverings, this concept was the basis for the Women's Panel I moderated and the comments I shared on other panels and meetups. It conveys not only how life and the world work, but also how the industry operates.

Every facet of the industry reflects and interacts with each other—the history and legacy of the craft of tile setting; those who make the tile by hand or with machines (and those companies that supply clay, glazes, frits, and other components); distributors and suppliers who get materials to installers who then create enduring precision projects; and artisan tile setters who take ceramic, glass, porcelain, and stone and create custom artworks for clients. Then there's marketers, influencers, social media groups, and publications that inform, encourage and inspire; trade show organizers, trainers and educators; associations, designers, specifiers. Every single node in the web is essential to the success of the industry as a whole.

Sometimes when you're struggling solo on a challenging job, you may feel alone, but you are actually an essential glistening jewel in this web of craftsmanship and connection.

What you will read about in this *TileLetter* issue are stories about how people are working together to reach their goals, especially on exterior installations. In our Business section, learn how Steve Clem from TVS Design and Sean Gordy of Gordy Tile have collaborated on large-scale porcelain slab projects. Elena Grant writes about how small businesses can cast their net to reach customers through marketing.

In our Member story, Nick Struzik describes his passion

for certification (he obtained all nine ACT certifications in about six months!) and how that both enhances his business and is a platform for him to help others receive their ACT certifications. CTEF's Scott Carothers, a font of technical wisdom, talks about involving architect and design professionals and published industry standards for success in exterior projects, and our Ask the Experts section expands on that theme.

Our One to One story details how Stan Platt of Elite Tile Setters grew his company into an empire of 35 people in the field and how CTI certification plays a role in his company's success. NTCA President Rod Owen offers a great metaphor of his own in his letter: "This month's *TileLetter's* theme of Exterior Applications reminds me how much our trade is built on exposure: to the elements, to challenges, and to growth."

In our cover story, we learn how the construction management firm Frank Rewold & Sons, Inc., tile contractor Wolverine Stone Co., and industry partner Schluter-Systems built a strong net of expertise, technical excellence, and high-performing materials to renovate the iconic Detroit Athletic Club.

Finally, we remember Jacob Wiseman in our memorial story, recognizing the many lives he touched and the various segments of the industry and his life that have come together to support his young son, Thaddeus.

A central tenet of the industry Mindset Matters group, which you can find on Facebook, is that no one is alone. Believe it. Let this conviction uphold you and strengthen you to use your skills and talents to both weave your individual part of the web and contribute to the whole. God bless,

Lesley
lesley@tile-assn.com

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Rod Owen

BUILT from the GROUND UP

This month's *TileLetter's* theme of Exterior Applications reminds me how much our trade is built on exposure: to the elements, to challenges, and to growth.

My journey started early. At 12 years old, I began spending my summers, Thanksgiving breaks, Christmas breaks, and spring breaks working on commercial job sites as a laborer, helper, and apprentice. That continued through my school years. Stepping into my 20s, I progressed to tile setter, running projects across Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Like many of you, I learned this craft hands-on, reading plans out in the field, prepping substrates, setting tile, and solving problems in real time.

Around 2002, at about 31 years old, I transitioned into the office at C.C. Owen. Going from the field to an office environment was quite the transition for a guy with leather hands. I began learning estimating, project management, budgeting, scheduling, and contract negotiations. I had to understand hiring, discipline, and how to motivate people through emotional intelligence.

It was during that time that I attended my first NTCA Total Solutions event, now called Tile Solutions Plus. That experience was a game changer. Growing up in a family business can unintentionally create a silo. Total Solutions exposed me to new ideas, different business models, and opportunities I hadn't fully understood.

In 2011, I stepped into the role of president at C.C. Owen. Implementing new policies and stepping outside our comfort zone wasn't always easy. Change rarely is. But growth requires it. As we've all heard, if you're not growing, you're dying.

Exterior tile work teaches that same lesson. When we build assemblies for the outdoors, we account for expansion, moisture management, proper substrates, drainage, and movement. You can't cut corners, because the environment will expose those weaknesses quickly.

Business works the same way.

Over the past year, I've shared the Ten Essential Acumen skills with you: Financial, Market, Technological, Leadership, Strategic, Negotiation, Risk Management, Problem-Solving, People Management, and Ethical Acumen. I didn't share them simply to fill pages. I shared them because I've had to learn them—sometimes the hard way. They are the difference between surviving and building something that lasts.

I've served on many boards, committees, and industry groups over the years, and every one of them stretched me. You don't grow in isolation. Put yourself out there. Learn from your peers. Invest in your own development.

At the end of the day, I'm just a tile setter who learned to become a businessman. If I can do it, you can too. Keep building strong foundations, in your installations and in your leadership.

And, as always,
Educate for Excellence!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rod". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rod Owen
NTCA President
rod.owen@ccowen.us

Assurance.



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BASICS OF MARKETING FOR SMALL BUSINESS

What is Brand Marketing?

Brand vs. Marketing

Your brand is who you are. Marketing is how you promote it.

Brand = reputation, values, and customer experience.

Its Importance

A strong brand builds trust in a high-stakes industry.

It differentiates you from competitors bidding on the same projects.

Business Impact

Branded companies earn more referrals.

They command higher rates and attract better talent.

Build a brand that reflects what you stand for and strategize to share that identity with potential customers.



By Elena Grant,
TileLetter Publisher

At Coverings 2025, I partnered with Sheila Wyatt, Evolv's Regional President of Strategic Partnership, to deliver a practical and insightful session titled "The Basics of Marketing for Small Business," designed to help small businesses, especially tile contractors, build a brand that works just as hard as they do. (Stay tuned for information from Coverings 2026 educational sessions later this year!)

When your day is packed with installation jobs, employee issues, and client estimates, marketing isn't always top of mind. But this session made one thing crystal clear: if you want to grow your business, it's time to treat marketing like a core part of your operation, not an afterthought.

What's the big deal about a brand?

Your brand isn't just your logo or your van wrap. It's your reputation, your values, and how your customers feel about working with you. Marketing, on the other hand, is the vehicle that promotes this brand to the world. A strong brand helps tile contractors:

- Build trust
- Stand out from competitors bidding on the same jobs
- Attract better clients and better talent
- Command higher rates and win more referrals

If you're not clear about who you are and what makes you different, potential clients won't be either. That's why defining your value proposition is step one. What's your specialty? What sets you apart? Are you a Certified Tile Installer? Do you specialize in custom showers or large-format installs? Spell it out. Be bold about it.

Define Your Value Proposition

A clear statement that explains what you do, who you do it for, and why you're the best choice.

Why does it matter:

Clients need to know "why they should choose YOU" over others.

Be sure to include:

- Your Specialty (e.g., tile installation, home remodels, commercial builds)
- What Sets You Apart (speed, quality, customer service, experience, etc.)
- Certifications and Industry Affiliations

Example:

"We provide high-quality tile installation for residential homes, combining decades of experience with fast, reliable service—backed by industry certifications."

One of the first steps in building your marketing is defining what sets you apart and makes you special.



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What Every Small Business Website Should Include

Homepage

- Who you are & what you do

About Us

- Your story & mission

Products/Services

- Clear details and estimate process

Contact Info

- Easy access to key information email, phone, map

Call to Action

- Book an estimate, contact us



Every small-business website should include these basic components.

Make your website work for you

In today's world, your website is your 24/7 salesperson. It's working when you're asleep, setting tile, or wrangling supplies at the warehouse. A professional website builds credibility, increases visibility, and helps customers understand exactly what you do.

