

D. Stephenson Construction

Football Legend Builds a Niche in the Community

D. Stephenson Construction, Inc., in Fort Lauderdale, may have started as a small general contractor in 1992, but the company, founded by Dwight Stephenson and his wife, Dinah, has more than quadrupled in the last five years.

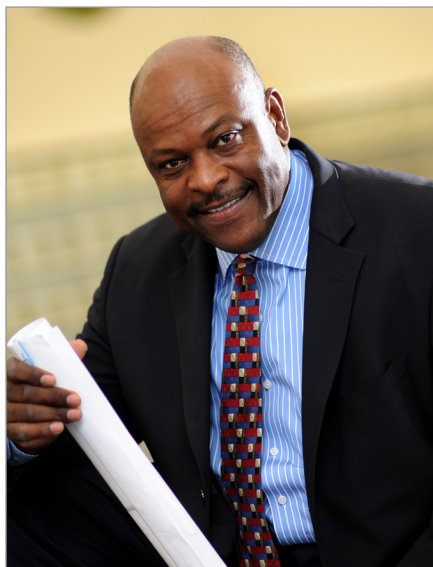
Considered by many to be the best center of all time, Dwight Stephenson spent his eight-year Hall of Fame National Football League (NFL) career with the Miami Dolphins. He was recently appointed by Governor Charlie Crist to serve on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Also a trailblazer, Dinah has more than 16 years of experience in various aspects of construction and real estate. The real estate attorney was recently named an honoree for *South Florida Business Journal's* "Top 10 Women Who Mean Business" – an award that highlights businesswomen leaders who also make a strong impact in the community.

Embraced for both his on-the-field prowess and gentle demeanor off the field, Dwight fell in love with community in South Florida. "The people are so warm and welcoming. My wife and I never wanted to leave," says the former NFL great.

He spent a year as an assistant coach with the Dolphins and then grew excited over the prospect of a whole new career. "After football was over, a good friend of mine asked me to work with him in his construction business. I was immediately taken with the development and construction world." He believes the same attributes for success on the field applies for success in construction – surround yourself with passionate, talented people driven to be the best in their league.

With the help of friends, a strong business sense and great personalities, the husband and wife team decided to venture out and form a business in which they could give back to the community that had given so much to them – D. Stephenson Construction was born.

With assistance from partners Tim Talbert and Eric Cyrus, the company has bal-



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Founders: Dwight and Dinah Stephenson

Location: Fort Lauderdale

Website: www.dstephenson.com

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looned from 10 employees and \$5 million in revenue in 2004 to 55 employees and \$30 million in revenue today. They run the most successful and largest small business construction firm in all of South Florida.

With strong niches in the educational, municipal, aviation and health care markets, the company supports clients in the private and public sectors with professional construction services in the areas of construction management, general contracting and design-build services.

"For some clients, we serve as an extension of staff to oversee their projects and to ensure they are completed correctly, on schedule, and on budget," says Dwight. "For others, we are effective, hands-on team members during the implementation of innovative project delivery systems"

People may be drawn to the Hall of Fame center for his football heroics, but what attracts people closer is his humble and sincere attitude. The company thrives because Dwight and Dinah genuinely care about each client and surround themselves with the best people that bring talent to the team. The team has grown by strategically pursuing the best talent that shares the company's mission to be the best in serving our clients.

They credit both their long-term relationships in the community and the great work ethic of their team for the company's successful growth. "Our strong relationships combined with our track record have given us a competitive edge within our markets," says Dwight.

Some of D. Stephenson Construction's clients include Broward County School Board, The City of Lauderhill, Broward County and the Mount Hermon AME Church. Its most recent project is a joint venture with Moss & Associates and architect Cubellis on the \$12.8 million, Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Silver-certified city hall in Lauderhill. The city's old city hall was destroyed by Hurricane Wilma two years ago. When completed, the new city hall will be a 42,500-square-foot facility with four floors.

The D. Stephenson Construction name stands out not only for the quality service from its superior staff, but also for the impact it has made in the community. After decades of charitable giving, Dwight and Dinah wanted to do more for South Florida community. Last year, the couple started the Dwight Stephenson Foundation – a charitable non-profit organization – to help increase funding for children and families in their community. So far this year, nearly \$100,000 has been raised for numerous charities including Urban League, the United Cerebral Palsy Foundation, The Boys and Girls Club of Broward County and Kids in Distress. "Whether it's constructing a building or serving in our community, it's our passion to build a strong community," says Dinah. ■