

A little over three years ago, I started La Casa Roja Tile with Louie Casarez and my wife Julie. In starting a small business we shared many fears, the fear of failure, and fear of the unknown. We also shared a vision to become a viable company and to grow in such a way as to maintain our ideals and integrity.

Joining SAHBA was the next step in doing just that! Receiving support, advice, and having the ability to network within this organization has helped us grow in many ways. Also, opportunities have been presented, such as the extreme makeover project.

When Art Flagg asked me if I was interested in being a part of this project, I thought, cool, we really need the work. Then he said, by the way, you need 30 guys to work for free, and in the middle of the night. I could not imagine how that could possibly work. I had feelings much like we did three years ago, a little excitement mixed with the fear of failure, which I discussed with Art. He said Kiko, "Failure is not an option". Art then asked if I could attend a preliminary meeting with the board of builders and we wanted to contribute. I agreed. About midway through the meeting John Wesley Miller stood up and said Felipe, you are the tile coordinator. Art said that would be great if his name was Felipe! John coolly replied, "tell your father to pronounce your name better! I knew three things at that moment, one, I was already up to my neck in it, two, there was no backing out gracefully, and that I knew that we could pull together and make this work. We were in! No matter what it took, we wanted to contribute to this project. I attended the pep rally and listened to the story of the Bell family. They were chosen because of their selfless commitment to a great cause.

Right at the start the second pallet of tile I delivered to the staging area at Craycroft and river was dropped and all of the tile was broken. I thought to myself, run away! After a multitude of violent and angry thoughts ran through my head and I lost the urge to assault the forklift operator, (who as it turned out had no business operating that machine,) we called our suppliers who, thank goodness, were quick to send us more. There were times when everyone one was tired and hungry and wanted to give up, but when we walked outside for a break, there were friendly faces offering support and food. These things, and a fair share of prayer, kept us going. Despite the many changes during the course of this endeavor, everyone seemed to remain positive. Thanks to the many donations, and the selflessness of the hard working guys who gave their time and labor, I think we accomplished our goal successfully. Tucson is still and always has been populated by folks with the pioneer spirit. I am proud to be a resident of The Old Pueblo, and very proud to be a part of this city's building industry.

This experience has brought a new appreciation for the sense of community and support that organizations such as SAHBA, provide. This kind of support and networking is what we believe will help companies and individuals such as ourselves, thrive and grow. Thank you.