At a minimum, your site should include:

- A home page that clearly states who you are and what you do
- An "About Us" section with your story and values
- A detailed "Services" or "Products" section
- Contact information that's easy to find
- A clear call to action (like "Schedule an Estimate")

Want to really stand out? Add high-quality project photos, testimonials, and even a blog that shares your expertise. Don't be afraid to tell the story behind the shower install that saved a bathroom remodel or how your prep work avoided a costly failure.

Relationships still rule

Tile may be a technical trade, but the business still runs on relationships. Referrals, repeat business, and strong customer relationships should be at the heart of your strategy.

Get involved locally. Join the NTCA and your local associations that are relevant to what you do. Network with designers, builders, and past clients. And most importantly, provide service that exceeds expectations every time. Create a robust referral program. Offer an incentive for customers who send new business your way. Even a small gift card or discount can turn a satisfied client into a vocal advocate.

NTCA Total Health & Wellness Benefits Program

The National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) provides exclusive, cost-saving programs designed to support the success and growth of tile professionals nationwide. Among the many valuable benefits available to NTCA members is the NTCA Total Health & Wellness Benefits Program. This comprehensive program is dedicated to promoting the well-being of our members and their teams. Discover how NTCA can enhance your business and help you thrive!

[LEARN MORE!](#) 

Meridio

Building Relationships & Referrals

Networking
Join local chambers and industry associations.

Customer Service
Exceed expectations to generate word-of-mouth.

Repeat Business
Stay in touch with past clients.

Referral Program
Offer incentives for client referrals.

Relationships and referrals are the lifeblood of your business. Spend time nurturing them.

Marketing tactics that actually work

You don't need to do everything at once. Instead, pick one online and one offline strategy to start with. Here are a few that work particularly well for contractors:

- Optimize your Google Business Profile so you show up when people search "tile installer near me."
- Post before-and-after photos on Instagram and Facebook.
- Use content marketing like blogs or short videos to show off your expertise.

- Leverage your certifications—like CTI or NTCA Five-Star Accredited status—in all your materials.
- Partner with companies like Evolv (a current NTCA partner) to extend your reach through digital advertising and targeted outreach.

From setting tile to setting goals

Marketing might not come with the same instant gratification as finishing a flawless backsplash, but over time, it builds momentum. Contractors who are intentional about their brand and consistent in their outreach stand out in the long run. To get started, create a simple three-month marketing calendar. Pick a few tactics, set goals, and track what's working. Measure your results and adjust as you go.

And if you need help, don't hesitate to reach out to the NTCA, Evolv, or a trusted marketing partner. Because just like tile, good marketing starts with a solid foundation, and a little planning can turn your business into a masterpiece.

(Ed note: Look for print TileLetter stories from Coverings 2026 in the second half of this year.)



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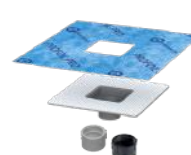
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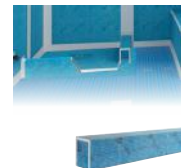
PROSHOWER PANELS



PROSHOWER SQUARE GRATE



PROSHOWER SQUARE DRAIN 1010



SHOWER CURB

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Color Coded Polishing Liquid
- **Wool Pad**
High-Nap Knitted Wool Pad
- **2 Diamond Face
Foam Pads**
Diamond Face Foam Pads
- **ROTARY BACKER PAD**
Rotary Backer Pad



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2. Polish

3. Final Polish

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Color Coded Combination System Between Polishing Liquid and Pads

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GLOBAL INSPIRATIONS: ENGAGED PORCELAIN SLAB DESIGN AND INSTALLATION

By Bart Bettiga,
NTCA Executive Director



Steve Clem of TVS Design in Atlanta (l.) with Sean Gordy from Gordy Tile Co., Inc. in Covington, Ga.

The session “Global Inspirations, Case Studies, Engaged Porcelain Slab Design and Installation,” presented as part of the educational program at Coverings 2025 in Orlando, brought together leading experts Steve Clem, Principal of TVS Design in Atlanta, and Sean Gordy from Gordy Tile Company, Inc. in Covington, Ga., to discuss their collaborative approach to large-scale porcelain slab projects. I had the opportunity to moderate this session, which highlighted the intricate relationship between design professionals and specialty subcontractors, emphasizing how their synergy leads to successful and innovative installations.

Clem, with 47 years at TVS as an architect and interior designer, shared his international experience and the importance of skilled trades. Gordy, a third-generation tile professional, offered an installer’s perspective, underscoring the challenges and triumphs of working with gauged porcelain tiles and slabs. The discussion revealed how this close partnership—often rare in the industry—fosters remarkable results and pushes the boundaries of porcelain application in diverse architectural settings.

The collaborative advantage

Clem opened by stressing the crucial role of strong relationships with subcontract trades in achieving project success. He noted that while general contractors manage projects, it’s the people who do the work—the specialty subcontractors—who are key. This philosophy has led to a long-standing and productive partnership with Gordy, which is a unique and invaluable collaboration that transcends typical industry dynamics wherein architects often work primarily with suppliers and subcontractors are more aligned with general

contractors. This integrated approach, as evidenced by their case studies, ensures meticulous attention to detail and shared understanding of quality expectations from conception to completion.

Harris Cherokee Casino Resort Expansion

Gordy presented the Harris Cherokee Casino Resort Expansion, a 2021 project featuring nearly 8,000 sq. ft. of 6mm gauged porcelain slabs. This project showcased significant challenges, particularly regarding material efficiency and clarifying architectural layouts. The standout feature was the installation on 30’-high columns in the grand lobby, requiring precise cuts and strategic joint placement. Due to limited material availability, Gordy’s team meticulously planned layouts to maximize every piece, finishing with only half a slab left.

The project also utilized over 3,000 lineal feet of metal trims for accents and joints, demanding an exceptionally flat substrate and stringent accountability from other contractors to ensure perfect alignment. The use of Schluter® QUADEC in joints required alternative lippage tuning methods, demonstrating the need for

A network diagram with various icons connected by lines. The icons include a speech bubble, gears, a smartphone, a laptop, a '4' in a circle, a 'www' in a circle, a '@' symbol, and a smartphone with a checkmark. The background is a teal-to-green gradient.

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The Harris Cherokee Casino Resort Expansion is a 2021 project featuring nearly 8,000 sq. ft. of 6mm gauged porcelain slabs.

adaptability and problem-solving on-site. The unrectified Neolith Tile on the fireplace demanded in-field cutting and micro-beveling for a seamless appearance. This project served as a prime example of overcoming logistical hurdles and material constraints through careful planning and skilled execution.

Appliance showroom floor application

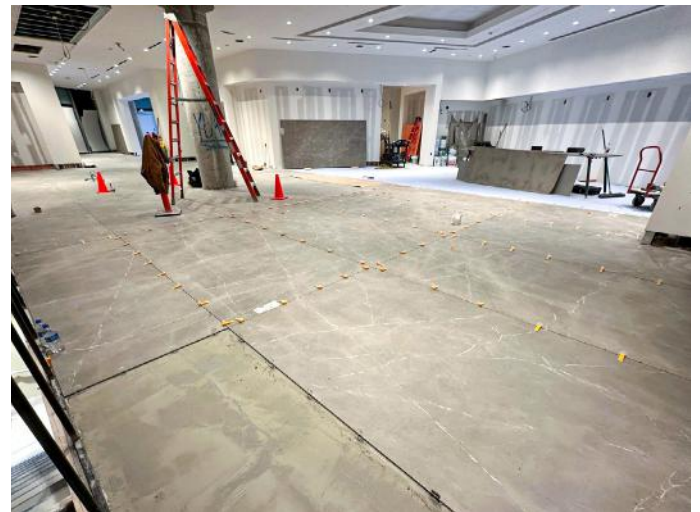
A current project, an appliance showroom, demonstrated the less-common application of 6mm porcelain slabs on the floor. With about 6,700 sq. ft. of full-panel (63" x 126") porcelain, this project highlighted the material's suitability for high-traffic floor areas, defying common reservations. Logistics were a major challenge, requiring booming A-frames of material through windows onto the second floor due to a lack of other access. Work proceeded in phases to accommodate other trades, primarily the millwork contractor, demanding precise upfront layout and preparation to maintain workflow continuity.

