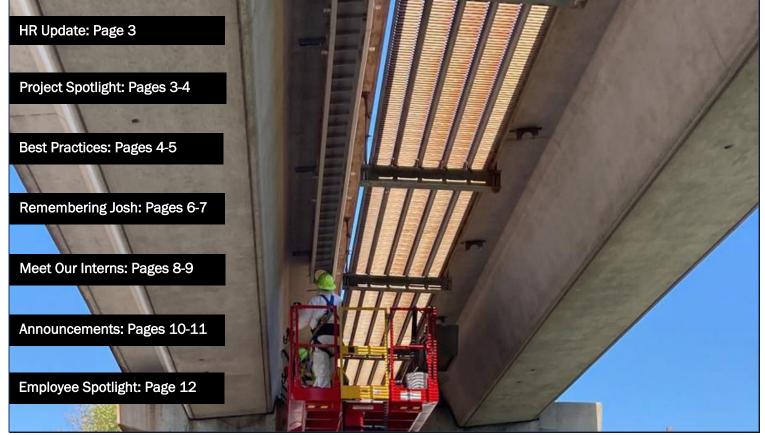


# **TAG CONNECTION**

SPRING/SUMMER 2022



### Dear TAG Team and Colleagues,

As COVID-19 protocols change and we continue to adapt to the needs of our employees, partners, and clients, I want to take a moment to thank everyone who has lent a hand and provided support, whether by keeping our offices and jobsites up and running or working from home while maintaining high client standards. As we consider what it means to "return to normal," here are a few things I believe will prove helpful for all of us.

Stay mindful of your mental health. Check in with yourself. If you need support, ask. Connect with friends and family. Check in on each other. Don't hesitate to seek professional help. Too often we simply push forward or struggle alone. A "return to normal" does not mean everything is resolved and everyone feels fine. This is a process we share together, so let's help each other.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. On my end, I'm committing to more regular communication. There are several things I would like to do to help us reconnect after so much time apart. One is to provide quarterly updates in which I share TAG accomplishments, ongoing initiatives, and what I anticipate as coming next. Employees can submit questions before or during our quarterly updates – I want us to have an open dialogue. We should all make a renewed effort to communicate openly and transparently to further our connections to one another.

Take more time to celebrate. We don't have to wait for a big occasion to get together, talk, and enjoy each other's company. Let's make it a habit to celebrate life's accomplishments – big or small.

Revisit and refresh company goals and strategies. Societal drivers - like sustainability and equity - are more important than ever. At The Allen Group, we have a unique perspective on the value of diversity. Following the impacts of COVID on business, it's time to leverage our perspective and apply it to new business areas. This includes how we can deepen our commitment to our core values, the culture we value, and how we'd like to progress and develop.

Treasure what we learned. During this pandemic, we found some creative ways to stay connected - remember those virtual trivial nights? Let's incorporate what worked as we adjust and move forward.

Recognize people. Over the past two years, one thing has become clearer than ever: our people are The Allen Group's greatest asset. We are continuing to refine our

and always strive to remain vigilant when it comes to keeping our employees healthy and safe.

Spring was a time for us to refresh and renew. As we transition further into summer, we are excited to welcome a select group of interns – whom you can learn a little more about in this edition. Please help welcome them and make their summer a success.

I also want to mention the war in Ukraine. We have TAG employees from Ukraine and our hearts and prayers go out to them.

And finally, in the spirit of living the change we wish to see, Laverda Allen and I are proud to add Juneteenth as a company holiday beginning this year.

As always, thank you again for all that you do, and let's stay connected!



Schatzu Allen Jeffern

With respect and gratitude,

Employee Recognition Program, develop TAG trainings,

### TAG HR UPDATE

Micaela Mazzini, HR Director, The Allen Group



#### **CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH**

On June 17, 2021, President Biden signed new legislation officially recognizing June 19 — or Juneteenth — as a U.S. federal holiday. According to Biden, "by making Juneteenth a federal holiday, all Americans can feel the power of this day and learn from our history — and celebrate progress and grapple with the distance we've come and the distance we have to travel."

Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, but its enforcement took much longer. Juneteenth, long celebrated by African Americans in the U.S., marks June 19, 1865, as the day Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, two months after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered. The troops shared that the war was over, and that the formerly enslaved people were free.

