

Episode 69 - Jason Ball - Giving Back [00:16:03]

Intro: Welcome to Profiles In Prosperity. The leading podcast for residential service contractors, sponsored by Service Roundtable and hosted by David Heimer.

David Heimer: Hi, this is David Heimer, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity. We're going to hear two great stories today, both from Jason Ball. Jason is the president of Arctic Bear Plumbing, Heating and Air in Endwell, New York. Arctic Bear is a great company. They provide outstanding support to their customers and they're well-known as wonderful contributors to their community. That's understandable because Jason Ball is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. I wanted to talk with Jason before Thanksgiving because these stories seem particularly appropriate in this difficult year as we head into the holiday season. So Jason Ball, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity. I want to start off at the beginning now I've known you and your lovely wife Brie for a while, and I want to start off with something that is sort of, not exactly work-related. And tell me about how you met Brie.

Jason Ball: Great story. Hey, thanks for having me on here first, and I'm glad to share this. I've met Brie in the strangest way. My son had dragged me down a hall and then down a set of stairs and then down another long hall to a big sanctuary at a church that was completely emptied out. But there was a door in the center of the room that was framed in and there's this young lady with her daughter and a couple of other kids opening the door and kind of playing with them with her, coming through the door into another world, I guess. And he points at her and goes, I want her to be my mom. And

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I'm like, kind of scary there Brody. And I just kinda ran away at that point, but I got to know her later on and she, later on, became the mom.

David Heimer: So, I mean, when he led you down the stairs, you were a divorced father of three, right?

Jason Ball: Yes. I had been raising three kids on my own since, like I told you one wasn't even one yet. And the oldest was just starting kindergarten and that was on my own.

David Heimer: Brody, recognized that a mom would be a good thing. And he picked out the appropriate mom and wife, all in one.

Jason Ball: He did, we've been together now 19 years and it's been the best 19 years of my life.

David Heimer: Hats off to Brody, he seemed to have a really good handle on what was necessary.

Jason Ball: Maybe he's a matchmaker and he doesn't even know it. Until he found out before, when I was getting ready to get engaged to her. He found out and he would go to her at the grocery store and kept getting dimes out of her, to go back to the candy machine there. And she was just kind of entertaining it with him. She didn't know what he was up to, but he was trying to beat me to the punch and get an engagement ring.

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David Heimer: So he wanted you guys to actually get married as well. That's great.

Jason Ball: He did and he needed a mom, they all did. I look back on those times and like I told you, I was on my own five years. My parents were there to help me on Saturdays because I had to work on Saturdays. But otherwise, during the week I had to find sitters and I went five years and I never missed a day of work. I've held it off, I've always been on top of it, always had people in line. We had a retired lady up the road that really just stepped up and she took care of everything. In fact, one Christmas, we got home and she and her son had shoveled our whole driveway for us. And they just showed up, took care of it, and got us in. I had to tell you, I had a great network of people in my neighborhood that just really supported us.

David Heimer: Community makes a huge difference, doesn't it?

Jason Ball: It really does. You know one day I needed a riding lawnmower, David. I couldn't push the lawnmower anymore and take care of the kids. It took too long. And just at that time, somebody showed up with \$750. I wasn't allowed to know where it came from. I never did know where it came from. But it was just what I needed to buy a riding lawnmower. Somebody just did that.

David Heimer: That's awesome. So, we're going to get into a little bit of another story about you kind of paying it back, frankly. The community stepped up and helped you. But you stepped up and helped the community as well. Before we do that, I want to set

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the stage just a little bit. Tell us a little bit about your company.

Jason Ball: Arctic Bear, we are 15 employees, we make two and a half million a year.

A little more, as of the close of October, we are 38.6% ahead of last year's numbers, which is amazing. We're a community-based company. We don't really have to advertise too much because we do so much within the community. And that's what brings us a lot of calls. Just a great all-around staff. I'm just really happy where we're at.

David Heimer: My part of the story is that in late August of this year, 2020, I contacted you on behalf of the Joseph Grow Foundation about a charitable project that is in your town. And I remember how you responded. Frankly, I'm calling somebody up and asking them if they can help out. It always feels a little uncomfortable when I make those calls. But you were the best because you said enthusiastically, "I was looking for something like this." We've had a really great year. And I just told my guys that we needed to find some way to give back." So this was a resident in your town who had contacted the Joseph Groh Foundation. Needed some help, needed a new boiler and a new air conditioning system. And you agreed to do it, you agreed to go and look at it. So tell us what you found.

Jason Ball: When you called, we basically said, we got it, we're going to do this, we'll do the whole thing. Don't worry about it. So, thinking, okay, I'll get, there will be a furnace. That's a piece of cake and all the furnace, air conditioner, easy. I get there and I find a whole steam boiler, probably from the forties. David, this thing was huge and just

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decrepit. And he actually hadn't had heat in over two years. He would keep the kerosene either in the basement.