Gordy detailed the extensive floor preparation: removing old adhesives, mortars, and membranes, followed by priming, self-leveling, and applying liquid crack isolation. The installation technique involved "walking in" the large slabs to ensure full mortar coverage and air expulsion, a method that Clem

affirmed as highly effective. This project exemplified the meticulous preparation and specialized techniques required for successful large-format porcelain floor installations.

TVS Design former office building repositioning

Clem shared a project with personal significance: the major overhaul and repositioning of TVS Design's former office building, originally designed in 1989.



An appliance showroom project with about 6,700 sq. ft. of full-panel (63" x 126") porcelain highlighted the material's suitability for high-traffic floor areas, defying common reservations.

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- Multi level settings provide a more comfortable working height





Logistics were a major challenge, requiring booming A-frames of material through windows to the second floor due to a lack of other access.

This extensive renovation involved removing existing stone flooring and cladding to implement a new image using thin porcelain tile on three levels of flooring and extensive vertical wall surfaces. Turner Construction served as the general contractor, with Gordy Tile collaborating with Atlanta flooring contractor DCO Floors. The project, a recipient of the Ceramics of Italy tile competition's top commercial project in North America in 2023, featured over 12,000 sq. ft. of slabs on

walls, columns, and soffits.

A standout detail was over one mile of quirk miter corner details, a technique borrowed from stonework but applied to porcelain. This involved polishing both edges of the tile to achieve the same gloss level as the face, creating an elegant open reveal. Gordy pointed out the effort involved: effectively polishing over two miles of tile edges. Clem emphasized that this project showcased the super flatness achievable with porcelain



The major overhaul and repositioning of TVS Design's former Atlanta office building, originally designed in 1989, was named the Ceramics of Italy tile competition's top commercial project in North America in 2023. It featured over 12,000 sq. ft. of slabs on walls, columns, and soffits.

and demonstrated how a skilled installer like Gordy could execute complex details that other tile managers deemed impossible, serving as a model for future projects.

The design also incorporated subtle illusions, such as polished stainless steel in elevator cabs to create a flowing ribbon effect, avoiding tile on moving parts. This case study powerfully illustrated the transformative potential of porcelain when coupled with expert craftsmanship and innovative detailing.

WHAT THEY SAY...



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*Nicole Hulme, Owner,
The Tile Chick, LLC
Mesa, Arizona*

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Key installation insights and practices

Throughout the case studies, both Clem and Gordy provided valuable insights into the technical aspects of porcelain slab installation:

- **Material efficiency:** Strategic layout planning is crucial, especially with custom or limited material runs, to minimize waste.
- **Substrate preparation:** Achieving a perfectly flat and sound substrate is paramount for large-format porcelain, often requiring extensive cleaning, priming, self-leveling, and crack isolation.
- **Specialized tools and techniques:** Tools like the Euro notch or zipper notch trowel ensure proper mortar coverage. The “walking in” method for large slabs effectively expels air and ensures full adhesion.
- **Collaboration:** Early engagement and continuous communication among designers, architects, and

installers are vital for clarifying drawings, solving on-site problems, and ensuring design intent is met.

- **Industry standards:** Adherence to standards like ANSI A108.19 for gauged porcelain tile panels and slabs is essential, though practical challenges often require creative solutions within these guidelines.
- **Innovation:** Adapting traditional techniques, such as the quirk miter, and developing new ones continuously pushes the boundaries of tile installation.

The session provided a compelling overview of the design and installation of gauged porcelain slabs, powerfully demonstrating the value of deep collaboration between design professionals and specialty subcontractors. Steve Clem and Sean Gordy’s partnership exemplifies how shared expertise, meticulous planning, and a commitment to quality can overcome complex challenges, transforming architectural visions into stunning realities. From maximizing material efficiency in casinos to executing intricate details in corporate lobbies and pioneering floor applications, their case studies underscore the versatility and aesthetic potential of gauged porcelain. Their work not only sets new benchmarks for installation quality but also inspires broader industry adoption of this innovative material. The ongoing dialogue and mutual respect between designer and installer, as championed by Clem and Gordy, is a blueprint for future success in the dynamic world of architectural surfaces. **TL**



The design also incorporated subtle illusions, such as polished stainless steel in elevator cabs to create a flowing ribbon effect, avoiding tile on moving parts.



The design also incorporated subtle illusions, such as polished stainless steel in elevator cabs to create a flowing ribbon effect, avoiding tile on moving parts.

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Detroit Athletic Club exterior, Madison Avenue, Detroit.

The DAC

The Detroit Athletic Club (DAC) was founded in 1887 and reorganized in 1913 by prominent automotive and industrial leaders in the city to broaden its scope to include other recreational and social functions. A seven-story clubhouse was built in 1915 on Madison Avenue in the sports and theater district of Detroit. It houses athletic facilities including a fitness center, swimming pools, courts, and a bowling alley, and social spaces including restaurants, bars, ballrooms, boardrooms, and guest rooms for overnight stays.

More than the amenities, the DAC prides itself on providing an environment where members can forge relationships, support each other, and generally enhance their lives. The DAC was recognized as the No. 1 athletic club in the United States by the Club Leaders Forum and Advisory Board of Platinum Clubs of America. A few notable club members include Henry Ford, Baseball Hall of Famer Ty Cobb, and racing mogul Roger Penske.

The project and contractors

In early 2024, the DAC planned an \$11M renovation project that included an overhaul of the main kitchen, improvements to guest rooms, and virtually complete reconstruction of the women's locker room. The locker room features various wet areas including floors, showers, a steam room, and a jetted-tub deck. Given the overall footprint of the wet areas, a history of leaks that were addressed with band-aid repairs, and the presence of a ballroom with ornate hand-painted ceiling directly below, all areas of the locker room that had any risk of water exposure were designated to receive waterproofing. The locker room renovation was completed between May 2025 and September 2025.

Robert Offer, Superintendent at the construction management firm Frank Rewold & Sons, Inc., and Matthew Bontomasi, Vice President of Operations at the tile contractor Wolverine Stone Co., shared their experience on the project. It is worth noting that both firms have been in business for over 100 years—a fitting match for a client like DAC with its own deep roots in Detroit history.



Offer and Bontomasi knew the stakes were incredibly high and that the execution would be challenging. As Offer put it, “Projects like this are like remodeling the Smithsonian with Abraham Lincoln looking over your shoulder, asking if you’re done yet.” A club like the DAC is unable to shut down in part, let alone entirely, during renovations, and consequences of failure would be catastrophic. There would be no second chance. Therefore, they needed to use a system that would guarantee success. Together, they brought Schluter-Systems to the table for the project and the DAC agreed.

