

# *the* **OUTRIGGER**

R. Baker & Son Magazine  
Minority/Women Owned Business Enterprise

OCTOBER 2021

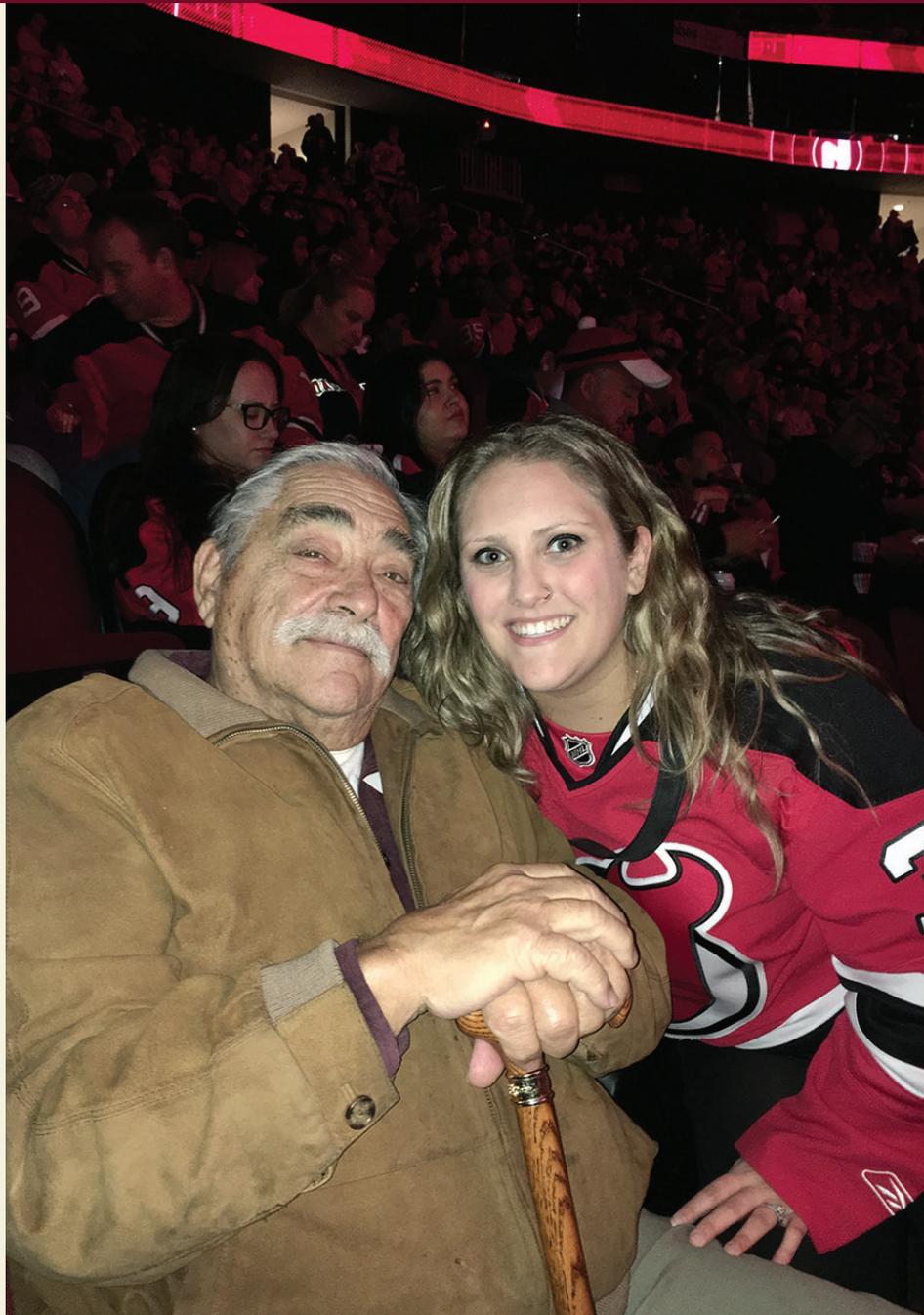
## R. Baker & Son Names New President

We are pleased to announce that Ashley Baker DeGorter has been appointed president of R. Baker & Son. As the great-granddaughter of our founder, Robert “Ruby” Baker, Ashley represents the fourth generation of Baker family leadership in the 86 years since our company’s inception.

