

LEADING *from* WITHIN

TODD DUNLAP WINS THE PRESTIGIOUS
BEST OF THE BEST AWARD

by Krista Berns

When Todd Dunlap was delivering food to a food pantry the day before Easter 10 years ago, he saw a woman and a boy outside. They had attempted to come to the food pantry, but it was closed. Dunlap heard the boy ask his grandmother, “What are we going to do for food now on Easter?”

“When you see things like that, you can either get in your car and do nothing, or you can accept that—for whatever reason—this was put in front of you,” Dunlap says. “My grandmother used to say: ‘When Jesus was on the cross and asked for water, he was given vinegar. Never give anybody vinegar.’”

That day, Dunlap chose to do something. He took the woman and her grandson to the grocery store and bought them food for their Easter dinner.

According to some of Dunlap’s co-workers at Frost Roofing, Wapakoneta, Ohio: “That’s just Todd.”

“Todd lives his life trying to be compassionate, and he will give even when he doesn’t have it to give,” says Dunlap’s brother, Chad, business development manager at Frost Roofing. “He puts everyone else above his own wants and needs. You don’t find many people like that anymore.”

Dunlap, superintendent, warehouse foreman and operator at Frost Roofing, recently won the Best of the Best Award, which recognizes extraordinary contributions to the roofing industry and community.

The Roofing Alliance’s MVP Task Force presented Dunlap with the award, which is an extension of the Roofing Alliance’s Most Valuable Player Awards. OMG® Roofing Products Inc., Agawam, Mass., and *Professional Roofing* co-sponsor the honor.

“The letters of reference we received for Todd Dunlap during the MVP selection process highlighted his importance to the Frost Roofing team and exemplified how important Dunlap is to his community through his

volunteerism and selflessness,” says Reed Gooding, president of GSM Roofing, Ephrata, Pa., and MVP Task Force chairman. “It is an honor having Todd represent the roofing industry as Best of the Best.”

A KIND HEART

Born in St. Marys, Ohio, Dunlap learned compassion at a young age from his mother, who passed away when he was 7 and his brother was 5.

“We all have that one moment that puts the star in the sky for us,” Dunlap says. “I believe it was stemming from my mother’s death, knowing she was a good person and known for being kind, loving and caring for other people. I had a difficult childhood, to say the least. The best way to fight it was to be good—to do good—and move on from what had happened to me.”

Dunlap says a nurturing nature is ingrained in him.

“I’m no angel, but at the same time, taking care of people and loving my fellow man is just the way I am,” he continues. “Being my brother’s primary caregiver in the early years of our lives might have turned me into that person, but it also has something to do with a kind heart. That is something you’re born with.”

Dunlap and his brother spent several years in Mississippi after their mother and stepfather passed away but mainly grew up in Wapakoneta.

“I was nerdy—and still am—so it helped that I was big!” he says. “In junior high, I power-lifted and was bench pressing over 400 pounds, but at the same time, I was getting awards for academic work. And in high school, I was recognized by Congress for volunteer work.”

Dunlap was a volunteer youth advocate for feeding the hungry and says his greatest achievement while volunteering happened at the Ohio State Fair.

“Catering fell through, and in two days, I was able to network and get 1,100 Happy Meals® brought in for the youth Special Olympics program,” he says. “Dick Celeste, who was governor at the time, had a temporary station on the fairground campus during the fair. It caught his attention.”



Dunlap on the job at Frost Roofing in Wapakoneta, Ohio

Chad says Dunlap also was an avid reader growing up. “He used to read dictionaries,” Chad says. “He read every encyclopedia front to back, back to front. I would be out doing stupid things until three or four in the morning, and he would be the guy to let me in.”

During his senior year of high school, Dunlap received a full scholarship to a culinary arts school. However, life changes derailed his plans.

“I wanted to be a chef but married young, and my wife—now ex-wife—was diagnosed with cancer,” he says. “It wasn’t terminal, but I gave up going to school to focus on her.”

A few years later, after holding various jobs, Dunlap landed in the construction industry.

“In the Midwest, guys my size usually end up in construction,” he says. “I became an operator of 35- and 50-ton cranes, and that was the beginning of me and this industry.”

Dunlap went into the propane industry and hauled gas for 14 years for Moulton Gas Service in Wapakoneta.

However, he decided to leave in 2013 because he believed changes in the industry led to a departure from its “mom-and-pop” mentality.

“I’ve never liked working for big business,” Dunlap says. “There’s nothing wrong with big business, but I always

enjoyed working for family-owned businesses. So naturally, I gravitated toward Frost Roofing. My brother was here, and they needed help. They needed a guy like me.