Floors

The existing mortar bed and mosaic floor application were torn out, exposing the subfloor of concrete poured over steel decking. A new mortar bed was installed to provide the necessary slopes and a stable substrate for the Schluter-KERDI bonded waterproofing membrane. A total of six Schluter-KERDI-DRAIN bonding flanges were installed in the mortar bed, some with grates for drainage



Shower area substrate prep.



The layout left no room for error—and a tight squeeze for the panels.



KERDI membrane bonded to mortar bed with KERDI-DRAIN and mosaic floor substrate in place.

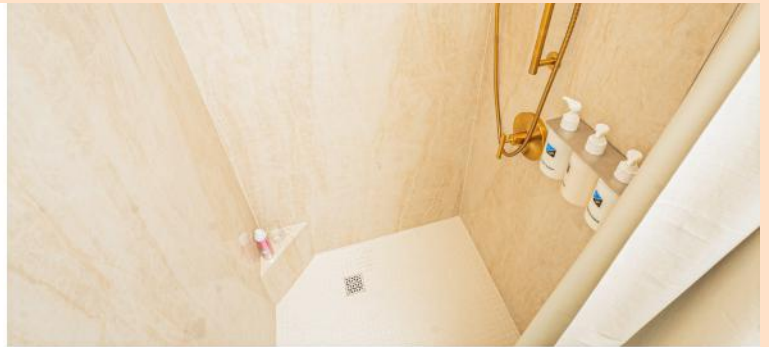
and others with cleanout covers to provide additional access to the plumbing. The KERDI membrane was bonded to the mortar bed and drains, then carried 12" up the walls.

Once the floor was waterproofed, it was time for a water test to validate the application. The wet area was flooded with 3" of water and left to stand for 24 hours—directly above a ballroom where preparations for a \$1M+ wedding were already underway. The system had to hold.

Showers and steam room

Showers were completely reconstructed and waterproofed using the Schluter shower system, including the KERDI-DRAIN and KERDI membrane installed over a mortar base on the floor and backerboard on the walls. The same approach was taken with the steam room, apart from using the KERDI-DS membrane. KERDI-DS meets the requirements for "low perm waterproof membranes" and is suitable for continuous-use steam rooms as defined in the *TCNA Handbook for Ceramic, Glass, and Stone Tile Installation*.

Schluter-Systems representative Josh Lewis worked closely



This shower was fully waterproofed with the Schluter Shower System, complete with a KERDI-DRAIN fitted with FLORAL grate, FINEC protects porcelain panel edges.



The jetted-tub area, fully waterproofed and finished with large-format tile throughout.

with the contractors to support the planning and execution of the steam room. Once again, the guiding principle of the project was no second chances. The showers and steam room simply had to be successful. Any required repairs after the locker room was put back in service would create inconvenience that would not be acceptable to the DAC and its members.

Tile installation

Tile installation on this project had its own challenges. While floors and shower bases were finished with mosaics, walls were finished with 5' x 10' gauged porcelain tile panels from floor to ceiling. Handling these enormous panels is difficult in general and was complicated on this project in various ways. Fabrication was performed in an outdoor station that required temporary closure of two lanes of traffic, and the panels were loaded through a 6' x 6' window at a height of 40' in the air. Maneuvering and installing the panels in the tight quarters of the locker room was difficult as well.

Wolverine used Schluter-FINEC-SQ outside corner profiles to finish and protect the panel edges. The FINEC-



The jetted-tub deck features multiple KERDI-LINE drains installed in tandem for seamless water management.



FINEC-SQ profile and corner accessory trim all exposed tile edges.

SQ profile has a minimal reveal that suited the application and will prevent damage at corners that could otherwise require repairs that are simply not practical.

Closing

The DAC women's locker room renovation project was extraordinarily challenging given the construction environment, timeline, and consequences of any failures or required rework. Success hinged on thorough planning, exacting execution, and using the best products for the job. Schluter-Systems is grateful to have been given the opportunity to support this exciting project and excellent partners by providing a robust waterproofing system that fit the needs of the project and allowed the installers to fully leverage their skills and deliver high-quality work on schedule.

By the way, the water test passed without incident. Four months later, the women's locker room at the Detroit Athletic Club reopened on schedule: pristine, fully waterproofed, and ready for another century of use. Below, the ballroom ceiling remained exactly as it had been: ornate, hand-painted, and untouched. **TL**



Steam room interior—waterproofed with KERDI-DS.

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Nick Struzik, Sovereign Tile & Stone

By Lesley Goddin, Editorial Director and Senior Writer

Nick Struzik, Owner of Sovereign Tile & Stone in Magnolia, Texas, has the distinction of being the very first tile contractor to attain all nine residential Advanced Certifications for Tile Installers. And he did it in 171 days, while working to build his fledgling business from the ground up.

As ACT #49, he wants to pay it forward, by training to become an evaluator to draw more Certified Tile Installers (he is CTI #1494) into the ACT program, elevating the professionalism of the trade.

Struzik set his eye on tile early. At 13 years old, with a single mom who needed things done around the house, he insisted he could take on tile projects. “She was cool enough to buy the tools and let me try,” he said. That launched him into a life of setting tile.

From there he worked for a local setter, diving into learning everything on his own. He had a yearlong partnership that ended when he and his partner took different professional paths. Struzik established his prior business, Syndicate Tile and Stone, in 2021, and was named a Coverings Rock Star that same year.

Struzik took a hiatus to deal with some health issues and started back in the industry in 2024. He established Sovereign Tile last December to focus on residential and high-end commercial, working with tile that is 24” x 48” and up. The business is in the process of establishing an identity centered on high-end installs, bolstered by credentials, attention to detail, and industry standards.



As Owner of Syndicate Tile and Stone, Struzik completed this project with 2’ x 4’ tile on a full LATICRETE system over a mud bed.

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Timeless Construction was Struzik's very first company. He installed this custom steam shower with LED-lit infinity niches.

NTCA

Struzik joined NTCA when Syndicate Tile and Stone was active, valuing the education it offers as well as workshops, online resources, and networking with other members. "And of course the vouchers are always a bonus!" he said. Membership helps him stay up to date on education, new product features, "and who's the best and brightest in the industry, pushing boundaries with what's feasible with tile," he said.

The path to certification

As CTI #1494, Struzik found out about the ACT certifications shortly after receiving his CTI credentials in 2018. When he re-entered the industry after his health hiatus, he decided to pursue residential ACT certifications—ALL of them.

He took his first ACT exam in July 2025. "I had a ton of questions for Scott Carothers and Bradford Denny when I was there," he said. "When I found out that no one on the residential side currently had all nine, that was all I needed to hear! It gave me a goal and I pursued it relentlessly. Bradford will tell you I bothered the hell out of them!

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Struzik had to erect full scaffolding to complete this project for Platow Home and Tile, using 6' x3' 3/8"-thick porcelain to a ceiling height of 22' tall.



This project was completed for Platow Home and Tile and included a fully waterproof system and custom foam pan.



These ACT modules are shower receptor tests for B421 and B421C specifications.

“Getting all the ACTs was a phenomenal experience, from the traveling aspect to experiencing my first Mud Event, and testing live in front of others,” he added. “The camaraderie of being at those events is always great. And being at the CTEF headquarters quite a bit was a great experience. I had the opportunity to talk with Bradford at great length about a variety of topics, mostly surrounding tile.”

