

# MEET Carolyn Faulk

IAPD recently met with A&C Plastics, Inc. CEO Carolyn Faulk about her career and the great work she is doing in her community through The Faulk Foundation.



## What is your current job title and what does your job entail?

I am CEO of A&C Plastics, Inc. I meet with the company's management team on a regular basis and oversee special projects for expansion.

## How long have you been with A&C Plastics, Inc.? How did you get started there?

I've been with A&C Plastics, Inc. for 43 years. In 1973, I was teaching school and keeping books for different businesses. I saw an opportunity that I thought would be fun to try. My husband, Myrl, and I saved US\$5,000, got an answering machine, ordered phone books from all over Texas and started selling plastic sheet. We had no inventory and no credit, just a telephone, desk and the will to make more than a teaching salary. I figured that if we tried this, we had a 50 percent chance of making it. If we didn't try it, we would never know if we could have made it. At the time, when we would get an order, we'd go buy it from our competitor, pay cash, deliver it and pray we got paid. We lived off of my teaching salary for three years and any money we made was put back into the company. We took a salary after five years in business. We have gone from a 200-square-foot metal building in 1973 to more than 250,000 square feet of office/warehouse, to date. In 1987, I bought out my ex-husband's half of the business and have been "rolling the dice" ever since.

## Have you always worked in the plastics industry?

My dad, Marvin Chipman, was a prisoner of war in World War II, had an 8th grade education and retired from the Navy in 1958. He needed a job and went to the library to learn about building boat windshields because my uncle needed his repaired. So, my dad started his business in our backyard. His warehouse was our one-car garage and in it he built an oven to heat plastics. I was always around plastics, even as a child. When I got in trouble as a young kid, my punishment was to go to work with him at 5:00 a.m. until 8 or 9:00 p.m. His company name was Aero Shield Plastics.

Since I've always been around plastics, it seemed like the natural thing to do when I wanted to start my own business. My dad was having fun trying to achieve the American dream after being held in a prison camp, not knowing if he was going to make it out alive. He taught me to be fearless and that life is short; to make every minute count. So being in the plastics business is fun to me, like playing a game and I'm playing to win.

## What jobs have you done in the past?

I flipped hamburgers when I was 13. I was a telephone operator at 16. I worked at different companies all through college doing secretarial work. I sold real estate in 1970, then worked part time from 1973 on. I also taught accounting at Houston Community College at night, from 1970-1976.

## What kind of education or training have you had?

I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration from Sam Houston State University. I learned to sell by having the desire to try anything that would improve my life's goals and listening to my Dad and my ex-husband.

## What do you like most about the work you do?

I like that it's constantly changing. This industry is interesting and there is never a dull moment. I am still learning something new each day.

## What has been the most interesting and/or unexpected thing about your job?

There is a lot more competition now than in the past. I love competition. It reminds all of us to not become a "legend in our own minds." There is always someone who can outsell you, outpurchase you and outwit you.

I am also in awe of how much the Internet helps you. There weren't email or computers in 1973. We were pretty antiquated. Today you have to constantly change your business to not only keep up with your competition but to give your customers the absolute best customer service. After all, they sign our paychecks.

## What would you say to someone who is new to the workforce about the plastics industry?

Stay focused, dream big and don't be afraid to roll the dice.

## What's next for you?

I'm focused on three things right now:

- Witnessing the awesome job that my team does and watching them excel in their career.
- Growing Faulk Properties, a real estate company I started in 1990 after I bought my first piece of property in 1975. I buy a piece of property, pay it off, rent it, then buy another; it's just like playing Monopoly.
- Spending time growing the nonprofit organization I started in 2008, The Faulk Foundation, so that we may help more people. [Editor's Note: for more information about The Faulk Foundation, see the Plastics in the Community article on p. 26.]