The Allen Group is proud to share our firm's recognition of Juneteenth as a company holiday Monday, June 20, 2022. The Allen Group honors all Americans – especially Black Americans – who suffered the impacts of slavery and racism throughout U.S. history.

We encourage you to honor this holiday by participating in Juneteenth events, supporting black-owned businesses, engaging with educational resources, and connecting with our communities.

COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates. In response to the pandemic and its COVID-19 variants, TAG requires all employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect our workers and our community. We also highly encourage staff to get boosted! In addition to our firm's mandate, most of our client agencies (including the FTA, City and County of San Francisco, BART) have implemented vaccination directives for employees and contractors working on site.

Weekly COVID-19 Health and Safety Reminders and Guidance. The Allen Group is committed to keeping staff informed of updates, guidance, and resources available

during the pandemic. The Weekly COVID-19 Health and Safety Reminder email provides key updates on COVID-19 policies and guidelines affecting the workplace and other important news to our staff, COVID-19 resources, and links to more detailed information (e.g., COVID-19 vaccine availability, local mandates, masking and social distancing guidelines). We will continue to actively monitor federal, state, and local guidance and information that prioritizes COVID-19 policies and procedures from our public health authorities.

### TAG'S RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The Allen Group's Employee Recognition Program continues to evolve to better support our initiative to promote a culture of recognition, rewarding performance, and personal achievement. Micaela Mazzini will be reaching out to project teams to set up meetings to connect with each team in person.

### TAG PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

34.5kV Cable Replacement Project Team Helps Get BART Back on Track

Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) is the fifth largest transit agency in the United States, providing rail transit access to five counties across the San Francisco Bay Area and serving a population of nearly 8 million. BART first opened in 1972 and is celebrating 50 years of service as a vital system connecting the Bay Area. The agency's comprehensive efforts to improve the reliability of its aging infrastructure include replacing BART's 34.5kV cable system, which provides traction power for the transit system.

The Allen Group (TAG) is the construction management team representing BART on its \$54 million 34.5kV Cable Replacement and Fiber Optic Installation (R-Line) project, which runs from El Cerrito Del Norte to the Richmond Yard. The project work impacts two BART stations: Richmond and El Cerrito Del Norte, as well as the BART Richmond Yard.

The project scope includes demolition of the existing 34.5 kV conduit and cable, installation of new raceways, including conduit, trough and duct banks, cable, isolation disconnect switch machines (IDS), and enclosures. The team is also installing new raceways and fiber optic cable to provide connectivity to traction power substations and train control rooms. This project will replace approximately 50,000 ft of 34.5 kV cable and 29,000 ft of fiber optic cable over 3.5 miles of track. The project is currently 15% complete and is expected to conclude in March 2024.



TAG Senior Project Manager, Vanessa Young, is leading the project with assistance from TAG Office Engineer Larissa Takou-Ayaoh. According to Vanessa, the project is challenging given that priorities constantly shift to address ongoing faults within the aging infrastructure.

In early March 2022, an electrical fault occurred affecting service to the Red Line (El Cerrito to Richmond). The Allen Group worked quickly with our construction management team partners, designers, contractor, and BART stakeholders on a solution. This included temporarily splicing the existing 34.5kV cable so the Red Line could resume service while BART Construction and the contractor installed new infrastructure and cabling in the affected section.

As a result of working together, the team resolved the issue in less than eight weeks, a task that would normally take much longer. On a recent visit to the El Cerrito Del Norte Station, El Cerrito Council Member and Former Mayor Paul Fidelli shared a message with the project team, saying, "Congratulations and thank you for helping El Cerrito get back on track."

# PRACTICES: BUILDING AND MAINTAINING CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

### Schatzie Allen-Jefferson, President, The Allen Group

When our newsletter began, it was developed to keep TAG employees informed; now that we share our news with a wider audience of colleagues, we have added a "Best Practices" column to discuss industry topics and trends. For our first consideration, I'd like to begin this series with a focus on what may seem initially obvious but is fundamental to working in the engineering and construction industry — building and maintaining client relationships. Here are my thoughts:

> Trusting client relationships allows people to solve even the most difficult problems.

Dennis Jaffe's Forbes article, "The Essential Importance of Trust" states: "There are just a few elemental forces that hold our world together. The one that's the glue of society is called trust" and that "trust makes people feel eager to be part of a relationship or group, with a shared purpose and a willingness to depend on each other."