David Heimer: I'm sorry he had kerosene. I was going to say, how are you in New York? And you're in upstate New York. How do you get by in the winter without a furnace?

Jason Ball: I get there and I meet a guy that has a lot of joy. He's raised five kids. He's got three older boys, two younger girls just like me, in the same situation. They're all young though. They can't help him, but they've all been going to college. One's going to UAlbany on a full medical scholarship. Now you've done a great job, and have nothing. And when I say nothing, you would have been blown away with what we saw. But here's a guy who's full of joy and he wants to work. He's {inaudible 06:04} all the time. He's got bees and he's got chickens and {inaudible 06:09}. But he takes me into the basement. He tells me he hasn't had heat. This old boiler sits there, that's 70 years old. And he tells me he's heating with a kerosene heater down there in the winter time and then he keeps one up on the main floor. There was no way they were keeping themselves even, probably remotely, the 60 degrees in that place, in the dead of winter. And 60 degrees in the dead of winter with no humidity it's cold. That's during the fifties most of the time. There's no way that these kerosene heaters were keeping up with this place for a couple of years.

David Heimer: He was disabled somehow. And he had done some work in our

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industry, right?

Jason Ball: Yeah. He did construction trade, more road construction and he had fallen off the back of a truck. And it damaged his vertebrae and also caused lung issues. So when he'd follow me up the stairs, he'd have to stop for a minute or two just to get his breath and get himself going again.

David Heimer: Yeah.

Jason Ball: Wonderful person I'm telling you. You really chose a great one. I couldn't wait to do it. When I saw the boiler, my heart sank because I knew that, wow, this is going to be this new project. But we loved it. We just dove in and your foundation was able to help him find a boiler for half the cost of what I would have spent on it.

David Heimer: So you found some other stuff there too, right? You took a look at the whole house and I really appreciate you doing this. And you decided that it was more than just a heating and air conditioning replacement.

Jason Ball: Yeah. What I found when I first walked into the basement. The first floor was coming into the basement in one room. So there was one room that's probably 12 by 14. And the whole one side of the floor was two inches below the joist. And it was just coming in. So I had a guy come and give me a quote for jacking up the floor. And then as we were looking at that, we noticed the basement windows using rough neighborhoods and the basement windows were just barely hanging on. So I went back

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to you guys and told you guys about that. And we also needed the chimney liner and the chimney was falling apart up on the roof, two stories up. And we got you guys a quote for that and they were all accepted. Everything was accepted. And we were a go and as we were looking at it further, there's masking tape holding the windows together throughout the whole house. So, I just thought, Greg, would you mind if I had a contractor come over and just give an estimate, let's just show an estimate of Joe Groh Foundation, and see what happens. And just a couple of days ago, I got the call and he's getting windows.

David Heimer: Awesome.

Jason Ball: Yeah. He's overjoyed. Now he can live comfortably and not have those stresses on him and he'll pass it forward in the ways that he can pass it forward.

David Heimer: So putting in a new boiler, there's a lot to that Isn't there? Got to take out the old furnace and put in a new boiler.

Jason Ball: That one had to be taken out in pieces, very messy. I'd have to say it takes about six hours to take that out.

David Heimer: Wow.

Jason Ball: And then put a new boiler in. We also took a radiator out of the second floor, with hundred-year-old pipes getting those bales apart, getting that out there. It

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wasn't fun. I think there were three of us laying on the floor, trying to pull and turn and twist without breaking anything. Well, we got that, we got the radiator in. We fixed all the veils throughout the house that were leaking and all the air releases. And then we'll just take care of it going forward until we've got him on our schedule. Once a year, we just can go out, do a service on it and make sure he's in good shape.

David Heimer: You guys for the best.

Jason Ball: {Cross talk 09:24} them out on a dune buggy ride next year.

David Heimer: Awesome. And fix the chimney, right? Put in a new liner. And then I saw pictures that they were up on the roof rebricking it all in.

Jason Ball: They did and we did the whole thing and then put a nice cap on it. They made a stainless steel liner. They went over and above for that. In fact, he had his whole crew there. He got six guys there just really got to go on, stepped up.

David Heimer: Fix the foundation issues?

Jason Ball: Yup. They came in and took care of that. They made quick work of that.

David Heimer: And then there was something on the basement windows too right?

Jason Ball: So yeah, they quoted, to do two basement windows, and then they were just going to block two in. And when they got there, they decided, at least just give them

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the two windows, let's do all four windows. That way you've got the light and we'll make sure it's all secure and they took care of all that too. Everybody was liking him, once he got there and met the man, they liked him.