“When I left Moulton, I had gotten away from taking care of the customer,” he continues. “When it was a small, family-owned company, if I pulled into a driveway and the husband was out of work and they didn’t have much food—much less money for heat—the owner would say: ‘It’s a family. Take care of them, and we’ll figure it out later.’ Big business would say: ‘We can’t do that, we’re not a charity.’ And I understand both sides of it, but I can choose where I work. I can choose who I want to represent me and my beliefs at a customer’s house.”

Dunlap believes he found a good fit at Frost Roofing.

“I can’t even tell you the amount of work we have done where we have just taken care of customers,” he says. “I’m not just here to sell Frost Roofing on any level. If I believed the company was unjust or didn’t have good people, I wouldn’t be here.”

FILLING THE GRAY SPACE

Dunlap started at Frost Roofing as a driver and operator.

“He was Chad’s brother and had a lot of great referrals, so we thought he might be a good fit,” says J.J. Smithey, owner of Frost Roofing. “We didn’t really hire him for the job he’s in now. He evolved into that.

“He started out mostly on job sites,” Smithey continues. “Then, he became the shop guy and started fabricating metals and kind of took that over. Now, he runs the shop, keeps track of the other operators and is the first point of contact for crews in the morning.”

In his leadership role, Dunlap has learned it is important to help develop the strengths of those around him.

“As a leader, you cultivate people’s strengths, use those strengths to your advantage and train them from their strengths moving forward,” he says. “If you train them from their weaknesses forward, you’re only setting them up for failure. You take those strengths and that team member, and you weave a team.”

Smithey says Dunlap’s leadership is crucial when handling field and office communications.

“There’s always a communication gap between office and field,” Smithey says. “Things change from what needs to be done, what is communicated and how it is received. Todd’s a great person to have in the middle. He understands what needs to be done and can communicate it in a way people can understand. That’s a good skill to have.”

Chad says his brother’s work ethic is unparalleled.

“He will do whatever it takes,” he says. “He is our crane operator and metal bender and will get up on the roof and work. He’s the first guy here and the last to leave.”

Dunlap credits his work ethic to his Irish heritage.

“I was raised with a deep Irish mentality that work is work and loyalty is loyalty,” he says. “My grandfather came home from World War II, and there was a blight that year that destroyed the crops. He shoveled chicken barns so the kids had milk and lunch money for school—on top of doing his regular job.

“There always is a gray space to fill at a company, and my job is to fill that space around all team members and make sure everything is done,” he continues. “I’ve never



Dunlap is superintendent, warehouse foreman and equipment operator at Frost Roofing.

been a person that cares whether I am sweeping floors, running a crane or fabricating metal. What matters is taking care of your family.”

FATHER FIGURE

That work ethic extends to the people Dunlap works with, as well.

“When it comes to the crews, Todd leads from within,” Chad says. “When you think of ‘lead,’ you’re putting yourself in front of others. Todd’s not that leader—he doesn’t want to be. Todd is a teacher. He gets in the trenches and teaches workers how to do their jobs so they can do it on their own. Most people don’t have that ability to teach.”

However, Dunlap says he is not a pushover and is respected by crew members.

“My management style is parental,” Dunlap says. “I’m kind and loving, but I will punish you if needed. You choose whether we go there. I don’t start off by being demanding or a jerk. It’s not a softness, and that’s what the guys here know. I’m kind by choice—not because I’m weak.

“If I need to confront an issue, I do so privately and have the individual be a part of the disciplinary process,” he continues. “My grandfather never hemmed and hawed. He would say: ‘This is what you did, this is what you’re charged with and this is what we’re going to do about it.’ Crew members respond to it because you’re treating them like equals. I’m fine with showing strength and compassion.”

Smitley says they often use the phrase “father figure” when referring to Dunlap.

“He’s a nurturing guy,” Smitley says. “He’ll help you and work with you, and as long as your heart is pure, he’ll do anything he can for you. But if you’re playing games, he doesn’t have time for that.”

Dunlap has played a father role with Frost Roofing workers who came from Puerto Rico to help relieve the labor shortage. He has learned some Spanish, and the workers refer to Dunlap as “Papi.”

“It was never intended to be his role, but he just jumped right in and started doing it,” Smitley says. “Nobody asked him to or expected him to. He’s checking on them all the time. He treats the people he works with like family.

“He has arranged trips to the grocery store with them,” he continues. “A lot of times, he is cooking at home and feeding them. They immediately took to him and had his phone number so if they needed something, he would

make sure they got what they needed. That’s Todd in a nutshell.”

SAVING YOUR WORLD

Dunlap’s kindness overflows into life outside of work. Since 1988, he has volunteered to haul food at local food banks.