Though we are excited to be moving forward under new direction, this is a bittersweet occasion as it also marks the passing of president Walter Baker, the “son” in our company name. Walter first joined R. Baker & Son in 1954 as partner to his father, Ruby, and was named president in 1974. The company flourished under his leadership; over the next four decades we grew to become one of the most respected Demolition, Dismantling and Rigging contractors in the northeastern United States. Although Walter stepped back somewhat from day-to-day on-site activities over the last decade, he maintained an active interest in the business and continued to report to work daily until just weeks before his passing. A kind and personable man who was loved and admired by all, Walter enjoyed sharing stories of his many experiences working in the field, his biggest challenges, and the colorful cast of characters he encountered during his seven decades on the job. Walter Baker was 85.

Ashley Baker-DeGorter joined R. Baker & Son in 2013 as an office assistant shortly after she received her B.A. degree in Communication Arts from Ramapo College of New Jersey. Initially, this was only meant to be a temporary, interim job while she looked for a position in her chosen field, but wasn’t long before she realized that she wanted a permanent role in the family business. “It kind of took me by surprise,” Ashley said recently. “I never even entertained the thought of making it my career before I got there, but that changed almost immediately.” When she expressed her interest to Walter and her uncles, co-vice presidents David and Mark Baker, they moved quickly to develop a long-term plan to familiarize her with all facets of the business in preparation for her future leadership position.

*Continued on page 2.*



*inside this issue...*

- \* R. BAKER & SON NAMES NEW PRESIDENT
- \* NYC MINORITY & WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE
- \* MENTAL HEALTH IN CONSTRUCTION - TEACHING HOSPITAL PROJECT

## R. Baker & Son: Announces New President

*Continued from page 1*

Over the next seven years, while Ashley gained hands-on experience in accounting, estimating, contract negotiation, and project management, the three Baker generations coalesced around a renewed, future-focused vision for the company. David Baker describes her as “a very driven person, very sharp, and I think she’s injected new energy we hadn’t realized we were missing.” Under Ashley’s leadership, R. Baker & Son has concentrated on bringing in new office and field staff to introduce fresh, new approaches and ideas while learning the ropes of the industry from the more seasoned members of our team. The company has also invested in new technologies and software to help better define our skillsets and bid more efficiently in the future. “Our goal,” said Ashley, “is to make sure we’re forward-thinking and always staying ahead of the curve.”

Ashley resides in Hamilton, New Jersey. She and her husband Cody DeGorter, who works for R. Baker & Son in the field, are parents to 5-month-old son Spencer, named after Ashley’s father who passed away 1996.



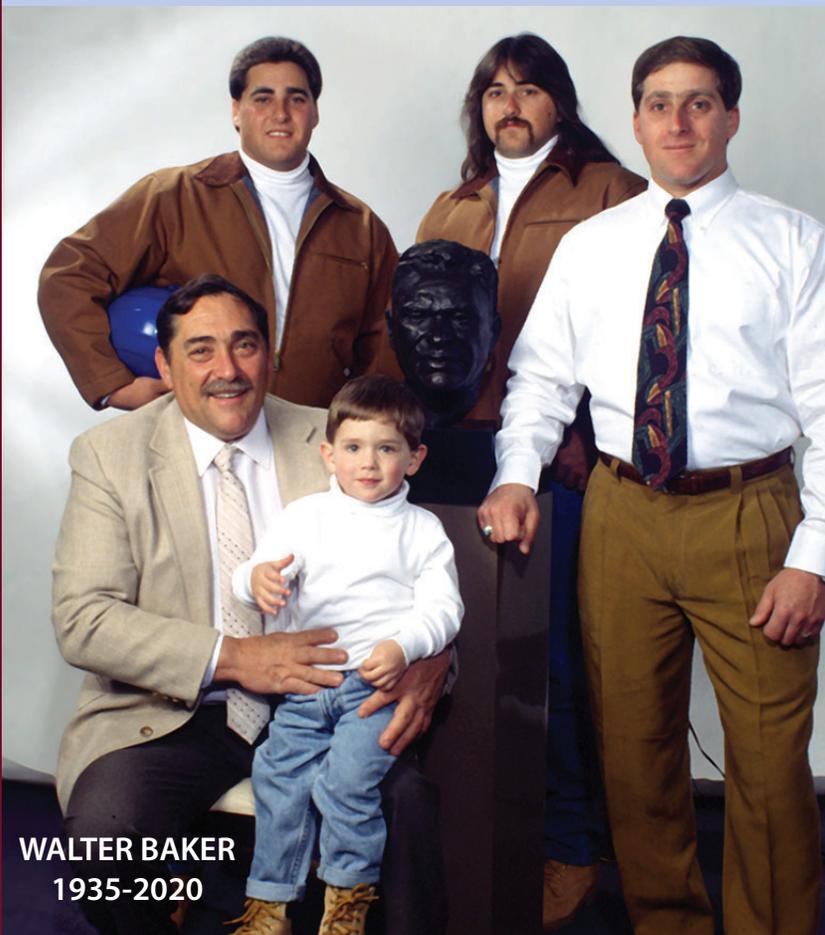
### R. Baker & Son: Is A NYC Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprise

R. Baker & Son All Industrial Services, Inc. is pleased to announce that we have been granted M/WBE Certification by the NYC Department of Small Business Services.

