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JIM CARCHIDI

McCree Jr. worked way up from ditch digger to CEO

BY JEFFREY RILEY

While in high school, Richard McCree Jr. — Central Florida's 2009 Outstanding Male of the Year in *Orlando Business Journal's* Forty Under 40 competition — earned money by digging ditches for his family's firm, McCree General Contractors and Architects.

After he graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1993, McCree worked at Peninsula Engineering Inc. in Orlando. While there, he took night classes at Rollins College and earned his master's in business administration. Then in 1996, at age 25, he returned to the family business as an estimator.

Since then, his career progressed to project engineer, vice president of construction, chief operating officer, and, in 2005, he became CEO.

Under his leadership, the company grew to \$88 million in 2007, up from \$60 million in 2006. The firm dropped to \$47 million in revenue last year due to the construction industry's general decline in the recession and credit crunch.

And in 2008, he was certified as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-accredited professional by the Green Building Certification Institute. That means

Richard McCree Jr.

Age: 38

Title: CEO, McCree General Contractors and Architects

Community involvement: Valencia Foundation; Lifework Leadership

he can steward an eco-friendly construction project through the LEED certification process.

Understanding purpose means a lot to the 38-year-old McCree. "Try to figure out your purpose, and stay true to that purpose."

In 2008, McCree led a bible study for his firm's employees based on the book, *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren, to make sure his firm's workers knew the power of their influence. He also instituted a program this year from Ownership Thinking LLC, a consulting and training firm, which shows all employees how their performance affects the company.

Dana Lichty, director of marketing and communications for the company, said this level of transparency and trust motivates her, as well as McCree's willingness to hear new ideas. "He's very approachable."

McCree also believes his family's company should get involved in the community rather than just watch from the sidelines. That's why the firm built Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Florida's two Orlando locations and waived its fee. "We're part of the community," said McCree, who also has been involved with Valencia Community College Foundation, Committee of 100, Orlando Rotary Club, Orlando History Center and Junior Achievement.

Lou Ann DeVoogd, executive director of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Florida Inc., said the relationship between McCree and the charity has been a great one. For example, McCree and his father rallied suppliers and contractors to raise money for the houses, she said. "We appreciate all the work. They have hearts of gold."

McCree now is taking steps to ensure the firm remains profitable, even in the economic downturn, which means diversifying the type of work it does to include growing niches such as eco-friendly construction.

Said McCree, "If you stand by your values, you eventually will succeed."

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