GLASS & METAL ALLIANCE

ROBERTO RIOS, JR.

FOREMAN, FTI INSTRUCTOR &
2003 LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNER

SPOTLIGHT

On Roberto Rios, Jr.:

Title Foreman for W&W Glass, LLC (Nanuet, NY)

Hometown South Philadelphia

Family Wife Anjolic and daughter Gianna (11)

Hobbies Working out, running, date nights with his wife, family time

Favorite Projects Kimmel Center, FMC Tower, Comcast 2

ABOUT ROBERTO

Roberto Rios was the only student in his Cardinal Dougherty High School class who didn't apply to college. Despite good grades, Roberto was focused on getting a job to support his family. A nun pulled him aside and suggested glazing. She gave him the number of Mike Metz and Roberto made the call. "I'm sorry, sir, but I don't know anything about glazing," Roberto remembers he said. "I didn't think he would call me back."

But two days later, Mike did call back, and Roberto started his glazing career just 10 days after graduation, as an apprentice with National Glass & Metal Company. In nearly two decades, he has risen to foreman and shop steward, worked on some of the region's most significant buildings, become a union trustee and an FTI instructor, and been awarded for leadership. And every day, Roberto says a prayer for the union and gives thanks to the people who helped him get where he is today. "On my first day of teaching each week, I give a shout-out to the guys I had the opportunity to work with. They made me who I am today. I want my students to pass that along."

"I grew up in North Philadelphia, in and around the ghetto. I feel blessed that I'm able to move forward in life with a great career."

Below: Roberto on the job, teaching at FTI, and earning his degree

CAMARADERIE AND CRAFT

When you ask Roberto his favorite part of glazing, he immediately describes his co-workers. He loves the camaraderie and knowing that others count on him and value his opinion. But talk a little longer and you'll understand that Roberto holds craftsmanship at the same high level. He takes such pride in his work that he often comes across as blunt and direct. "I like to come across as super hard, but I care a lot more than people think," he describes. He says every day is a balance of executing the craftsmanship perfectly while managing time and sticking to the schedule. He loves giving and receiving the atta-boys for a job well done.

Roberto's attention to detail comes from working on some of the city's highest-profile buildings. He honed his craft on the Kimmel Center and appreciated getting to see the project from start to finish. He learned the complex Pilkington structural glazing system on FMC Tower at Cira Centre South and consequently attracted the attention of W&W Glass, who hired him as foreman for Comcast 2, where the same system is used.

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

A natural leader, Roberto takes any opportunity to contribute and he leads by example. He participated in the FTI program to earn his associate degree.

After his apprenticeship, Roberto was invited to teach welding at FTI and has spent the last decade as an instructor. He now teaches third-year apprentices and journeymen a range of courses including skylights, rigging and hoisting, and crane signals. He likes getting to know apprentices, serving as a big brother or father figure, and offering tough love.

Roberto has also served as a steward for several shops and as a union trustee for 12 years, communicating the brotherhood's voice to management. "I love to speak to guys on and off job sites and I'm happy to share their opinions."

GIVING BACK

Roberto participates in community service both through the Glazier's Local 252 and through his church. He contributes annually to the union's Toys for Tots program and especially enjoys delivering toys and gifts to families in need. He describes how special it felt to buy and deliver living and dining room furniture for a family one year. He recalls with emotion when the union paid for his church to help in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. "Sometimes the media portrays unions as being not so good," Roberto explains. "They don't really see our heart. Our heart goes a long way," he adds.

From top: Roberto with his daughter and nephews, running with his family, with his wife, and on the job

WORDS TO LIVE BY

Anyone who knows Roberto knows he's a spiritual person and committed to his wife Anjolic and daughter Gianna, who he calls his best friend in the world. Roberto's favorite Bible verse is Matthew 6:3,"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." These are the words by which Roberto lives. "I like doing things for people. I love surprising and being a blessing to people without them knowing."