Struzik’s nine certifications include:

- Grouts
- Large Format Tile & Substrate Preparation
- Membranes
- Mortar (Mud) Floors
- Mortar (Mud) Walls
- Shower Receptors (B415, B421, and B421C each have their own certification)
- Gauged Porcelain Tile and Gauged Porcelain Tile Panels/Slabs

Struzik said the ACT certifications have had a huge impact on his business, with fellow installers reaching out and asking him to come help on projects, and even some job offers. He had the opportunity to assist J&R Tile on some of its higher-end projects, and to enhance J&R’s apprenticeship program to better equip future installers going through the program. “It’s been amazing,” Struzik said.

He isn’t stopping there. “I am extremely interested in becoming a CTI and ACT evaluator,” he said, and is waiting—at this writing in early March—on the next evaluator training to become available.

“I want to become an evaluator to help ease the burden on the industry of more people wanting to take tests but not having enough evaluators or locations available to get everyone tested,” he explained. “I think the certifications are a great opportunity to not only grow our industry but to set in place a higher standard, much like other trades have strict licensing requirements.”

2026 and beyond

2026 holds the potential to be Struzik’s best year in business ever, with higher-level clients and projects on the horizon, as well as strategic partnerships on projects with other companies.

As much as Struzik loves the work, he said his greatest joy “is when the project is over and there’s no more stress and no more physical struggles or hard days.” He enjoys “taking that step back and looking at the final product and thinking to yourself, you built that with your own hands. It’s very fulfilling for me,” he said. **TL**



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ONE to ONE



BUILDING EXCELLENCE: the story of STAN PLATT and ELITE TILE SETTERS



In the One-to-One column, NTCA Executive Director Bart Bettiga interviews industry leaders about pertinent topics.



The company embraces industry certifications, with 24 Certified Tile Installers (CTIs) having come through its ranks.

In the world of tile installation, few names resonate with the same blend of craftsmanship, leadership, and community spirit than that of Stan Platt, President of Elite Tile Setters. Based in South Jordan, Utah, just outside Salt Lake City, Platt's company has become a benchmark for quality and innovation in both residential and commercial tile work. Here, Platt shares the story of his company's evolution, the values that drive his team, and his vision for the future of the industry.

From humble beginnings to industry leader

Platt's entry into the tile business was almost accidental. While attending college, he worked for a neighbor who specialized in exterior masonry. As Utah's harsh winters set in, the team shifted to indoor tile jobs, sparking Platt's realization that working indoors offered a better quality of life.

What began as side jobs for neighbors quickly grew into a business opportunity when a builder reached out. Recognizing the need for legitimacy, Platt obtained his contractor's license, and in 1999, Elite Tile Setters was born, a name suggested by his sister-in-law.

The company's early days were a family affair, with Platt's wife Amy pitching in when needed. He hired a couple more people, "which quickly led to adding another builder," Platt explained.

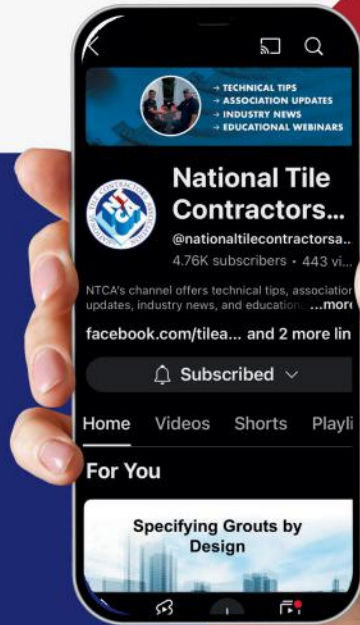
Growth came quickly, fueled by word of mouth and a reputation for



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Elite Tile Setters proudly displays the certifications of its accomplished CTIs.

quality. By 2006, Elite Tile Setters had 13 installers and was working for multiple builders. The economic downturn of 2007–2008 prompted Platt to take his crew to Hawaii for a six-month project—a move that would later become a niche for the company.

Today, Elite Tile Setters employs about 35 people in the field, with a balanced portfolio of commercial and residential work, primarily in Utah but occasionally as far as California and Maui. “We’re about 50/50 now, commercial versus residential,” he said. “We started 100% residential and got into the commercial world just by our name getting out there and commercial guys wanting good work done.”

A culture of training and mentorship

One of the hallmarks of Elite Tile Setters is its commitment to training and mentorship. Platt credits much of his business acumen to the NTCA and the networking opportunities it provided. Early in his career, attending the Coverings trade show opened his eyes to the depth of the industry and the importance of learning from others.

“I really credit the NTCA with helping me as a young business owner,” he said. “There were so many important classes...that talked about how to do business, what to do, what not to do, and how to look at profit margins.”

This philosophy is embedded in the company’s culture. Every Monday morning, the team gathers for training—sometimes hands-on, sometimes video-based, and often led by both senior installers and outside experts.

Platt says the team “sticks around...because every Monday morning we train them. That’s what they love more than anything: to be knowledgeable.”

The company also embraces industry certifications, with 24 Certified Tile Installers (CTIs) having come through its ranks. While some have gone on to start their own businesses, Platt sees this as a positive reflection of the company’s impact. Former employees often return to collaborate on large projects, creating a network of trusted professionals. “Those who have left have started their own companies and we’ve helped them. So when we have a big project, we’ll reach out

to them and say, ‘Hey, you want to help?’” he said. “We know that they know what they’re doing. So it’s a great benefit for us. And then they’re doing well, too.”

Platt’s approach to employee retention is unique. “We go far out of our way to take care of our employees,” he said. “Every year we either take them on a shooting experience. Or those that don’t like guns, we take fishing.” This coming July will be a lagoon day. “That’s for families. We cater to our employees,” said Platt.

Supporting growth and navigating challenges

Elite Tile Setters’ growth has brought new challenges, from project management to succession planning. The company now boasts project managers, install managers, and estimators to handle its expanding workload. Platt’s right-hand man, Matt Newbold, joined early on and has been instrumental in landing major contracts and maintaining technical excellence.

“He just landed our biggest contract ever this year,” Platt said. “He is consistent beyond consistent and he’s highly involved with CTEF as an evaluator. We call him our tile nerd because he knows everything there is. To have that expertise in the business is huge.”

Despite its success, the company faces the perennial challenge of finding and retaining skilled labor. Even though some of his trained employees may leave to start their own ventures, Platt sees it as an opportunity to mentor the next generation of business owners, offering candid advice about the realities of running a company. “The better they are, the less I want them to leave,” Platt admitted. “But I sit down and have a frank conversation with them about how business and taxes work: here’s how much you’re going to pay in taxes, insurance, and all these extra things that you’re not used to paying.”

Platt’s commitment to quality is unwavering. Certification is not just a marketing tool but a way to ensure every installer meets the highest standards.

“We’ve embraced [certification] so that I can sleep at night,” he said. “We’ve had a lot of goofballs come through...



[&]



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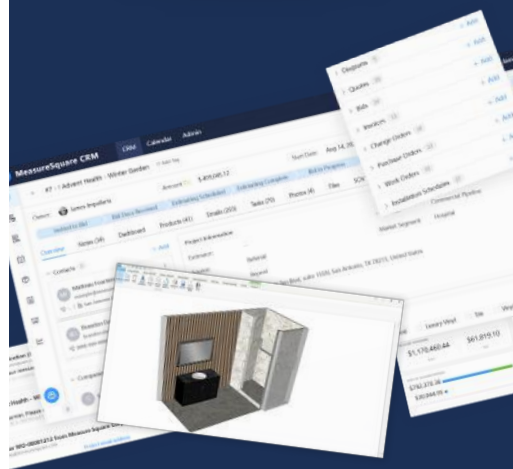
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Platt values his employees and shows appreciation by offering trips and experiences for them and their families annually.

and mess up jobs. And that's what keeps you up at night as a business owner. We promote certification so that our guys know how to do it correctly... and we can brag about our guys when we go talk to a builder and say, 'Hey, you're going to get the smartest installers in the state of Utah, period.'"

