



ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC

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*Your cooperative is committed to the provision of safe, reliable, and reasonably priced electricity and other energy related services while improving the communities we serve.*

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## McKown's Cabinets a family affair for Mullinaxes

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

**ARCHEL MULLINAX CAN UNDERSTAND** why some people think he and his son Gary have the last name McKown.

After all, the elder Mullinax was only 15 when he partnered with his neighbor to start McKown's Cabinets in 1969. Since then, the brand and business—which is served by Broad River Electric Cooperative—has grown from its humble roots in Cherokee County's Draytonville community to provide wood cabinet design, construction and installation for commercial and residential clients throughout the state.

Archel says he adopted Pat McKown as a father figure in his teens after his own father passed away.

"He had a little shop where he fiddled around and I just kind of hung around when I was younger," Archel says. "I always had a hammer and a nail and was building something."

McKown, a local contractor and carpenter, took Archel under his wing, teaching him the finer skills of cabinetry in the barn once used by McKown's Dairy. The company's first client was Providence Baptist Church in Gaffney, for which they built bookcases. It truly became a family affair when McKown's son and Archel's brother joined the business. In 2007, Archel bought the business outright and operates it alongside his son Gary, daughter Lindsey Deborde, and Gary's wife Sara.

Like his father before him, Gary spent his youth hanging around the shop learning carpentry as he grew.

"I remember the first thing I built down here," says Gary. "It was a little TV console that's still sitting in my momma's house."

Gary's son Collin continues that legacy. "He would come here after school and we would pay him to sweep up," Gary recounts. "I think we wrote him his first check when he was 15. Now he does all our finishing."

Also a part of the McKown's Cabinets team is shop manager Derrick Owens, fabricator and installer Cody McLaughlin, finishing



JOSH P. CROTZER

Broad River Electric members Archel (left) and Gary Mullinax operate McKown's Cabinets in the Draytonville community of Cherokee County.

assistant Matt Duffie and shop hand Ryan Davis.

The new generation at McKown's Cabinets is also represented by the addition of modern technologies that help the business keep pace with their growing demand. They typically complete a cabinet set per week, aided by automated machinery and computer software. It's an incremental evolution that allows the business to maintain their hand-crafted charm.

"We're taking the old and putting it with the new and making it work," says Archel.

It seems to be working for their client base. McKown's Cabinets continues to provide customized products for an increasing number of homeowners and businesses while also expanding the number of building contractors they work with.

"They've come after us," says Gary, explaining the demand for their services. "We don't spend a lot of time shaking the bush, so it's been word of mouth."

Whether you call them McKown or Mullinax, Archel and Gary and the rest of their family want to be known for their dependability and quality of work.

"We show up when we say we're going to show up and do what we say we're going to do," says Gary. "When you hire us, you know what you're getting."

# WHO POWERS YOU?

Inspired by someone making a difference in our community? Tell their story and they could win a prize.

We know our community is filled with unsung heroes who are making a difference. Let's celebrate them! This is your chance to honor the people who are making a real difference. Winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact they have on our community. All entries must be submitted by July 31, 2022.

Together, let's celebrate the power of human connections.



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