

Unnerstall Named 2018 Outstanding Alumni

Nearly 30 years ago, Ron Unnerstall helped found Washington Engineering and Architecture. Today, the company's influence can be seen around Franklin County and beyond. Its portfolio is vast – from the Washington Public Safety Building to the new Heat and Control facility in Union.



Unnerstall has used his engineering knowledge over the years to help serve the community. His firm has donated services to help local organizations with projects big and small. Outside of work, he volunteers his personal time to help those around him. He's an inspiration to those who know him, and it's why he's been chosen as the East Central College 2018 Outstanding Alumni! The award is presented annually to honor an ECC graduate who has used his or her education and been of service to the community.

"It's a great honor to win this award," Unnerstall explained. "I know there are thousands of other East Central College alumni who are deserving of this award as well."

After graduating from St. Francis Borgia Regional High School in 1975, Unnerstall enrolled in East Central College's pre-engineering program. "It was really just getting off the ground at the time," explained Unnerstall, "but my instructors were dedicated, passionate people who helped me get to where I am today."

In 1977, he transferred to the University of Missouri-Columbia where he earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1979. "At the time, we were still using punch cards to write code," he said. "I still remember getting my first programmable calculator – which was an engineering marvel at the time!"

After college, he returned home. He began his career in engineering at a major construction company in St. Louis. The position would eventually move him to Ohio, where he spent several years.

"My wife and I got a little homesick," he remembers. So, he returned to Missouri, working at different engineering jobs in the area. However, travel was becoming burdensome. It was at that time when Unnerstall decided to venture out on his own. In 1989, Washington Engineering and Architecture opened for business.

Since that time, the company has experienced success. They've used it to help others along the way. Unnerstall's firm has offered free design services to organizations like St. Francis Borgia and the Washington Town and Country Fair. His efforts haven't gone unnoticed as he was named the St. Francis Borgia High School Knight of the Year in 2013 and was named Grand Marshal of the Washington Town and Country Fair in 2012.

Unnerstall not only volunteers professional services but his personal time. He's served on various committees at St. Francis Borgia as well as the school board. He has also volunteered on the Washington Town and Country Fair Board, eventually becoming chairman of the event in 1998. Additionally, he served as president of the East Central College Alumni Association and as a board member for the East Central College Foundation. He also served on the Franklin County Building Commission as chairman and is involved in the Knights of Columbus, Elks Lodge and Lions Club.

Unnerstall and his wife Donna are parents to four girls and have six grandchildren. He currently enjoys spending time with his family and playing drums in the Washington Brass Band.