

GINGER SCOGGINS

ASHRAE President 2023-24



I started college as a math major. I was going to major in math. I was going to be an actuary because I had one uncle, the only uncle who ever had any money in our family, and he was an actuary. So my dad said, "*Be an actuary.*" And I was like, "*Okay, fine.*"

So I went to school as a math major. I got through a couple of years of that and realized that I really needed a degree in statistics to be an actuary, which my school didn't offer.

I had a really good friend who was getting his master's in mechanical engineering and convinced me to change to engineering.

So about halfway through college, I changed to mechanical engineering and stayed there and graduated in mechanical engineering and didn't know what I was going to do when I graduated because my brother said, "What are you going to do, drive a train?" And I'm like, "I don't even know what mechanical engineers do."

So anyways, my first job was five months long with a very small consulting firm, and then I got a job working at a larger firm, working for an ex-president, Tom Phoenix, who was the first person to take me to an ASHRAE meeting.

I went to my first ASHRAE meeting, only woman in the room. Before I left that meeting, I guess I was research promotion chair. So that's how my ASHRAE career started.

There's not a lot of women in ASHRAE. There's very few, actually, in my area. So you get recognized.

I was fairly young at the time, and so the knowledge and the people I met through ASHRAE and learning how to run ASHRAE meetings really helped me do well at starting my own firm.

Well, first of all, I never thought I would be ASHRAE president.

I started just to work in my chapter, and I was working in my chapter for many years. It's four years to be president of your chapter, and then I was a committee chair for two years before that. So six years at the chapter level.

And then I got appointed to a society-level committee, and I joined that and took a few years off from the chapter regional stuff and did society-level jobs.

Then I went back to be a regional vice chair in my region for membership promotion for three years, and then I moved into director and regional chair for my region for three years.



So yeah, I took my time because I had three kids and a business, and I had all I could handle on my plate. And I figured my kids needed to get grown before I could actually be ASHRAE president, so I waited until my son was, my son's 24 now, when he was out of high school, before I let my name go up to be treasurer.

My goal was to have a year that made a difference.

So I was focused on decarbonization, decarbonizing buildings. And so we were addressing climate change in my year. I felt like I needed to really go out with a bold statement. Felt like that's what we needed to do. We needed to stop beating around the bush when it came to climate change and decarbonization. We needed to hit it head-on, and that's what we did.

So my engagement in the new ASHRAE offices is I was chair of the building ad hoc committee, which was made up of a group of ASHRAE volunteers that were put together to help guide and steer that project.

And so we did, for three years, guide and steer that project. We were not on the design team. We were not on the construction team. We were simply the ASHRAE representatives that were responsible for delivering a final product.

In the middle of that project, COVID hit. We thought it was going to slow us down more than it did. It ended up not being a big deal, but we thought it was going to slow us down more than it did.

So I was actually representing ASHRAE somewhat as an owner's rep in that situation, and I really enjoyed that aspect of it.

Yes, absolutely. You can take a 1970s building and make it decarbonized and energy efficient. And we proved it can be done.

I have sold my business, so I'm currently pretty much retired, other than ASHRAE work.

I bike. I have three high-level bicycles that I bike, and I work out, and I try to stay on top of things.

And I teach for ASHRAE now, which is nice, and just doing ASHRAE work and trying to keep ahead of the game.

Well, my advice to young engineers is that climate change is probably going to rule your career throughout your career because it is a huge problem that the younger generation is going to have to face.

I don't think it's business as usual anymore. I think you've got to pay a lot of attention to buildings and building energy use and decarbonization. And I think that our younger generation needs to understand how important that is.

Well, there's two different ways, or there's probably a myriad of ways, but one of them is coming up through a chapter as a chapter president, up through a region to society.

The other is to go up through the technical side of ASHRAE, through the TCs, to a DAL position, and then to the board.



So there's two different ways to do it, and it depends on what somebody's passion is. If their passion is grassroots and members, then they should go through the chapters. If their passion is technical, they should go up through the TCs to the director at large position.