David Heimer: Yeah, he's a heck of a guy, isn't he?

Jason Ball: He really is. I was thrilled to meet him. And he was nervous when I came at first. He didn't know what to expect. I thought, yeah, this isn't going to happen and I think we blew his mind.

David Heimer: Well, good. We started this story off with you talking about how people helped you along the way. And you have turned back and given back to the community in such a huge way, by helping this guy out. You got other people to participate, but the thing that's interesting is I bet this was great for your crew, was't it?

Jason Ball: It was. It was good for them to see that. And I think I kind of preach it all the time. I coached the Special Olympics and got 130 athletes and I literally just do it. I'm there every week and that's just my thing. I don't advertise that. That's my thing. And we have a mascot who has down syndrome. He's been the mascot for six years. He's actually been called up to the mascot hall of fame. Which we haven't been able to do because of COVID. But we're actually sending him out to the mascot hall of fame where he's going to be entered into it.

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So the guys see this all the time and I'm constantly telling them, you really got to do something out in the community. You're going to feel better about yourself. And you're going to see a different side of people and you're going to care more about your community. Most people in the triple cities always say, oh, I can't wait to get out of here and move to North Carolina. Me, no, I love it here, I love the people. And the more I volunteer, the more I do the Special Olympics. No way I'd ever leave, you're part of their family. But for the guys to see this and see that we're really going to step up and even do more. Hopefully, we'll bring them out to try and give a little bit to the community too.

David Heimer: I think it's also interesting. You do this because you think it's the right thing to do and it's just part of who you are. But it's also good for your business, isn't it? I mean, I know that's not why you're doing it, but it is good for your business.

Jason Ball: That's terrific for my business. It's funny, because I really didn't do the Special Olympics or any of that for the business. I think I enjoy doing that stuff. I've just always been more of a giver. And people know when it's genuine, they know you're just, boots on the ground. You're just trying to drive everybody forward. You're not making it up, you're not making it happen. It's just natural. And I think if you're doing that it comes back full circle. But don't expect it to, I mean, if it doesn't, it doesn't. I've got a lot of families that I know that I've done stuff for being a part of their lives, whether it be coaching or whatever, they don't use my company. That's fine. I do it because I enjoy it.

David Heimer: Well, good for you. What else should we know about that project?

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Anything else.

Jason Ball: The Gill Group Foundations, went far and above. And this man's worries for the next 30 years of home maintenance are pretty much gone.

David Heimer: Excellent.

Jason Ball: And to have that comfort, being handicapped in any way has got to be a huge relief because we don't take care of our disabilities. They are restricted of what they can get when they should be the last people that are restricted of what they should get. So you guys did - I just, I'm impressed.

David Heimer: Well, thanks. Joseph Groh Foundation is a great foundation. They've helped so many people and are focused on our industry. The thing about people in our industry is that we depend on our bodies. And if something happens and there's an accident, you can't count on your body to provide an income for your family anymore. So it's really important that people have disability insurance. That's one part of it. But it's also important as a community that we step up and help people and you've been a great part of that. And the Joseph Groh Foundation is a great part of it. And a lot of people donate to the Joseph Groh Foundation and donate their time as well. So it is {cross talk 13:44}.

Jason Ball: I was thrilled and honored that you called me on that, I really was, made my night.

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David Heimer: Well, thanks for doing it. You did a fantastic job. That's such a great story. We'll look for another good project. Jason, thank you so much for doing this with me. I really appreciate it and I look forward to talking to you again in the future.

Jason Ball: Always a pleasure talking to you, David. Thank you.

David Heimer: Hi, this is David again. I hope you liked hearing about Jason and his amazing project. It's inspiring, right? Well, I have a small favor to ask of you. We put on this podcast as a contribution to our industry. We don't get paid to do it, we don't have any advertising, we don't have any sponsors. Don't get me wrong. It's a pleasure to do it and I love the opportunity to talk with people in our industry. Nevertheless, it takes time and money to put it on, that's our contribution. In return, I'd like you to make a contribution as well. I'd like you to contribute to the Joseph Groh Foundation. You heard about the Groh Foundation and Jason's story. The Groh Foundation provides support to people in our industry who are suffering from life altering illnesses and accidents. It's a fabulous organization.

And I got to tell you, they could really use your help. Doesn't matter how much you give every little bit supports people in our industry who need help just like the family in Binghamton New York, that Jason helped. So if you would please go to josephgrohfoundation.org. Groh is spelled G R O H. So it's josephgrohfoundation.org. Click on the donate button. If you think about it, we all have a lot to be grateful for. I'm

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grateful for your support. I hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving and a wonderful holiday season with your loved ones.

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