If something goes wrong on a project, who would you feel more comfortable being honest with? Someone you know well and respect, or someone you met once and never really connected with? Jaffe writes: "When we depend on a leader, family member or friend, we can feel vulnerable, and we need trust to manage the anxiety of this feeling."

With good relationships comes a greater sense of understanding and flexibility. People are more likely to listen and reserve judgment. When individuals feel understood and respected, they are more likely to be transparent when it comes to information sharing. Every project team needs the necessary technical expertise to solve problems, but having a good relationship based on a foundation of trust provides the best approach for arriving at mutually beneficial solutions. Invest in your relationships.

You never know when you might encounter someone you've worked with in the past on a new project.

This one is simple, so I'll keep it short: you may leave one project only to run into the same people on a different scope of work. Whenever you meet someone, keep in mind that you may work with them again. It is to your benefit to try to establish positive relationships early on. People will talk and share their opinions — with you, or about you.

Here are a few practices I have found invaluable when it comes to building and maintaining client relationships over the years:

1. Have the courage to reach out in new settings.

Walking up to someone and introducing yourself isn't always easy, and I imagine this can be especially daunting for those who are early in their careers or new to the industry. But at the end of the day, we are all just people, regardless of titles or years of work experience. Be courteous, of course, and mindful of other people's time, but don't be afraid to look for an opening. Find a chance to say hi and start with that. Call people! It adds a personal touch. Don't just email. With former FTA Administrator Leslie Rogers, I went up to him many years ago and said the words, "I'd like to get to know you," which was the beginning of a long-lasting business relationship and friendship.

2. Be patient! Good relationships take time.

A Business Insider article by Monica Torres on making friendships indicates the following: "A new study published in the 'Journal of Social and Personal Relationships' recently calculated that, on average, it takes about 50 hours of time with someone before you consider them a casual friend, 90 hours before you become real friends, and about 200 hours to become close friends."

You might find common ground and shared interests right away, but a lasting relationship always takes time and intention. Trust is built iteratively over time, through a consistent alignment of words and actions. People will feel comfortable sharing more about themselves in their own time and their own way – it's not something you can force. Be flexible. An initial impression or misunderstanding doesn't mean you can't build a good relationship with someone. Be open to learning from different perspectives. People are complex. You won't always "get" someone right away. Some relationships may take years to develop.

3. Find common ground in and outside of work.

Finding common ground has always helped me build lasting relationships with individuals I first met in a work setting. Again, gauge how receptive the person is. It's important to identify, of course, if there is a conflict of interest or any financial boundaries you need to be mindful of when interacting with government workers, for example. Meeting doesn't require spending money, though – go for a walk with the other person during lunch.

4. Find allies at all levels.

Everyone is worthy of respect. While it's valuable to make connections with executives and those who can settle disputes and make critical project decisions, don't overlook or underestimate administrative support, service workers, and other employees in nonmanagement roles. Any employee can be a valuable source of information and support. It is always best to be kind to everyone you meet. You never know when you may need help or to ask a favor, or in turn can be a valuable resource to them.



5. Recognize the limits of the relationship if you cannot see eye to eye. Always remain professional.

You won't get along with every individual you work with. If you've made repeated efforts to connect, communicate, and remedy any misunderstandings and still find the relationship is not progressing in a positive way, it might be time to respect the dynamic as strictly professional. You should maintain a high standard for your work regardless, but in situations like these, be especially rigorous in the execution of your project work. Without a close relationship, there will be less understanding and tolerance for mistakes.

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### REMEMBERING JOSH MONTGOMERY

Justin Montgomery, Resident Engineer, The Allen Group



### A Love of Airplanes

We had a lot of toy planes growing up. I was interested in jet planes and wanted to join the Air Force (Mom said no). Around high school, Josh decided he wanted to be a pilot and fly planes commercially. In college, he received his B.A. in Aviation Management from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. As time went on, his focus shifted from being a pilot to wanting to work in an air traffic control tower. After Josh graduated, he settled on what he really wanted – to be an airport director (Josh didn't think small).



### Coming to California

Having grown up in Maryland, I wanted to explore the West Coast. I came to California right after college and started at The Allen Group in July 2015 as an Office Engineer. I encouraged Josh to come to California after he finished his degree. Schatzie was always there for both of us. Josh started as a summer intern at The Allen Group in 2016 and then was hired full time as an Assistant Office Engineer.