Embracing industry leadership

Platt's dedication to the tile industry extends beyond his own company. Recently, he accepted the role of second vice president of the NTCA, a commitment that will eventually see him serve as president and chairman of the board. For Platt, the motivation is both personal and professional.

"I wanted to work with you (Bart Bettiga) and other leaders at NTCA," Platt said. "To be around guys like that makes you a better [person]. That's what it comes down to. I hope I can give back to the industry and do my

part. But selfishly, I'm there to improve what I do and who I am by being around people who are better and smarter than me."

Looking ahead

With \$10 million in sales and major projects on the horizon—including contracts extending into 2027—Elite Tile Setters is poised for continued growth. While succession planning is on the radar, the immediate focus remains on profitability and expanding the business. Platt's approach to challenges, whether technical or interpersonal, is pragmatic and rooted in decades of experience. And he recognizes that sometimes the best decision is to walk away from a difficult job, especially when customer expectations are unrealistic.

Ultimately, the story of Stan Platt and Elite Tile Setters is one of resilience, innovation, and a deep commitment to people—employees, clients, and the broader industry community. Through mentorship, training, and a willingness to embrace new opportunities, Platt has built more than a successful business; he has created a legacy of excellence that will inspire tile professionals for years to come. **TL**



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STANDARDS AND METHODS ENSURE SUCCESS for EXTERIOR TILE INSTALLATIONS



By Scott Carothers,
Ceramic Tile Education
Foundation Academic Director

The beauty and functionality of ceramic tile installations demonstrate the versatility and longevity of tile. Tile installations function well when American National Standards Institute (ANSI) requirements along with *Tile Council of North America (TCNA) Handbook* methods and industry-accepted best practices are followed. And exterior projects completed where freezing temperatures are expected require extra diligence.

A word of caution

As we move through this discussion, we need to understand that there are **no** approved *TCNA Handbook* methods for installing exterior floor tile over a wood structure, wood subfloor, or wood underlayment. If these components are part of a proposed project, **always** consult the architect/design professional for written clarification and the manufacturer of the designated products for their written instructions and warranty.

There is, however, one exterior wall method (W244E) in the *TCNA Handbook* that specifically calls for cement backer board meeting ANSI A118.9 or American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) C1325 (Type A) to be installed over wood or metal studs. Additionally, the Requirements section of W244E states, “Water-resistive barrier or waterproof membrane required, per building code. See Membrane Options.”

Structure suitability

ANSI A108.01-2.1.1 Responsibilities of Other Parties states: “The owner shall communicate in writing to the design professional and/or general contractor the intended use of the tile installation. The design professional and/or general contractor shall provide



This exterior porch does not slope to the outside of the installation, causing water to pond, resulting in efflorescence. Note the cracked left-to-right grout joint, which should have been a movement joint with sealant.

the project design necessary for the expected live load, concentrated loads, impact loads, and dead loads including weight of the tile and setting bed.

The tile contractor shall not be responsible for structures or substrates not compliant with applicable building codes, or for verifying compliance with applicable building codes unless the tile contractor designs and installs the backing assembly including the structure and/or substrate.”

Membranes and waterproofing

The *TCNA Handbook* exterior methods all state: “Use of a membrane is optional. See membrane options.”



ONLINE LEARNING

NTCA University is a comprehensive online platform offering tile installation courses designed for individuals new to the industry or those seeking to refresh their skills. These courses are an excellent resource for training or apprenticeship programs, ensuring that learners are equipped with industry-standard methods and practices before applying their knowledge through hands-on or on-the-job learning. Additionally, these courses are beneficial for sales associates and professionals in other roles within the tile industry, providing valuable insights into the principles and processes of tile installation. NTCA University also features business courses tailored to small business owners. Accessible 24/7 via computer, tablet, or smartphone, NTCA University allows learners the flexibility to study at their convenience.

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When inappropriate tile is used in freezing temperatures—as seen here—the tile will fail.

That statement sounds counterintuitive until you realize that the *TCNA Handbook* could not list all the installation possibilities encountered in the field. The Membrane Options header within the Exterior Balcony/Deck Floors section in the *Handbook* declares: “A waterproof membrane (A118.10) may be specified to prevent moisture intrusion. Specifier shall indicate if complete waterproofing is required, including if/how membrane connects to drain assembly, if base flashing is required, and treatment at other termination points...Check with membrane manufacturer for suitability for applicable conditions, as not all membranes are suitable for exterior use...” Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions.

Water management

Common sense tells us that water always wins unless we control it. This is especially true on exterior work. Water must always flow away from the structure to the edge of the installation, gutter, or drain. Water allowed to remain on the tile surface in cold climates will freeze, expand, and eventually cause the system to fail.

Depending on the application of exterior floors, the *TCNA Handbook* states, “Slope slab for complete drainage,” or “Slope deck surface minimum 1/4” per foot,” to effectively evacuate water from the tile surface.

Flashing

If applicable, flashing must be included where the field tile or base meets the building structure and receives the appropriate sealant. Always follow the project specifications and the manufacturer’s written instructions.

Applicable standards and methods

ANSI A108.5 requires the maximum contact of mortar



Tile will rebel, as evidenced here, when there is no allowance for expansion and contraction. Properly-designed movement joints will absorb this movement.



Exterior wall tile also requires movement joints at the change in plane. This image shows a sealant joint (although not well done) between the wall tile and concrete sidewalk.

on the back of each tile: contact area on all exterior installations shall not be less than 95%.

The Exterior Balcony/Deck Floors – Limitations section of the *TCNA Handbook* states the following: “Where the installation will be subjected to freeze-thaw cycles, snow and ice accumulation, and/or snow melting chemicals, degradation can occur over time.”

Temperature

Many installers have been in a situation where the owner or general contractor is pushing the tile contractor to get an exterior tile job completed before winter weather and low temperatures arrive, which can be a recipe for failure. All setting material manufacturers clearly list the temperature requirements for a tile installation on the product bag and the technical data sheet. Most dry-set mortar manufacturers require the working temperature to be a minimum of 40° F (4° C) or higher, and maintain that temperature for 72 hours after installation.



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Ongoing maintenance on exterior installations is crucial. When this grouted movement joint fails, water can enter the tile assembly, freeze, and destroy the tile.

Appropriate materials

Porcelain tile that meets ANSI A137.1, American National Standard Specifications for Ceramic Tile, using the ASTM C373 water absorption test, requires that the tile's water absorption must be 0.50% or less. This means that the tile can absorb just one half of one percent or less of its weight in water. This tile is safe to use in exterior locations that experience freeze-thaw situations. A tile that does not meet this requirement may be suitable for exterior installations, but only if the tile manufacturer's technical data sheet (TDS) recommends a particular tile for this environment. If the TDS does not specifically state that the tile can be used in freezing temperatures, it means that it can't.

Movement accommodation

The Movement Joint Guidelines (EJ171) in the *TCNA Handbook* asserts that perimeter and field movement joints within a tile installation are essential and required. Exterior movement joints shall be a minimum of 3/8" for joints 8' on center and a minimum 1/2" for joints 12' on center. These exterior installations are more critical than interior joints to accommodate the temperature change from summer highs to winter lows, which can be greater than 100°F.

