Kraig Kalashian

EO Member Story

In order to understand my background, I think it’s important to understand my parents. My parents are first generation Americans whose parents immigrated to the US in the beginning of the 20th Century. My parents grew up in the post-depression 1930’s and the survival skills they learned growing up have always been a part of my life. I grew up in a middle class Long Island suburb and have always lived within 60 miles of my childhood home.

I had an early interest in Architecture from the works of Frank Lloyd Wright with a particular interest in the budget inspired origins of Usonian Houses. These homes were intended to be homes built for the common man living on average wages. I was intrigued by Wright’s use of Design to compose an entire work including furniture, textiles, glass windows, wood screens and all of the décor. It led me towards a career in Design where I didn’t limit my aspirations simply to buildings but to the whole of the built environment. In particular I believed in the idea that simple materials could be elevated into works of art that affect the human spirit. I developed a manifesto that outlined how to go about using Design as the means to facilitate this elevation.

In 1998 I obtained a job at the Trump Organization where I learned about the business of real estate development and how to create value through the implementation highly targeted strategies. After Trump, I spent 6 years at a top Architecture and Design firm before launching my own company in 2006.

Since that time, I have been focused on two major goals: to Design for others and to develop my own Design driven properties to realize a maximum return on investment. Both of my companies have grown through the most recent recession by delivering on the idea that you can still do great work with limited resources – which is the direct result of the skill set that I was raised with. Our design practice has won numerous Hospitality Design awards while our development company has built affordable modern homes in the Poconos which sell at the top of the market well before completion. Under the name of Pocono Modern, I have created a retail line of furnishings and home goods that are sold online by a variety of retailers.

When I am not working, I enjoy spending time with my family, playing guitar, and cooking a variety of chef-inspired dishes. As much of my work involves hotel and restaurant design I have become very interested in the art of hospitality, and specifically cooking for others. My company is also involved with several philanthropic causes such as NJ Cares and Habitat for Humanity. I live in a1950’s ranch house in Chester with my wife Sara and two children, Hannah (6) and Simon (4).