



Anna Hurst, left, and Devon Hurst are carrying on a fourth-generation legacy of construction and real estate. (Contributed photo)

Pair following family's path

By Zack Nally

Two Swansboro natives are following in their family's footsteps while making sure contractors and real estate agents are caught up on state code.

Devon Hurst and Anna Hurst put together a class at 34 North Bar in Cedar Point in November, ensuring those in

the industry were trained for a new law that went into effect in 2020. It required all general contractors holding a building, residential or unclassified contractor license to complete eight hours of continuing education on an annual basis.

"It changed, and none of the contrac-

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tors knew it," Devon said. "If they weren't signed up for briefs from the board, they didn't hear about it. Then they started getting bombarded with emails about it. Some of them still didn't believe until they went to renew their license and couldn't do it."

Devon, the owner of Hurst Build, Inc. in Charlotte, also runs a continuing education business, The Construction Institute, with her business partner and boyfriend Scott Query, and Jeff Griffin. All three have spent time in code enforcement, the crux of what Devon Hurst hopes to bring to those in the field.

"We're code junkies, to be honest," she said. "For instance, we've got a course coming up on crawl spaces and framing defects. Most professionals have to have CE courses. I never would have thought (Anna and I) would be doing something together like this. I love to be able to bring this to my hometown."

The stars aligned for the cousins to bring a class to their home community when Anna made a career pivot from the healthcare industry to real estate.

"Right around the time I was getting my license," she said, "I got to talking with (Devon) and she was telling me this is the first time general contractors have needed this licensure. She said so many of them didn't have it, and they didn't really know they needed it in this area. Finding a place to take the class was tougher due to COVID-19, too, so we decided to put the class together to help our fellow contractors in the area."

Both cousins brought their expertise to the table, Devon with her general contracting background and experience in teaching the continuing education courses and Anna with her background in marketing and real estate.

Anna was also quick to



Attendees listen at The Construction Institute's continuing education course at 34 North Bar in Cedar Point in November. Devon Hurst owns the educational business in partnership with Scott Query and Jeff Griffin. (Contributed photo)

thank the class' locale for hosting it.

"I can't thank 34 North enough," she said. "It's a beautiful place and it was a great venue for us during a time of social distance. They offered the location for us for free and they even bought us breakfast. It would not have been possible without the support of Paul (Musco)."

The classes are just one aspect of Devon's expertise in the field, a stab at bringing together two distinct fields in the same industry — general contracting and code enforcement.

"My daddy always taught me, 'You need to know your code,'" she said. "There's a significant gap between contractors and code enforcers. That's why I wanted to offer these classes, to bring everyone together."

The ever-changing nature of materials safety and how those materials are sourced requires ongoing education to prevent unwanted stoppages in development.

"You can have a project all ready to go, with plans and money all set,

and if you have a building inspector who doesn't know what they're doing, you're screwed," Devon Hurst said. "It costs a ton of money, time and manpower before you get a re-inspect. It's better for both sides if contractors are as well informed as they can be. Building inspectors will respect and trust general contractor who are up on their code."

Both cousins come from a long line of homebuilders and land developers. Their grandfather, Basil Hurst, built Tarawa Terrace and developed many of the Sand Ridge homes along with Devon's father, Jack, and Anna's father, Lane. Their great-grandfather also built the family home in the 1940s.

"I love saying that I'm a fourth-generation contractor," Devon said. "I didn't have a choice, really. It was in my blood. I've always loved it. I love the technicality of it. I love building things and seeing how they go together. I love drawing floor plans and showing people the process. I want to build homes that stand for a long time."

Matriarch

While the men in the Hurst family were building and developing, the matriarch of the family, Wilda Hurst Knight, was perhaps the most industrious of the family. The two cousins' grandmother lived an eclectic life, founding the Tideland News, becoming the first woman to be elected to the N.C. General Assembly from the district (she served two terms), leading the charge to bring the Uniflite Boat Company to Onslow County, writing two novels and opening Hurst Insurance and Realty, the first insurance and real estate agency in Swansboro.

"She was a pioneer," Devon said. "She was also the one who found the A-frame building that Hurst Realty still sits in today. She bought it from a catalogue and had it shipped by railroad to New Bern. My grandfather picked it up and brought it home and built it."

Gender issue

Being female in a male-dominated industry hasn't

been easy for either Hurst cousin, but they have both relished the challenge, drawing strength from the legacy of dynamic, productive women in the family.

Devon began as a general contractor and code enforcer in Onslow County before taking time off to raise a family.

She decided to return to school at the age of 40 and eventually graduated with a degree in construction management.

"It's very hard to be a woman in construction," she said. "I used to tell my dad, 'Why can't I be normal and get a job that's more socially acceptable for a woman?' He said, 'Devon, what's normal?'"

For Anna, the planning and development background has broadened her perspective of a community with deep family roots. "I think it's really cool that I can look at a housing development or a strip of land or even an old house or building, and my dad or uncle can tell me the story behind it," she said. "They can tell me who built it or why this street is named what it is. I like to have that

perspective of the community."

Anna, who currently works at Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage in Swansboro, added, "I just want to help people find quality homes or quality land that they can pass down to their family, generation after generation."

Anna and Devon got to see another family legacy being passed down at their class in Cedar Point, which attracted 11 in-person attendees and 28 online.

"There was actually a father and daughter in attendance, and they were both general contractors," Anna Hurst said. "It was really nice to see that. I have a son who is a senior in high school. He's interested in getting his contracting license as well. Devon's son just graduated high school, too, and I believe he's going to get his license as well."

The pair hopes to offer the classes locally every quarter, in addition to the online offerings from The Construction Institute.

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