The Department created the Mayor’s Office of Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises in 2016 to address disparity in City contracts awarded to ethnic and gender groups and provide increased opportunities for these groups to do business with the City.

R. Baker & Son encourages existing and potential clients to consider our M/WBE status when evaluating proposals for future projects to help your organization meet annual diversity goals. As an experienced and respected tri-state area contractor since 1936, we have had the privilege to participate in countless NYC projects both large and small including noted landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty, the United Nations, the Intrepid Air & Space Museum, Ellis Island, and the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

R. Baker & Son’s New York City M/WBE Certificate can be [viewed here](#). Please contact Art Sferlazzo, Director of Business Development, at 732-222-3553 for more information.



**WALTER BAKER**  
1935-2020

**HUSBAND, FATHER, GRANDFATHER, GREAT GRANDFATHER,  
FRIEND, BUSINESSMAN, HERO**

# Mental Health In The Construction Industry



The construction industry is one with many hazards. Many, such as falls, repetitive strain injuries, chemical exposure, electrocution, etc., are obvious, and employers typically know how to guard against them. There is one common danger in the construction industry that often goes unnoticed, however, that claims the lives of more workers than all other workplace-related incidents combined: poor mental health.

The statistics are startling. In several construction industry studies conducted in 2020, between 60% and 83% of workers admitted to struggling with mental health issues like depression, stress and anxiety. Construction has the highest suicide rate among all other industries according to the CDC, and at 53 suicides per 100,000 workers, construction workers take their own life at a rate that's three times higher than the national average (17/100K) and five times higher than all construction fatalities combined (10/100K).

A mix of factors account for the prevalence of mental health issues in this industry. With a workforce that is almost 90% male and a work culture that accentuates toughness, many mental health struggles go unreported. Risk factors common in the construction industry include competitive, high-pressure work environments, chronic pain, higher incidence of alcohol and substance abuse, end-of-season layoffs, and separation from family.

**What can employers do to support their workers?** First, take steps to normalize conversations about mental health and remove the stigma. Encourage workers to seek help if they're struggling. Consider conducting regular mental health check-ins and educating employees through seminars and guest speakers. Be on the lookout for signs that might indicate anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts such as decreased productivity, conflicts with coworkers, frequent near-accidents and injuries, problem-solving difficulties, and increased tardiness and absenteeism. Finally, provide workers with resources they can turn to outside the workplace such as local outreach programs, the Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/), or SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP, which provides referral services for those dealing with mental health challenges and substance abuse disorders.



## TEACHING HOSPITAL PROJECT

A large, seven-story building at a Philadelphia teaching hospital was undergoing renovation including a major overhaul of mechanical systems. R. Baker & Son was contracted by the construction management firm with removing all of the old mechanical equipment and associated piping, power and controls from the 8th floor mechanical penthouse and rigging in new equipment and materials.

The building had previously been renovated twice since the 1970s, and in both instances the old mechanical equipment had simply been disconnected and abandoned in place when it was decided that removal would have been too expensive and difficult in the crowded urban environment. Now, the penthouse was packed with non-operational equipment that would need to be removed to make room for new. Timing and logistics would be a challenge: crane operation could only take place over four Saturdays from the parking lot of an adjacent hospital, and debris removal and rigging of new equipment would need to occur simultaneously.



R. Baker & Son worked very closely with mechanical and electrical trades to identify, mark, trace, and lock out all equipment, power and piping slated for demolition. These items were then disassembled, cut into manageable sections, bundled, and carefully staged for removal. Because of the restrictive Saturday rigging schedule, the 3D rigging and routing plan called for maximum efficiency. Each time new piping and equipment, which included four 25,000 CFM fan wall air handlers, two air compressors and dryers, four hot water boilers, and a new RO water system, was lifted to the roof, old equipment sections and demolition debris would be lowered to the ground. The crane's hook was never unoccupied during the highly-choreographed process and the entire operation was completed safely.