Maintenance

ANSI A108.02-6.0 in part states, "Exterior tile assemblies may require the periodic application or reapplication of hydrophobic sealers. Maintenance of movement joints, if required, is considered normal maintenance and is the responsibility of the owner. It is the owner's responsibility to provide for routine inspection and appropriate maintenance."

The above-mentioned installation procedures work well and will stand the test of time. However, if the standards, methods, and industry-accepted best practices are modified, overlooked, or ignored, the outcome may be in jeopardy. These guidelines have been established, tested, and approved by the tile industry and serve to successfully complete exterior installations. Know and consider these guidelines before bidding and accepting an exterior job that may deviate from what is known to function well. Always remember that these documents can be your best friend or your worst enemy. Use them wisely. **TL**

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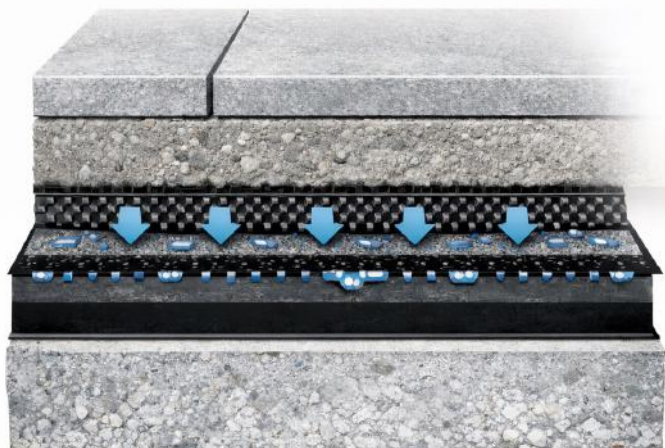


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Ask the Experts Q&As are culled from member inquiries to NTCA's Technical Team. To become a member and make use of personal, targeted answers from NTCA's Technical Team to your installation questions, contact Jim Olson at jim@tile-assn.com.



ELEVATED EXTERIOR POOL DECK over a roofing membrane needs CLEARLY-DEFINED STRATEGY



Exterior mortar-bed systems over roofing membranes typically require a drainage layer or drainage mat above the membrane to allow water to migrate to drains.

QUESTION

I am working on a project where there are requirements that I am not comfortable assuming. Below is the information given to me by the GC as we finalize our takeoff and put together our proposal.

What is the best way for me to finish a floor at 4" or 5"? I typically self-level, but not to this depth, particularly for an exterior installation where sloping is required.

I am also not familiar with the compatibility with the Soprema 2-ply SBS waterproofing system. Would that be installed by a waterproofing company or by us?

The sealants, expansion joints, and pressure cleaning are understood. If all components must be polymer-modified based, does that eliminate my ability to dry pack unbonded mortar followed by a thinset installation? Would I be adding latex to unmodified mortar? I am still learning the intricacies of mortar-set exterior pavers compared to interior installations.

Requirements specified by the architect:

- All components of setting materials (mud bed, thinset, etc) are to be polymer-modified based
- Total floor assembly at the lobby/ground level, including the tile: 4"
- Total floor assembly at the level 14 pool deck, including the tile: 5"
- Must include all exterior expansion joints, including sealant, per TCNA standards
- Includes sealant at any horizontal tile/paver intersection with vertical surfaces (i.e., planter walls, building walls, etc.)
- Setting material must be compatible with Soprema 2-ply SBS waterproofing system

ANSWER

A few important technical items need to be clarified before this can be properly priced or constructed.

First, per the *TCNA Handbook*, methods that include a mortar bed clearly state under Requirements: "Mortar beds

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Mohawk's tile brands—Daltile, Marazzi, and American Olean—continue to support the tile industry by partnering with the Ceramic Tile Education Foundation (CTEF) to advance installer certification and workforce development.

Through their facilities and industry leadership, these brands help create opportunities for installers to earn the Certified Tile Installer (CTI) credential.

Last year, CTEF conducted CTI testing at the Daltile facility in Grand Junction, Colorado, expanding access to certification for installers in the region.

Another testing event is already scheduled there this October. A special thank you to Matthew Hansen, Branch Manager, for his support planning and executing the test!

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in excess of 2 inches thick shall be detailed by an architect.”

A 4” to 5” total floor assembly strongly suggests a mortar bed exceeding 2”. That thickness is not something to field-design. It requires an architectural detail showing reinforcement, cleavage membrane (if applicable), slope, and interface with the waterproofing system.

Second, if the roof deck is waterproofed with a Soprema 2-ply SBS membrane and a mortar bed is being installed over it, the drainage strategy must be clearly defined.

A key question to address is: How is water that migrates through the tile assembly going to drain once it reaches the top of the SBS membrane?

Exterior mortar-bed systems over roofing membranes typically require a drainage layer or drainage mat above the membrane to allow water to migrate to drains. A mortar bed placed directly on a roofing membrane without a drainage plane can trap moisture, leading to saturation, efflorescence, freeze-thaw stress (if applicable), and long-term failure.

This must be detailed by the design professional. It cannot be assumed.

Regarding Soprema compatibility:

- The exact SBS product must be identified.
- Written confirmation from Soprema is required stating that a mortar bed can be installed over their membrane.
- Trade responsibility (roofing vs. tile contractor) must be defined.
- Regarding the “all components polymer-modified” requirement:
- Thinsset mortars can comply with ANSI A118.4 or A118.15.
- Traditional dry-pack mortar beds per ANSI A108.1A are not typically polymer modified.
- If the specification intends for the mortar bed itself to be polymer-modified, that requires written clarification and manufacturer direction.

Bottom line, this assembly needs:

1. The specific TCNA method reference
2. Architectural detailing for mortar beds exceeding 2”
3. A clearly-defined drainage strategy above the SBS membrane
4. Soprema’s written compatibility approval
5. Clarification of polymer-modified requirements
6. Defined scope between roofing and tile trades

An elevated exterior pool deck over a roofing membrane is a high-risk assembly. It should not be constructed based on interpretation. **TL**