We both worked on the Long Term Parking Garage at the San Francisco International Airport, which is where Josh really wanted to work – an airport. Schatzie helped Josh get his foot in the door at SFO. He was always enthusiastic and excelled with great support and mentorship from Airport Director Ivar C. Satero and Chief Operating Officer Jeff Littlefield.

"We will greatly miss Joshua. He was a fine young man, with unlimited potential, who in the short time he was with SFO had a tremendous positive impact on our airport and so many of his colleagues. He was tireless in his support of SFO and our culture, well beyond his work in Safety & Security with a strong commitment to better himself and those around him through Toastmasters and our various Employee Resource Groups with which he engaged regularly. I could always count on being greeted by such positivity and a warm smile whenever running into Joshua at SFO."

### -Ivar C. Satero, SFO Airport Director

Josh worked his way up from an entry-level position to a Management Assistant in Safety Management Systems (SMS) and achieved an Airport Certification within the Safety and Security Department. He loved public speaking and getting involved. He was an avid member of Toastmasters and COMTO (Conference of Minorities Transportation Officials).



"Joshua was a rising star at SFO who always seemed to be lit from within, radiating enthusiasm, joy, and positive energy. He brought the same infectious spirit to everything he did, from his role within our Safety Management team to his contributions to initiatives like the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) Employee Resource Group. He left us far too soon and we will honor his memory by continuing to make SFO a place he found meaningful... a place built on teamwork and care. We are better for having been able to call Joshua Montgomery a colleague, a co-worker, and a friend. He will be greatly missed but not forgotten."

-Jeff Littlefield, Chief Operating Officer at SFO

#### **Uncle Josh**

My daughter Talia loved her Uncle Josh. When Talia stayed with us for the weekend, she would run to the front door – insist on opening it herself – and scream, "UNCLE JOSH!" and run to find him. They would play together for hours, running around and jumping, playing with balloons, frisbees, you name it. They would head out on walks together, but Josh was often the only one walking by the time they came back, with Talia being carried and ready for a nap.



### Reaching New Heights

It happened when Josh was in high school, and I was away at college. *What in the...* Josh was taller than me?? I couldn't believe it. Josh, who had always been this scrawny little kid. Josh, the baby of the family, the youngest of the five of us (John, Tanisha, me, Amber, and then Josh).

Josh was very close to our mom, but he always wanted to do whatever his older brothers were doing. If we were playing basketball, riding bikes, or about to go somewhere, Josh came running. We used to wrestle. (I won.) We played basketball. (I won every time.) Josh used to tell us, "One day I'll be bigger!"

Josh kept up playing basketball. I didn't practice like he did, and he started blocking some of my shots. Maybe he even beat me once or twice. (As I've said, I don't like to talk about it.) Josh got his moment though, running circles around me on the court.

### One with the Water

Josh loved the water – being in it, being near it. Especially the ocean. As kids we would go to the community pool, or our uncle's pool in Annapolis. In California, Josh spent a lot of time at Ocean Beach in San Francisco, near where

his girlfriend Veronica lived. He was going to take surfing lessons this summer.



### Faith Above All

Josh always carried God in his heart and put God first. He was devoted to his family, friends, and girlfriend Veronica.

"Josh was one of a kind – a spirit that touched the lives of everyone he met. We learned to love harder, laugh louder, and show up to life fully through his example. Because of this, he will always have a piece of my heart, and I will cherish him for eternity" -Veronica



Josh loved singing. Kirk Franklin was his favorite gospel artist – he liked any song of Franklin's, but I know "Brighter Day" and "Stomp" were among his favorites. He shared his faith on social media, posting video clips of himself singing, sharing scripture verses, and giving motivational pep talks.

### Big Plans for 30

He was excited for the milestone, excited for the future. Josh didn't have specific plans for his 30th birthday, but he always said he was going to do something big. We promise to do it big, Josh.

### **MEET OUR SUMMER INTERNS!**

The Allen Group is excited to welcome five graduate student interns this summer. If you see them around, be sure to say hi!

# Anjana



Anjana is a master's student in Sustainable Design & Construction at Stanford. Anjana is working on the SFPUC Southeast Community Center with Peter Ross.

Fun fact: Anjana speaks four languages (English, Hindi, her native language Kannada, and Tamil) and understands

Telugu and Malayalam, languages from Southern India. Anjana is looking forward to learning from leading professionals this summer, finding mentors in the industry, and having fun.