“Growing up, I’ve seen many people affected by hunger, so I’ve always been sure to volunteer to help feed the hungry,” he says. “I’ve hauled at least 100,000 pounds of food, one van load at a time.

“I was inspired by what I endured as a child and turned it into a positive to combat it on a different level—fight it and not embrace it,” he continues. “Sometimes when people are hurting or have been through pain, it’s easier to embrace the pain and let it consume them than it is to fight.”

Dunlap and his brother also fight as advocates for suicide prevention. Chad started a business—Upshift with Chad—that currently focuses primarily on suicide awareness, and Dunlap says he tries to help with that business any way he can.

“The opioid crisis is taking people on many levels, and suicide is just one of them,” Dunlap says. “The suicide rate is climbing in youth ages 10 and up, and in our area, we’ve had two that were 11 and 10. Those are babies.”

Dunlap says Chad even went to Florida to become certified with the John Maxwell Team; Maxwell is a leadership expert, author and speaker who trains leaders.

“That was Chad’s way to fight, and he’s now a certified speaker,” Dunlap says. “And I couldn’t be prouder of what he is doing with that business. We often provide information on our Facebook feeds—the texting line for suicide awareness, counseling and outreach, as well as phone numbers.”

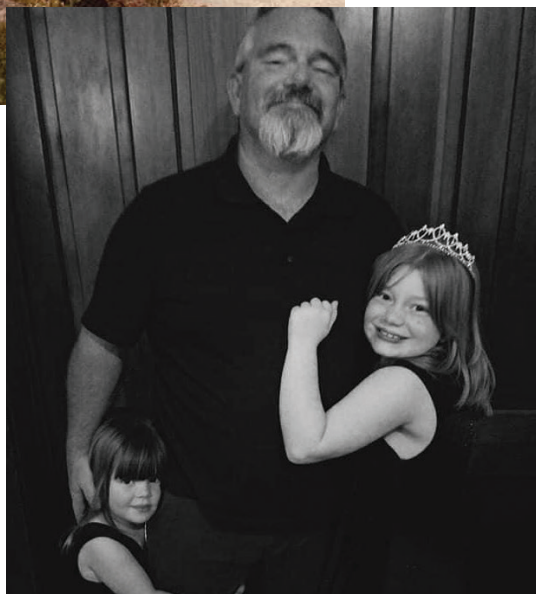
In 2002, Dunlap also became a member of the Civilian Emergency Response Team, which was created by former President George W. Bush after 9/11.

“I am background-screened by the Department of Homeland Security so, in the event of a crisis, they have people who have been background-checked and can provide certain skills,” he says. “My skills are running shelters—setting them up and receiving cots and emergency food—and handling the morgue trailer.”

In 2005, after Hurricane Katrina, Dunlap traveled



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE **BEST OF THE BEST AWARD** AND A LIST OF PAST WINNERS, GO TO WWW.PROFESSIONALROOFING.NET.



Top: Dunlap and his wife, April
Bottom: Dunlap with his daughters, Isabella (left) and Evangeline (right)

south to help deliver three tractor-trailer loads of water, food and clothes to distribution points in Kentucky.

"It doesn't seem like much in the scheme of things," Dunlap says, "but many hands make light work."

Dunlap's personal experiences have led to his desire to help others.

"I've had my battles with alcohol," Dunlap says. "I've had my demons and my issues. I have seen how suicide affects those who are left behind, and I don't want anyone to ever have to go through that. I have seen the hungry."

"I have seen bad and have been given an opportunity to do something," he continues. "People say you can't save the world—

which is a copout for those who do nothing—but you can save the people in your world. If everybody focused on just saving the people in their world, it would be a lot easier to make this world a better place."

FAMILY FIRST

Outside of work, Dunlap's priority is his family. He married his wife, April, in 2000, and they have two daughters—Evangeline, 11, and Isabella, 6. Dunlap also has a 28-year-old son,

Trenton, from his previous marriage.

He enjoys spending time with his family outdoors—hiking, swimming, having bonfires and visiting the Miami and Erie Canal.

"My focus outside of work is family—doing things with my wife; my daughters; and my dogs, Hammie and Zoe," he says. "If I do anything for me, it would be reading my books and hanging out with my family."

"And I still like to cook," he adds. "I can make anything from gumbo to étouffée to tater tot casserole."

Dunlap owns 3,000 books and loves to study history.

"If you want to get into the soul of any demographic of

people, you get into their history," he says. "If you understand the people, you can better understand their beliefs and the fabric of who they are."

He especially loves the period right after World War II until just before the Korean War.

"It was the greatest nation of men and women," Dunlap says. "They built the country we stand on, and it's up to people now in their 20s or 30s to build upon it. I try to bring up my girls with that mentality—remember the people who built this country."

INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Dunlap believes the lack of respect for the past contributes to the labor shortage the industry has been experiencing.

"My grandfather was a master finish carpenter, and there was a pride in what he did," he says. "That was taught to him. The fundamentals are not being taught. It would help to create more pre-trades skills in our vocational schools. Teach them the basics first and give them a foundation. You can't expect to reap a crop that has crappy seeds."

Dunlap also believes the roofing worker stereotype is a challenge.

"There is the stereotype that roofing workers are at the bottom of the food chain when it comes to construction, which to some degree has been brought on by the people in this industry," he says. "There's a sense of vulgarity and bravado by some that sullies it for the workers who take pride in what they do."

"You might even be treated differently," he says. "I have seen that, and I don't allow it. I'm a person that stands my ground. I had family who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and we're indignant people. You do what is right, and if this is my team, I'm not going to allow you to disrespect them based upon a stigma. These boys go up high where it's not safe, and they do the hardest work there is. I take a lot of pride in what I do, and I love what I do."

Dunlap loves working with his hands, being outside and the freedom that comes with the job.

"I love that it's adaptive and different every day," he says. "If you live a life that is like a factory, everything is humdrum. It's almost like you live a life that's been scripted by somebody else. When you live a life and do the work we do, it's like every day you're writing it."

Dunlap also loves the challenges involved with working in the roofing industry and recalls his favorite

project—a large buildup and tear-off project that involved Kevlar scrim.

“They don’t make Kevlar scrim anymore, but it is extremely durable,” he says. “One of the challenges of that is what it did to our equipment. With roof cutters, you often can go a whole season and never have to change blades, and suddenly we had to change blades on the fly. Our roof warriors were shearing drive pins, and we had to change and fix those on the fly.

“You have to cut that material and remove it from the deck, and to do that, you need those pieces of equipment,” he continues. “If they’re down, production stops. One of my most important jobs is to facilitate production.”

Additionally, because the roof on that project was so big, Frost Roofing had to be creative when it came to moving materials and getting them off the roof—including creating sleds from TPO to tie to the back of automated wheelbarrow carts for greater efficiency when moving large amounts of material. The project also was operating at night with a crew of six people.

“It was a huge job, and it required ingenuity,” Dunlap says. “I loved that job the most because it tested me every day on what I thought I was capable of doing and what could be done.

“Some people would dislike that, but I like being challenged,” he continues. “That’s every part of my life. I love people who aren’t the easiest to love, and I do a job that’s not the easiest to do. So everything I do, I often take the hard road by choice.”

A LIFE OF LOVE

Dunlap’s loving and giving nature radiates into every part of his life. His brother, who has worked for the same companies as Dunlap during much of his life, says there is a reason he always makes sure Dunlap goes wherever he goes.

“He lives his life to love other people—why wouldn’t you want to have that around you?” Chad says. “Love is the most powerful thing on the face of this earth, and he loves to a fault. He puts others in front of himself, which is the opposite of what I speak on. I tell people to love yourself first, but Todd doesn’t know how. He gets his joy from making other people happy.

“Todd has been the underdog,” he continues. “I watched him go through that for years. He knows what it’s like to have loss in your life, and he doesn’t want anyone else to have to experience that.”

Patrick Boedicker, service department manager at



Dunlap and OMG Roofing Products' Josh Kelly at NRCA's Industry Awards Ceremony and Cocktail Reception

Frost Roofing, agrees Dunlap’s constant giving to others makes him unique.

“He’s got a big heart,” Boedicker says. “Sometimes, I feel it’s too big for him. He hurts when other people hurt. Todd’s never off the clock. He’s always there—at work or in his personal life—for anyone, any time of day.”

Brenda Johns, an administrator at Frost Roofing, says Dunlap is the best of the best because he is a rarity in the roofing industry.

“In today’s world, you don’t find a lot of people with the work ethic Todd has,” she says. “Younger generations often are not ready to work or don’t come to work every day. Todd has been a jewel for the company. He enjoys what he does and takes pride in it. He doesn’t give 1,000 excuses why he can’t—it’s more like 1,000 reasons why he can do more.”

Dunlap says receiving the award at NRCA’s awards ceremony in Dallas gave him the opportunity to represent the roofing industry.

“I’m not a trophy person, but I was happy for all the people who I work with and love, and to win for their benefit and all the work they put forth,” Dunlap says. “When they called my name, there was a rush of emotion. There were tears in the company owner’s eyes and my brother was crying filming it.

“But for me, it was about maintaining honor and decorum, because at that moment in time, I represented a baseline—the shoulders upon which our industry is carried,” he continues. “So it meant something to me to hold my chin straight, make eye contact, be proud and make us proud.” 🌟🌟🌟

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