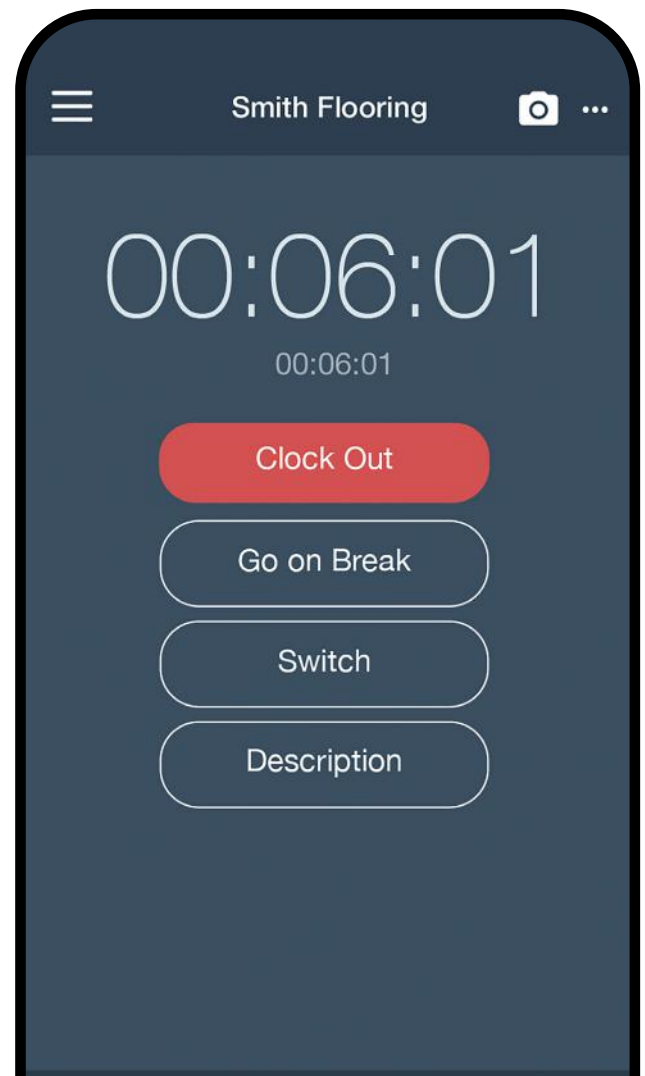
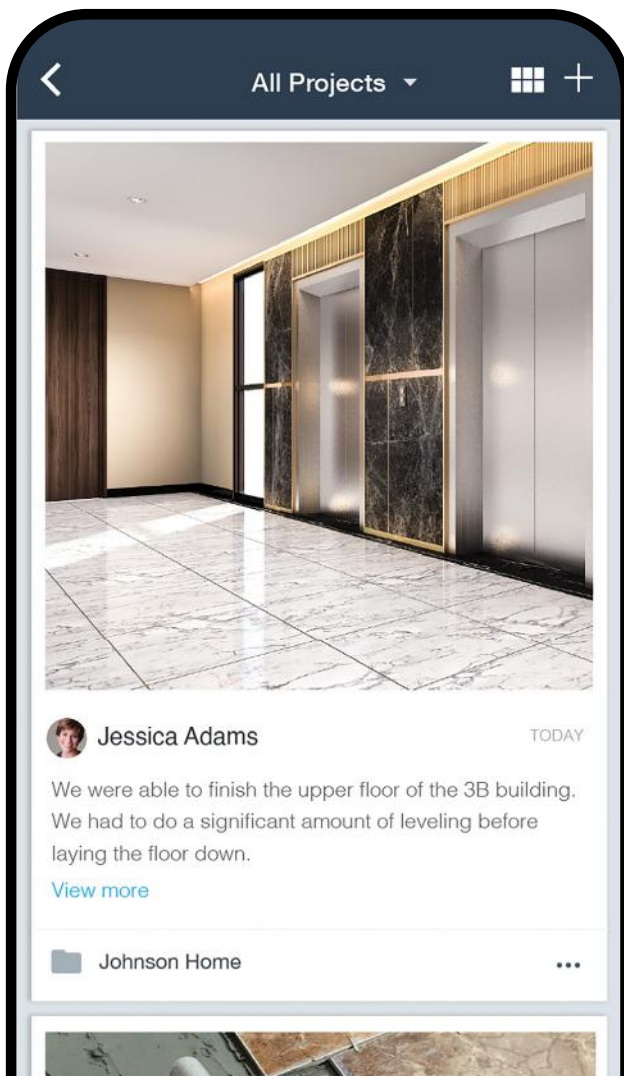
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IN MEMORY: JACOB WISEMAN



Jacob Wiseman of Madison Pro Services, LLC, at the A.R.T. training in 2024. He passed away February 19, 2026.

Jacob Wiseman, Owner of Madison Pro Services, LLC in Madison, Ala., was a well-loved member of the tile community. In addition to being a moderator of r/tile on Reddit, he earned his CTI #1774 and ACT #43 certifications through the Ceramic Tile Education Foundation (CTEF), and was a member of the National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA). He passed away on February 19, 2026, at age 41.

In 2024, Wiseman attended the Artisans Revolution in Tile (A.R.T.) training in Milwaukee, Wis., where creating hand-shaped mosaics was taught. He developed deep friendships and connections with other artisan tile installers and instructors in his class.

Michael Sandell of Outlaw Mosaics in Savannah, Ga., took the same 2024 A.R.T. class. He is working on a mosaic portrait to honor Wiseman and present to his son, Thaddeus, with support of the A.R.T. and tile communities, NTCA, and LATICRETE.

Close friend Jeff Roesner, of Artisan Wood Tile & Stone in Huntsville, Ala., called Wiseman “a remarkable man, father, and tile setter, whose passion for the trade was only surpassed by love for his son, Thaddeus.

“Jacob possessed a strong, unmistakable vision and a commitment to excellence that elevated his reputation in North Alabama,” he added. “With skill and confidence, he started Madison Pro Services, LLC, a focused remodeling outfit specializing in beautiful, detailed tile installations. Building on the desire to honor his craft at the highest level, he became the first Certified Tile Installer in the Huntsville metro area. And he didn’t stop there. He became the first contractor in Alabama to earn his Advanced Certification for Tile installers.



At A.R.T. 2024 (l. to r.): Seth Ready, Jacob Wiseman, Trevor Hook, Jeff Roesner, and Corwin Hall.

“I had the distinct honor of attending the Artisans Revolution in Tile (A.R.T.) training with Jacob in 2024,” Roesner continued. “Skilled tile setters from across the country converged in Milwaukee with the goal of adapting our trade skillset to more creative endeavors. We both left Wisconsin with a shared excitement to become mosaicists. Our thoughts are with his family, friends, collaborators, and the entire tile community during this difficult time. Rest well, Jacob.”

Wiseman’s friend Ryan Newberry wrote, “Jacob Wiseman was more than just a friend—he was a Brother



Jacob Wiseman with son Thaddeus.

In Recovery who inspired those around him with his strength and determination. After being clean for two years, Jacob’s journey was tragically cut short when he passed away unexpectedly. His loss has left a deep void in the hearts of everyone who knew him, especially those who walked alongside him in recovery.”

Newberry has established a GoFundMe to assist with handling Wiseman’s final arrangements and the legal responsibilities that come with settling his estate. To donate, scan.



Jacob GoFundMe

A celebration of life took place Sunday, March 1, at VFW Post 2702, 2900 N. Memorial Parkway, Huntsville, Ala.

In addition to the GoFundMe, an industry Facebook group named Mindset Matters is donating all proceeds from the sale of wearables in its current campaign to support Wiseman’s family. Mindset Matters exists to support each other as humans first. Group members share ideas about resilience, growth, leadership, and healthy living, and encourage one another to become stronger in life and in character. The group started in the tile and stone industry, but everyone is welcome.

Wiseman was a member of Mindset Matters. For every item sold in this special campaign, which was organized by LATICRETE’s Ron Nash, 100% of the proceeds are being donated to Wiseman’s family to offer support and let them know we care. **TL**



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Wiseman’s full obituary.



Donations to a GoFundMe campaign and proceeds of the sale of Mindset Matters wearables are being donated to Jacob’s family to offer support and practical help.



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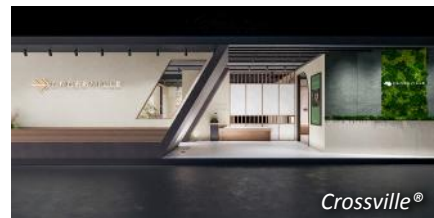
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In conjunction with the NTCA Technical Committee members, industry allies, and ceramic tile contractors, distributors, and manufacturers, we produce the *NTCA Reference Manual*. One of the most highly-valued tile industry documents, this manual identifies recurring installation challenges, recognizes potential problems, and offers expert solutions. The *NTCA Reference Manual* is a comprehensive culmination of knowledge, research, and development that addresses common installation obstacles and issues in the tile and stone industry.

The *NTCA Reference Manual* is released annually and a **printed copy is mailed to all active members**. PDF and print are available by visiting the [NTCA Online Store](#).


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