



“Every problem is an opportunity being mishandled.”



## JOSÉ RAFAEL DESPIAU RAMÍREZ *Partner, Chief Engineer & Laboratory Manager, Despiau Associates*

José Despiau’s love of “dirt” began early in his life. “Like many toddlers, playing with dirt and soil was fun and very exciting for me. Little did I know that the enjoyment was going to grow into the sheer satisfaction and joy I get from my profession. As the son of a geotechnical engineering consultant, my exposure to this field began early. I remember my delight while exploring my father’s engineering offices and laboratories, discovering cool toys (rubber mallets and other equipment) and fascinating types of soil (sand, clay, mud, etc.),” he said.

“Early in my adulthood, there was no doubt what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Each summer during my college years I worked in the field and assisted in my father’s laboratory. When I graduated from college, I started working as a field & laboratory manager. After a few years in the field, I became project engineer, which led me—years later—to be appointed chief engineer. Currently, I am also a partner at the firm,” Despiau said.

The young professional thoroughly enjoys the dynamics involved in providing geotechnical consulting services.

“I love being part of a project from the pre-design stages through its completion. Also, I have the opportunity to visit and experience locations that otherwise I might not have come to know,” Despiau stated.

He is also very sure of where his success comes from. “I believe the personal and professional successes I have obtained to date are the result of how my family influenced me and the education I received, along with effort and determination and—of course—a positive perspective and

attitude toward life. With God and family by my side, I see every problem as an opportunity being mishandled.”

Despiau’s passion for his profession is evident. “At the age of 33, I became the youngest president of the Puerto Rico chapter of the National Society of Professional Engineers after having served as its secretary and treasurer. I am also a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers, the Order of the Engineer, the Puerto Rico Society of Engineers, the American Society of Civil Engineers and the American Society for Testing & Materials. Last year, I was recognized as an outstanding young leader by the Puerto Rico Land Surveyors & Engineers Association’s Institute of Civil Engineers,” he said.

The young go-getter has a proven strategy for success: “Being persistent and determined—while knowing I have my wife and family’s full support.”

In the workplace, Despiau has become an inspiration. “I strive to provide my employees and co-workers with a professional environment that focuses on good ethics, integrity, health and safety,” he said.

For Despiau, the future is full of possibilities—and responsibilities. “Being a young professional engineer gives me the responsibility to look out for my profession, defend its principles—especially in terms of ethical conduct—and protect our community’s well-being. Having my work and efforts highlighted gives me the chance to be a role model for upcoming generations of professional engineers. This experience has become a driving force to continue working on behalf of my profession,” he said. ■

**Birth Date:**

November 1, 1974

**Place of Birth:**

San Juan, P.R.

**Education:**

Bachelor’s in civil engineering from Bradley University in Peoria, Ill. Master’s candidate in civil engineering (all required courses completed), Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico

**Marital Status:**

Married for nine years to Sugheil M. Colón Zayas; son, Salvador Enrique Despiau Colón, 2

**Favorite Food/Restaurant:**

Lawry’s The Prime Rib in Chicago

**Favorite Beverage:**

Diet Coke

**Favorite Place to Shop:**

Home Depot

**Dream Destination:**

Australia

**Car He Drives:**

Honda Ridgeline

**Nightstand Reading:**

“Good to Great,” by Jim Collins, and “Baits, Rigs and Tackle,” by Vic Dunaway

