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2020 Mechanical Hub Person of the Year —Dan Foley

[John Mesenbrink](#) | July 22, 2020

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Against the odds, Dan Foley rises above, displaying courage, strength and exemplary work through steadfast leadership. We are honored to name Dan Foley Mechanical Hub's Person of the Year.

When the calendar flipped to 2020, the new year was looking like one of the best years for Dan Foley, owner, Foley Mechanical, Inc. (FMI), Lorton, Va. Until the nasty pandemic hit back in March, that is. "It was the worst medical experience in my life. I got it the first week of April. I have no idea how I contracted the virus. I am at job sites, supply houses



and architect meetings every day. Over the course of a week, I am in contact with dozens of people. Obviously, I picked it up somewhere along the way," says Foley.

Foley knew something wasn't right with his body. "At first I felt a little funny but I did not feel sick. Then, extreme fatigue set in. I could not function. I would sleep 20 hours a day and was more tired when I woke up. I did not have a cough or high fever so I did not think I had Coronavirus, maybe just a bug or the flu. But think of it like this, I went 12 rounds with Mike Tyson and then got hit by a bus," continues Foley.

A fairly rare acquaintance—Foley and the doctor visit—"I did a virtual appointment with my doctor and was instructed to go immediately to the emergency room where I tested positive for COVID-19, as well as pneumonia. Once admitted, my fever spiked twice to 103°F and I was in the hospital for seven days. When I was released, I was in bed for two weeks at home. I lost 30 lbs. over those three weeks, as I could not eat. At times, I felt like I was in a fog. Although it affected me mentally and physically, I slowly regained my strength," says Foley.

Throughout this potentially perilous time, Foley's employee Ron ran the ship. "He shut down for two weeks in April while he sorted everything out. Luckily, no one else in my company got sick," recalls Foley.

Over time, Foley's condition improved, and today he is back 100%. Back to record-breaking business months of June, and July is not far behind. It's halfway through the year, and throughout all of it, Foley Mechanical is up for the year. "We were down in April and May, as clients understandably didn't want anyone in their homes. June was a record month and July is shaping up to be the same. I believe it is a combination of pent-up demand, with more people staying at home and hot weather. When it is 65°F outside, there is no need for our service. When it is 95°F and humid, we worked out ways to service, repair and replace HVAC system while maintaining employee and customer safety," says Foley.



And by customer safety, Foley stresses that they are following standard protocols—distancing, PPE (gloves, masks and shoe covers). Many of Foley’s service customers leave a basement door open for service techs. Customers can communicate by phone or Facetime so there is no direct interaction, and all billing is done through the office for the time being.

For Foley, he’s rested, ready to get back to work, Corona-free, with antibodies. Herd immunity, right? Not so fast, my friend. Pump the brakes, says Foley. “I thought the same—I’m home free now that I have antibodies. My doctor warned me that very little is known about the Coronavirus. It can evolve and mutate. He warned me to behave as if I never had it. I am following his direction. Respect the virus,” says Foley.

Getting Started in the Trades

Foley started out as summer help at Arlington Heating while he was in college. After he graduated in 1988 from Virginia Tech with a degree in Business Management, he went to work full time while he figured what he wanted to do. “Thirty-two years later, I’m still in the trade,” says Foley.



After spending fifteen years at Arlington Heating and A/C, Inc., rising to the position of Vice President, Foley left the company in April 2002 to start his own company – Foley Mechanical, Inc., an HVAC company specializing in steam/radiant/snowmelt/renewable/solar systems.

Foley currently serves on the executive board of ACCA national, and his local ACCP, the local chapter of ACCA, and has been a past board member of his local PHCC chapter. He is also a past President of the Radiant Panel Association. He is the current chairman of the ACCA Radiant & Hydronics Council. He holds Master HVAC and Master plumbing/gas fitting licenses in Virginia, Washington, D.C. and Maryland.



Foley's perseverance, work ethic, and never-give-up attitude stems from his father, a retired Marine Corps colonel. "He taught me the values of hard work and persistence. Never quit, never give up," says Foley.

Foley, while still learning the business and trade, attributes much to Woolye Croker, founder of Arlington Heating Co., and his bosses Tom and Linda Croker, who still have an influence on him to this day.

Other influences include Dan Holohan, who indoctrinated Foley on hydronics back in the early '90s when he was strictly a forced-air guy. "He gave me the knowledge, encouragement and confidence to jump into the radiant and hydronics world."

John Siegenthaler was very generous with his knowledge early on. Foley still uses design graphics and ideas he learned from him more than 25 years ago.

Mitchell Cropp, owner of Cropp-Metcalf AC, and past chairman of ACCA, was very helpful sharing his business experience.



Skipper Joyce, founder of The Joyce Agency helped Foley open accounts with suppliers when he first started my company. "No one knew who I was but everyone knew Skipper. I was able to secure open accounts with several key suppliers on Skipper's word alone."

Last, and certainly not of least importance, Jeff Riley, owner of Coredron, and formerly with Thos. Somerville Co., has been a friend and supporter

since the first day FMI opened for business, April 2002.

Foley truly loves his career in the trades. "I like the challenge of landing big projects and designing new mechanical systems. I like watching my crew bring my creation to life. And, I like working with the architect, GCs and owners to find creative solutions to problems. It is something new and different every day," says Foley.

Foley is so dedicated to his craft and his business that finding balance between work and time spent away from the job can be challenging. "That is the hard part. There really is no balance, but I enjoy what I do. When I no longer enjoy it, I know it will be time for a change," says Foley.

Yet, when asked the last time he had a great day? "Every morning! In all seriousness, I love what I do," says Foley. "Aside from work, I last said that as I teed off for a round of golf with my father at Ford's Colony Golf Club, Williamsburg, Va."