Her photo is from a recent trip to Salt Lake City, Utah!

### Subodh



Subodh is a master's student in Construction Management at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Subodh is working on the 34.5kV Replacement and Fiber Optic Cable Installation — R-Line with Vanessa Young.

Fun fact: Subodh is an avid sports fan. Cricket

is his favorite, followed by soccer. He enjoys watching and playing. He also enjoys visiting new places, sightseeing, going on road trips, and exploring nature.

Subodh is excited to meet new people, have interesting conversations, and make new friends. He is looking forward to gaining real-world project experience.

## Lingrui



Ling is a master's student in Construction Management at NYU. She is working on the BART Market Street Entry Canopies Project with Luis Paez. Fun fact: Ling enjoys painting and loves animals (she had a Chow Chow and has mini hedgehogs back in China). She also works as an amateur translator of Korean variety

shows and is starting to learn Spanish. She enjoys filmmaking, and as an undergraduate won the Best Film award in the Toronto University Film Festival two years in a row for her short films. Ling is looking forward to gaining new experiences throughout the summer.

### Uravi

Uravi is a master's student in Civil Engineering at California State University, Long Beach. She is working on the Concord Turntable Project with Sagar Shah.



Fun fact: Uravi enjoys going on walks,

journaling, trying new food (some of her favorite cuisines are Indian, Mexican, Thai, and Mediterranean), and spending time with friends. She also loves reading. Favorite books include those by Jane Austen, the Harry Potter series, and the classics. She is looking forward to a summer of learning, growth, and fun.

## Hongji

Welcome back, Hongji! Hongji was with us for our summer 2021 intern program. He is a master's student in Construction Management at NYU Tandon School of Engineering. He is also working on the BART Market



Street Entry Canopies Project. Fun fact: Hongji loves eating pho, which has earned him the nickname of "Phorriar" (pho-warrior). He is looking forward to continuing to expand his knowledge of the CM field.

### TAG'S HIGH SCHOOL INTERNS

In addition to our graduate student interns, TAG is excited to welcome four high-school interns!

Two are from NexGeneGirls, a program which "provides opportunities for young girls of color from low-income communities to participate in scientific processes through fun, hands-on science activities, lab experiments, and workshops that convey scientific principles while building self-confidence and developing the skills to problem-solve using math and technology."

Learn more here: <a href="https://www.nexgenegirls.org/whatwedo">https://www.nexgenegirls.org/whatwedo</a>

## Trey



Trey is providing support in The Allen Group's San Francisco Office. Trey is 15 years old and was born and raised in San Francisco. He is a rising junior at Saint Ignatius College Preparatory. He is interested in

engineering and other math- and science- related fields. Trey is looking forward to learning about engineering work and construction management during his time at The Allen Group.

### Andrew



Andrew is also working in The Allen Group's San Francisco Office summer. He is 14 years old and was born in Los Angeles but has grown up in the San Francisco Bay Area. Andrew will be starting in the fall as a freshman at El Cerrito High School. He is looking forward learning more about The Allen Group's project

work, maintaining TAG's patio garden, and becoming familiar with administrative office tasks. His academic

interests include civil engineering, horticulture, and mental health. Featured in Andrew's photo is his family's teacup Yorkie, Mac, who is a beloved frequent visitor of TAG's SF Office.

## Faqueline



Jaqueline (Jaqui) is part of the NexGeneGirls Program and is providing support in The Allen Group's San Francisco Office. Jaqui is 16 years old and was born in Houston, Texas, and raised in California. She is a senior and takes high school and college courses. Following graduation, she plans to

attend community college for two years, after which she hopes to transfer to UC Davis or UCSF because of their medical programs. She aspires to be a family nurse practitioner and is interested in entrepreneurship. Jaqui is looking forward to gaining experience and learning more about the professional world with The Allen Group this summer to expand her future career options and opportunities.

## Tayla



Jayla is also part of the NexGeneGirls Program and is working on the Southeast Community Center Project with Peter Ross this summer. Jayla is 15 years old and was born and raised in San Francisco. She is currently a sophomore at Sacred Heart in SF and is interested in attending med school or pursuing cosmetology. She would like to attend

UCLA or Louisiana State (Jayla has family in New Orleans). For cosmetology, she is considering schools in Los Angeles or New York. This is her first time working on a construction site, and she is excited for the firsthand experience.

