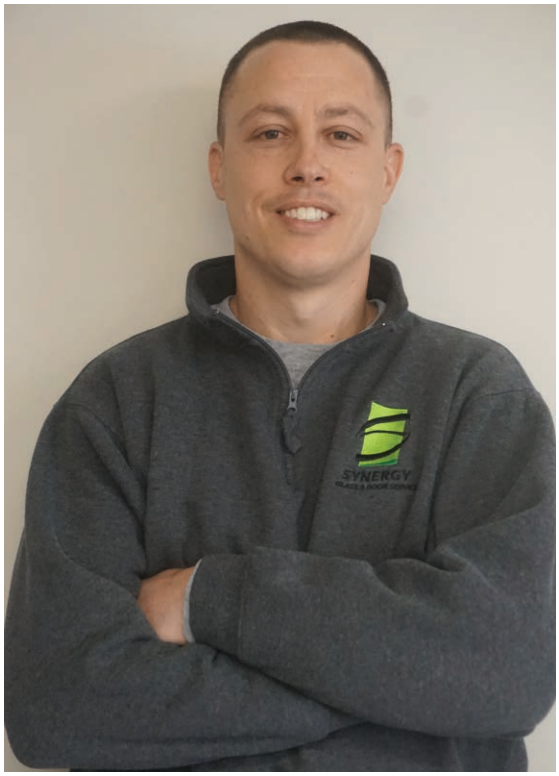
GLASS & METAL ALLIANCE

BRIAN KEILMAN

OPERATIONS MANAGER & APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR 2009



SPOTLIGHT

On Brian Keilman:

Title Operations Manager for Synergy Glass & Door Service, LLC (Collingdale, Pa.)

Hometown Warrington, Pa.

Family Wife Erica, sons Brian (16) and Justin (14)

Favorite Team Philadelphia Flyers

Hobbies Fishing, golfing, country music, reading about finance

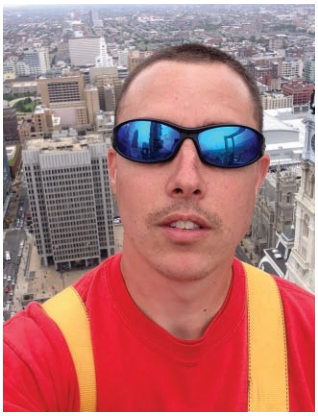
ABOUT BRIAN

After graduating from Father Judge High School in 1997, Brian Keilman worked in a variety of construction jobs – landscaping, hardscaping, countertops – but wanted a career path that would provide more stability. A conversation with a family member and union member discussing different trades led him to inquire about glazing. He took the career transition seriously from the start, vowing as an apprentice to become a foreman someday.

Not only did Brian reach that goal, but he exceeded it. After working as a glazier in the field for 12 years on projects such as the JP Morgan Chase Headquarters in Delaware and Novo Nordisk in New Jersey, he switched to the operations side. He currently works as Operations Manager for Synergy Glass & Door Service in Collingdale, Pa.

WHAT'S AN APPRENTICE?

When he first investigated glazing, Brian didn't know what it meant to be an apprentice or how the apprenticeship process worked. But he did his homework. He obtained the names of Mike Schurr, former FTI Education Director, and Joe Ashdale, DC21 Business Manager. He began calling them both every Friday and was impressed that they each took his calls and offered advice. Brian promised that if given the opportunity, he wouldn't disappoint. His persistence paid off. "I didn't know what to do, but I found out who to stay in touch with," he remembers with a laugh, still appreciative that the two leaders took a chance on him.



Left: Brian on the job at the Residences at the Ritz-Carlton and his view from a glass replacement, both in Center City, Philadelphia

MUTUAL RESPECT

Brian's role overseeing daily operations and meeting with customers for Synergy's project-based and 24-hour emergency services means he never really knows what a day will bring or when (or how late) the phone will ring. He coordinates scheduling, pricing, labor, and projects, making sure that at the end of each day, customers are happy. He doesn't mind the job's fast pace or its challenges because there's a sense of accomplishment when he is able to work through the struggles to make things right.

Brian especially enjoys working with his peers, many of whom he last crossed paths with in the field. "The mutual respect you've earned from working side by side translates from field to office," he explains. "I love the union labor force and what it represents." Brian recognizes there's sometimes a disconnect between office and field personnel who have never experienced the other's roles. "Having both perspectives lets me bridge the gap," he explains.

BE THE BEST

From his earliest days as an apprentice, Brian worked to be the best he could be. It led to his recognition as Apprentice of the Year 2009. And it's advice he shares with apprentices today: "Find your niche, be the best, and learn to teach others so that you can give back and educate."

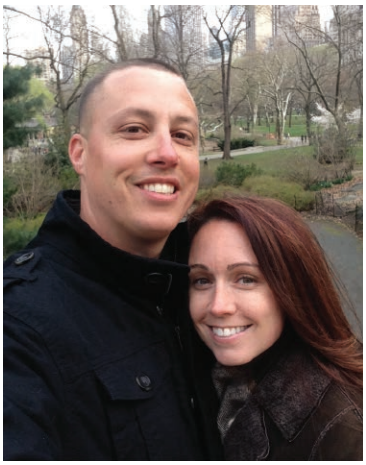
Brian spent several years as an educator at the Finishing Trades Institute, teaching the revolving door class. He also served as a union delegate. But family commitments take up the bulk of his non-work time today.

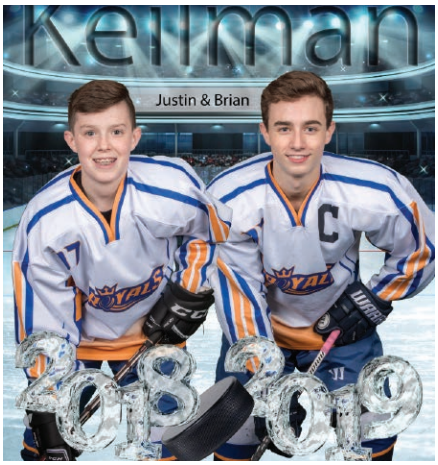
HOCKEY LIFE

The Keilmans spend much of their family time on the road. Brian and wife Erica, a Registered Nurse who provides home care, have been married since 2001. They have two sons: Brian, age 16, who is a junior in high school; and Justin, age 14; who is in eighth grade. Both boys play ice hockey on a combined total of five different teams. Their travel hockey schedule brings the family throughout the region and to farther locations such as Hershey, Pittsburgh, Niagara Falls, and New England.

PERSISTENCE & PASSION

Once Brian made up his mind to become a glazier at age 24, he worked hard, remained focused, and continuously worked to be the best he could be. He didn't back down from the opportunity to shift into management, and uses his role to better connect personnel in the field and in the office. And he's passionate about his work, his union brotherhood, and his family - scoring a personal and professional hat trick.





Clockwise from top: Justin, Erica, Brian, and Brian Keilman; Justin and Brian before school and playing hockey; the Keilman Family at the Hockey Hall of Fame; Brian and Erica