

## **Interview with Chapter Past President, Mr. Caleb Spradlin**

*Q: Thank you for taking the time to answer a few questions about yourself and your experience as ASHRAE President. You recently started a new engineering firm! Can you give us some background on your history and how you got to this point in your career?*

A: Of course. I started out in this industry as an intern at a branch office for an Arkansas firm called TME, now Bernhard. They focused on Hospital and Higher education work. I ended up working there after my internship for 4 more years and gained a huge amount of knowledge on some of the more complex systems we see in our industry. It gave me a great technical foundation. From there I left with my then supervising PE Stephanie Thomas to help her start her own firm, Moxify Engineering. I learned a little bit about what it takes to start from the ground up in that experience. However, it became a little too expensive to support my salary in the early days at Moxify, so I left and joined HP Engineering in OKC. I was there for a little over 5 years and had been promoted from project designer up to the Mechanical Engineering Manager for the OKC office acting as the Engineer of Record. This experience gave me the confidence to venture out on my own with my electrical counterpart at HP to start our own firm, DA Engineering. We are currently in our 4<sup>th</sup> month, and it has been an exciting adventure!

*Q: When you started as Chapter President in July of 2021, the pandemic seemed to be fading but it had already made an indelible mark on ASHRAE activity and participation. What were your thoughts as you planned for the upcoming society year and what hopes did you have?*

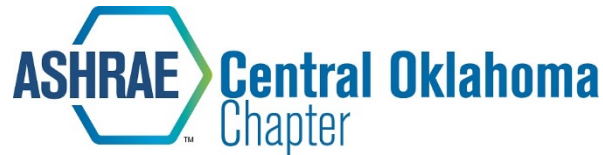
A: I knew it would be an uphill climb back to the level of involvement our chapter has seen in the past. The pandemic not only kept people away from ASHRAE meetings, but it also saw the rise in online PDH offerings and exposed many more engineers to them. Continuing education has been one of the top draws for attendance at ASHRAE meetings. So, we had a few areas where we needed to be more creative to encourage people back to the meetings. This was a large task, and one that continues into this new year. I think many ideas that were discussed but not quite acted upon in my year will be implemented in this current ASHRAE year, and I am eager to see how those affect attendance.

*Q: As the year progressed, in what ways did things turn out the way you expected and in what ways were they different?*

A: I expected there to be strong Board meeting attendance as our core volunteer group is a great group of volunteers. I am thankful to say that held true. Our meeting place wasn't the best, as we had to find a new one after the pandemic pushed us out of our previous usual spot. But attendance to the BOG meetings was still on par with past years which I again am very thankful for.

We had a decent turnout to our golf tournament, but I would have liked to see a larger increase in our standard meetings attendance. We had basically the same attendance as our previous year, and I was disappointed to see that.

One area that completely surprised me was our Social Media activity. Our chair Jessica Fitzpatrick went above and beyond not just in the standard Social Media outlets like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, but she also started a Podcast for the chapter, which has been amazing.



*Q: So, looking back now, what would you identify as your three most meaningful accomplishments?*

A: I think the 3 major accomplishments of this year were our increase in social media presence including the podcast, our huge turnout for the 2 sustainability events, and our very successful year with government affairs. We had an official E-week declaration by our governor this year in addition to some significant legislative wins due to the efforts of our government affairs team and our Day on the Hill presence. These 3 accomplishments will have a long-lasting impact on our chapter and even our State. I am very proud of all the volunteers who helped make all that happen.

*Q: You mentioned your recent interview for the Spotify podcast: HVAC Magicians. Please tell us about that experience and how our members can access those episodes?*

A: It was a great experience. Jessica was a great host and did a very good job at guiding the conversation. She sent me some questions ahead of time which I was very grateful for as it helped me pre-think through some of the good questions she asked. It was a very interesting conversation that I hope others will find enjoyment and insight from.

You can access the podcast on Spotify by searching for "HVAC Magicians".

*Q: Now that you've moved through the chairs, what advice would you give to future ASHRAE chapter leaders?*

A: I have a few bits of advice for future ASHRAE chapter leaders.

The first is to not only try and be a chair for a position, but also co-chair another position. Not necessarily at the same time. Co-chairing helps you learn about a position before being thrown directly into the deep end, a thing ASHRAE and other volunteer organizations are notorious for. Our chapter has started doing this more and more over the years and has made for a stronger team and a more consistent group. Burnout is less common when we have a good group of co-chairs to help or take over in subsequent years.

The next bit of advice is to start with something, anything to get involved. One of the great values from being an ASHRAE member is not necessarily from the technical meetings or the fun events we put on but being in the room with the volunteers that make everything happen. I can personally attest to the strong bonds created amongst the volunteers that operate ASHRAE year to year. It has vastly helped my career to know well those around me in the industry. It is fertile ground to foster relationships that carry over to our professional lives. So even starting with something small or even a role with little to no actionable volunteer work will still reap benefits in the relationships you can foster by being in the room where it happens.