### TAG BIRTHDAYS



### February 2022

Simon Yohannes Uravi (Intern)

### March 2022

Justin Montgomery Larissa Takou-Ayaoh Sharayu Bode

### **April 2022**

Vanessa Young Robert Owen

### May 2022

Roshni MacFarland Olga Keselman Robert James Anjana (Intern) Amir Hashemi

### June 2022

Micaela Mazzini Harry Overstreet II Johnnathan Erickson Brigette LeBlanc

### July 2022

Egle Maria Sirre Dwayne Hannah

### **TAG ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### Welcome to our TAG colleagues!



Khoi Le

Senior Project Manager



Johnathan Erickson

Inspector, BART Turntable



**Brigette LeBlanc** 

Community Relations Specialist



Iris Martin Lopez

Small Business and DEI Manager

### TAG'S EXECUTIVE RETREAT

On May 12-14, TAG Senior Executives took part in a 2-day working retreat to discuss strategic planning and business development and lay out tangible change to elevate TAG's organizational success for the next 5 years. The time away from the typical work environment was designed to foster communication for closer relationships and more effective team collaboration among our leadership and encourage creativity and goal-setting.



The team was joined by presenters representing partnering firms and subject-matter experts who provided outside perspectives on building clarity, unity, vision, and momentum for the retreat objectives. Senior executives returned from the retreat with clear long-term goals and implementation processes for what was discussed and achieved.



TAG founder LaVerda Allen (right) at the Executive Retreat with a close friend (left).

### **CMAA NorCal Industry Celebration**

At the CMAA 2022 Gala, The Allen Group won two awards for our work on the BART Headquarters Project!



The event was held at the Blackhawk Museum in Danville, CA, a venue that celebrates diversity through extraordinary exhibits reflecting African and Chinese history and culture – among several other impressive collections. The masquerade-themed gala began with a professional networking session followed by dinner, an awards ceremony, and a live band.



Reflecting on the evening, TAG's Assistant Resident Engineer on the project, Rajshree, shared: "The ceremony was a blast. The project team was honored to win not just the 'Buildings under \$100M' category, but 'Project of the Year' too!"



The evening provided a much-welcomed opportunity to connect in person and share Construction Management industry contributions as we (tentatively) emerge from the pandemic. Congratulations to our colleagues and thank you to our project team and collaborative partners.



### **EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: NICK HOUCHIN**

Congratulations to TAG Resident Engineer Nick for graduating with his MBA from UC Berkeley in May 2022! Nick has been with The Allen Group since 2014 – the same year he reached another important milestone: receiving his PE license.



Over the years, Nick has provided excellent support and leveraged his technical skills on a variety of BART projects: the Hayward Maintenance Complex, Elevator Modernization Project in Pleasant Hill, Gas Line Replacement (also in Hayward), Coliseum-Fruitvale Seismic Renovation, and Market Street Entry Canopies.

"These last three years have been the busiest time of my life," said Nick. "It's been the ultimate crash course in time management and learning to make tradeoffs when you're balancing school, work, and being a new parent. I've had to learn how to utilize every part of the day — especially whenever there are even a few free minutes — that time is valuable! The experience has really improved my ability to be efficient."

Nick started his MBA in August 2019 and committed to a 3-year part-time program so he could continue working. "As part of my career trajectory, I've wanted to transition from an RE role to the business side of the industry – to learn more about management and business development."



COVID being thrown into the mix of course made things even more complicated, with Nick's second year being entirely online. At the same time, he noted the benefit of having a year at home to spend with his son Beau, who was born in March 2020, given the hectic nature of his schedule when he had classes in person.

Nick shared that his MBA experience has been very rewarding. "I made a lot of great connections, and because I was working while going to school, I had the benefit of applying what I learned in my classes to my project work. I took classes on leadership, coaching, and negotiation – it was great to then practice those skills in the field."

Nick added: "I am very grateful for The Allen Group, Schatzie, Luis – and of course, my wife Emily – for everyone's support and flexibility. It's the kind of experience that, when you survive it and finally make it out the other end, you feel like you can do anything."



Congratulations again to Nick, and we'll be keeping an eye on Beau and his future career aspirations. "Beau is very interested in how things work," said Nick. "Whenever he has a toy, he wants to figure out the buttons and switches. He loves to be outside exploring." Sounds like another engineer in the making!

