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QUARTER.ONE.NEWSLETTER APR 1, 2021

DESIGNERS CORNER

The Burger Queen

By Laurie Breen, SDA



Tiffany Mead
Villa Park Architecture

It was during high school that Tiffany Mead decided she wanted to become either an interior designer or an architect, but it was her teacher at Reagan HS, Mr. Ward, who convinced her to start down the path of becoming an architect. In 2010 she enrolled at UTSA for her B.S. in Architecture, and between her sophomore and junior years, she applied for a summer internship at Villa Park Architecture/Planning/Interiors, PLLC where she could begin to earn her 3,740 hours required for licensure. She continued to work and study until she graduated with a Masters of Architecture in 2016 and could begin to sit for her licensing tests.

For Tiffany, the toughest part was passing the notoriously difficult six exams, which test the skills of would-be architects on all parts of design, construction, and even practice management. "I signed up with Black Spectacles through AIA, which helped me to realize the importance of a study group and having accountability. Before, I was reading a chapter a month to review for tests, but once I found my group we met every Thursday and set group goals to read chapters, watch videos, take practice tests, and tutor each other on various topics," she recommends. "I was also able to tap my resources, not only at Villa Park, but by picking the brains of the structural and MEP engineers that we work with to get answers and explanations for my questions."

"Gaining my license was a long process - ten years, but it's really worth it when you're finally hanging that degree on the wall in a fancy frame, and adding those letters onto your business cards. I was so excited to finally be able to legally call myself an architect," she explains. "I'm glad that I worked at Villa Park while I was studying because it was a really valuable resource both for school and gaining real-world experience."

Now, as a fully licensed architect, Tiffany has been working with several fast food franchisees and has been officially dubbed "The Burger Queen" at Villa Park. "Working with franchise is easier in some ways, because we follow the corporate design standards, making modifications for each new site. Part of my role is educating new franchisees on the process, or working with clients who haven't built a new restaurant for a while. We stay up to date on the newest prototypes - such as some of the new drive-thru centric versions with dedicated lanes for mobile orders." She went on to explain that while having the prototype can speed up the design process, there might be additional delays in getting approvals from corporate.

Tiffany will be celebrating 9 years with Villa Park in May. What's next for this goal-oriented, high-achiever? "My next plan is to obtain licensure in other states so that I have an excuse to travel to franchises around the country!"