



GLASS HOUSE GALLERY:

BUILT to LEAD:

The *Women* Shaping the Future of Home Design & Construction

by Christy Heitger-Ewing | photo by Aiden Brown

Construction was once a male-dominated field, but things are shifting as more women enter the industry in positions of power and responsibility. While women still only make up 8% of the construction industry, the scales are shifting on the management side of home building and design.

“It’s impressive and exciting to see this change over the last 15 years,” says Cori Brown, CEO of the Glass House Gallery (formerly known as Franklin Window & Door).

Last year’s Home-A-Rama featured a home with a female builder, architect, and designer. Brown notes that this time was huge for helping women navigate the industry. Last fall, Ashley Hurley, Business Development Manager with Custom Living, initiated a monthly meeting for a select group of women in the construction industry to gather for personal and professional growth and development.

“Making this an intimate group of women allows us to talk freely,” says Brown.

Hurley focuses on building meaningful partnerships, expanding market presence, and driving sustainable growth. Beyond revenue and client acquisition, her passion lies in enhancing the customer

experience—ensuring each interaction reflects trust, transparency, and long-term value.

“My goal is not just to grow business but to help shape a more responsive, human-centered future in the home industry,” says Hurley, who appreciates being surrounded by such amazing women.

“Cori has become one of the ‘it’ women in our industry by how she sells,” says Hurley. “She doesn’t just sell windows and doors. She sells a lifestyle and a brand that everyone wants.”

One reason Brown admires these powerhouse women who are working across design, construction, architecture, real estate, and related trades is that they are breaking barriers, mentoring the next generation, and leading with vision and purpose.

For example, Kristen Hale, owner of Kent Shaffer Homes, is one of the only female luxury home builders in the state of Indiana. Emily Handke owns Emily Handke Design. Both women are raising young children while leading their companies—balancing family life and entrepreneurship with incredible dedication.

Brown also admires Diana Daniely with Ferguson.

“Diana is dynamic, beautiful, and intelligent, and she can make anyone in the room feel like the most special person alive,” says Brown. “When I first met her, I thought, ‘Wow, she’s exactly what I want to become.’”

Now Brown is inspiring

other young women. When Gaby Garcia first applied for the receptionist role at the Glass House Gallery, she was looking for a steady job where she could improve her skills in interior design. Ultimately, however, she found a passionate, creative, empowering environment that crystalized the career she wants to pursue.

“Watching Cori lead as a CEO with such grace, strength, and determination has impacted the way I see leadership,” says Garcia, who now works as an estimator at Glass House Gallery. “She solves challenges with empathy and a clear vision, she cares deeply about her team and her clients, and she’s passionate about the path she chose to follow despite the challenges. That’s exactly the kind of leader I aspire to be one day.”

Through the years, Brown has worked with many incredible women, including Caryn O’Sullivan, owner of Drapery Street. She believes that strong leadership is a learned skill rooted in vulnerability, courage, and trust. At Drapery Street, she has worked to build a culture where collaboration and care are foundational, both for clients and her team.

“I aim to shape a future where women thrive in business and design by mentoring others, encouraging lifelong learning, and leading with purpose,” says O’Sullivan. “Success isn’t just about growth or accolades. It’s watching

team members step into their potential and knowing our work truly improves the way people live in their homes.”

Brown advises young women who are interested in working in construction to shadow people in the industry and attend the Women Build It Conference.

If you’re looking for a design-centric space when selecting windows and doors, visit the Glass House Gallery.

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— ASHLEY HURLEY
Business Development Manager,
Custom Living


GLASS HOUSE GALLERY

GLASS HOUSE GALLERY
200 S. Rangeline Road, Suite 117
Carmel, IN 46032
317.993.3660
glasshousegallery.com

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