



# JAMES R. COPPOLA

PROJECT MANAGER, FTI INSTRUCTOR & AWARD WINNER

## SPOTLIGHT

### On Jim Coppola:

**Title** Project Manager with Graboyes Commercial Window and Glass Solutions (Philadelphia, Pa.)

**Hometown** Winslow, NJ

**Family** Wife Nichole; sons Jimmy (12) and Nick (11)

**Favorite Book** Moby Dick by Herman Melville

**Award** Jim received the 2008 Harry Schurr Leadership Award



### ABOUT JIM

When Jim Coppola graduated from the College of New Jersey in 2003 with a B.A. in Literature, glazing might have been the last career choice anyone would have anticipated. But his path wasn't as surprising as one might think. "I spent four years in college using my mind to have fun and my hands to make money," Jim explains. The avid reader chose his major based on a love of books and an eye toward teaching. But he entered college to study electrical engineering, hinting at a career that would involve working with his hands. From the age of 10, he spent Saturday mornings accompanying and assisting

his plumber uncle on jobs. Through college, Jim worked as a landscaper, installed flooring and siding, and built party tents. Unable to find a teaching job after graduation, Jim followed the advice of his two glazier uncles. He shelved his literature career and began his glazing apprenticeship in August 2003.

### SECOND FAMILY

Over nearly two decades as a glazier, Jim has earned recognition and credentials that have established his strong reputation and solid career. In 2008, he earned the Harry Schurr Leadership Award from District Council 21 and LU252. In 2019, Jim was part of the first class to earn the Architectural Glass and Metal Technician (AGMT) certification, a rigorous written and field evaluation of his glazing skills. "For me, this was a way to assess where I stand in my career," Jim explained. He looked at AGMT as an opportunity to prove he could do any task at the level of a master craftsman.



*At left: Jim at work in the field and in the office*

*Head shot above © Graboyes Commercial Window and Glass Solutions*

Jim genuinely enjoys being a glazier and considers LU252 like a second family. "I feel like we stand together more than any trade I've ever encountered in the field," he describes. "We have a common language that joins us in a way that's hard to explain."

## PROJECT MANAGER

Jim joined Graboyes Commercial Window and Glass Solutions as a journeyman glazier in 2019. He earned a promotion to project manager in January 2020. In the role, he divides his time equally between the field and the office. Jim once joked about using his mind only for fun. "Now I use my mind 40+ hours per week," he says, admitting the job is both demanding and time consuming, but ultimately rewarding. He's presently working on projects at Pennovation Works, the Navy Yard, and the new Laborers' District Council training facility in Center City.

## FTI INSTRUCTOR

Jim has taught part-time at the Finishing Trades Institute for the last six years, supporting the VIP program for high school students. For the past two years, he has connected his literature background with current events, teaching the History of Labor Through Film. Using movies such as *On the Waterfront*, *Norma Rae*, and *Cesar Chavez*, Jim provides a context for students entering union careers. "I try to build a good foundation of the people who've gone before and the battles they've faced," Jim explains.

## ADVICE FOR APPRENTICES

Beyond the obvious – you can't be afraid of heights – Jim offers simple advice to apprentices and those considering a glazing career. "Have a positive attitude," he encourages. "I can teach anyone what to do, but I can't teach a positive attitude. That has to come from inside."

## FAMILY MAN

When he's not working, Jim spends time with his family. He and his wife Nichole met when they were 14 years old. In December 2020, they will celebrate 13 years of marriage. "We like to say that we've been through it together so we know we can get through anything together." They have two sons: Jimmy (age 12) is in seventh grade; Nick (age 11) is in sixth grade. The family spends most of its time outdoors fishing, boating, and playing golf.

## DESERT ISLAND

An early American literature aficionado, Jim cites Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, and William Faulkner among his favorite authors. In fact, he studied Faulkner as a major author in college. If Jim gets stuck on a desert island, his book collection will include *Moby Dick*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, *Leaves of Grass*, and *Light in August*.



*Clockwise from top left:*

*Jim and Nichole with Jimmy (left) and Nick (right) at Disney World;*

*Jim with his sons and niece Angelina; Jim and his boys out on their boat and on the boardwalk;*

*Jim and his father Jim fishing in the back bays of Brigantine, N.J.*

