



Angela Simon – “Angie” to her friends and colleagues – has a solid career on the HVAC side of the industry with Western Allied Mechanical in Menlo Park, California. Recently, the Simons (Angie and husband Michael) made a personal \$50,000 commitment to the New Horizons Foundation. We sat down with Angie to find out why.

NHF: You are a registered professional mechanical engineer. What attracted you to this profession?

Angie Simon: When the energy crisis hit in the early 1980s, I took a hard look at what was happening especially with HVAC and solar. The entire industry excited me, so I decided to get my mechanical engineering degree at Cal Poly.

After I graduated, my first job was with a small mechanical contractor. A year later, I was given the opportunity to join Western Allied as a project manager. It was definitely the right career move for me and for my family. I became a partner in 1996 and now I serve as the company’s president.

NHF: Having 24 years at one firm is a solid credential. Tell us about the company.

Angie: We’re excited that Western Allied is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. We are primarily a design-build firm with our own full staff of engineers. We do sheet metal, piping and controls, so counting our people in the field, we have from 150 to 180 workers. We also have a service company which adds to our ability to really meet our customers’ needs.

NHF: What do you see happening today in the HVAC and sheet metal industry?

Angie: I see a lot of changes coming to the industry – computerized CAD, BIM, pre-fab. Our workforce will definitely have to change. When I was growing up, my dad taught me how to work on cars. We can’t do that anymore because technology has taken over. Buildings are high performance and they need constant tune-ups just like cars. Technical upgrades are allowing non-union firms to become more proficient. What worries me is that the costs of operating in a union environment are high. We need to take major steps to be competitive.

NHF: How do those concerns tie together with the New Horizons Foundation?

Angie: The Foundation is important to me because it looks at our collective future and sometimes it can be scary to look forward. I want to learn and understand more about union vs. non-union and about the costs and benefits of pre-fab just to give you two examples. New Horizons looks at things that are changing – How can contractors become more green? How can we best use BIM? How can we be more efficient and more profitable from commissioning to fine tuning?

NHF: In addition to your company, you're active in SMACNA nationally and locally, right?

Angie: Absolutely. Right now, I'm completing my four-year term on the SMACNA Board of Directors. I've been appointed to the HVAC Council and SMACNA's Budget Committee. Here in northern California, I've served on the Bay Area SMACNA Chapter Board for eight years. And, I'm the first woman to have been selected as president of the chapter.

NHF: What made you decide this year to support the Foundation financially?

Angie: I was very honored to receive the Bay Area Leadership Award from our SMACNA branch. There is a \$10,000 stipend that goes along with this award and the recipient gets to choose the organization to which to give the funds. I chose the New Horizons Foundation because I have gained so much from my involvement with the HVAC industry and because what I have learned has made me a better business leader.

NHF: And there's more to the story?

Angie: Yes, there is. My husband Michael and I really believe in giving back to our community and to our industry. We made the personal decision to pledge a total of \$50,000 to New Horizons because the Foundation really does give back as well. I can give both time and money because I have been blessed by my involvement with the sheet metal and HVAC industry. I want to work with New Horizons to help focus on ways to make our industry better. I hope my personal involvement will help make that happen.

For information about the New Horizons Foundation and to become more involved in its work and its projects, contact Dennis Bradshaw, Executive Director, at dbradshaw@newhorizonsfoundation.org.