

Teen who wants to be civil engineer gets hard hat tour of new GL Homes project

By Alex Kushel
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GL Homes Director of Land Development Anthony LoFurno and GL Homes Project Engineer Heather Swanson talk about the Valencia Grand project site with Boys & Girls Club member Kelvin Rolle, an aspiring civil engineer.. (Tracey Benson Photography)

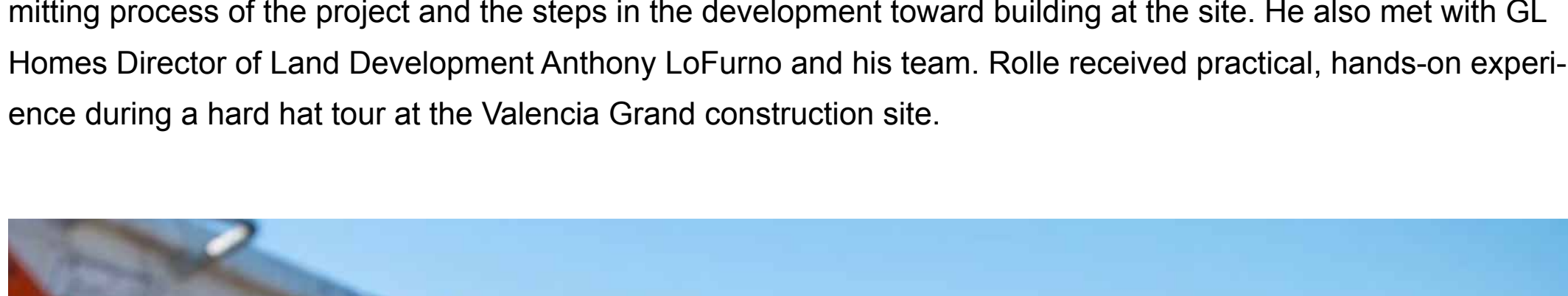
GL Homes recently gave high school senior Kelvin Rolle, an aspiring civil engineering student, an exclusive hard hat tour of its new construction site at Valencia Grand in Boynton Beach.

Rolle, who attends The Benjamin School, is a 2023 Palm Beach County Youth of the Year finalist for the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Beach County, where he has been a member for 11 years. GL Homes learned about Rolle's interest to attend college for civil engineering during a holiday gift drive event. The company provided a \$1,000 engineering scholarship to Rolle, who is just the second recipient of the honor.

"We get really excited when we are able to engage with a promising young person who wants to come into this industry," said Sarah Alsofrom, GL Homes director of community relations. "We need engineers and not enough young people are going into the engineering field. We are looking for the next generation of talent. When we do find someone like Kelvin who wants to learn about what we do, we are really excited about that."

Alsofrom said GL Homes has partnered with the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Beach County since 2017, which has included sponsoring holiday gift toy drives and hunger action relief programs.

GL Homes Project Engineer Heather Swanson and her team met with Rolle at its Boynton Beach office before the tour. He was able to learn details of the team's plans of how the site was started, the actual design, the permitting process of the project and the steps in the development toward building at the site. He also met with GL Homes Director of Land Development Anthony LoFurno and his team. Rolle received practical, hands-on experience during a hard hat tour at the Valencia Grand construction site.



The Benjamin School senior Kelvin Rolle and GL Homes Director of Land Development Anthony LoFurno talk about the Valencia Grand project in Boynton Beach. (Tracey Benson Photography)

"It's a fun day for me and they were awesome from the start," Rolle said. "They made me feel so involved and to help me be a part of it and to understand what was going on. I was able to see all the plans on paper and how the design was mapped out so it's really cool and seeing everything is accounted for. It's way deeper than I thought it was at first and you can take it for granted. It was cool to meet the people who play a role in it and are behind all of this. It helped me before I go to college know what to look for and what to expect when going into this field. It reinforced this is actually what I want to do."

Rolle grew up using his hands to build and fix items around the home. He also has a godfather who is a mechanical systems engineer. Rolle was able to continue toward his career path while taking engineering classes at Roosevelt Middle School in West Palm Beach. Rolle will be attending Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University to pursue civil engineering.

"I am probably one of the only kids my age who knows what they want to do," he said. "Everyone around me is still trying to figure it out. I want to inspire others."

LoFurno said the majority of younger students have been drawn to computer engineering and robotics while participating in the STEM programs in school. He said he was intrigued after learning Rolle wanted to pursue civil engineering.

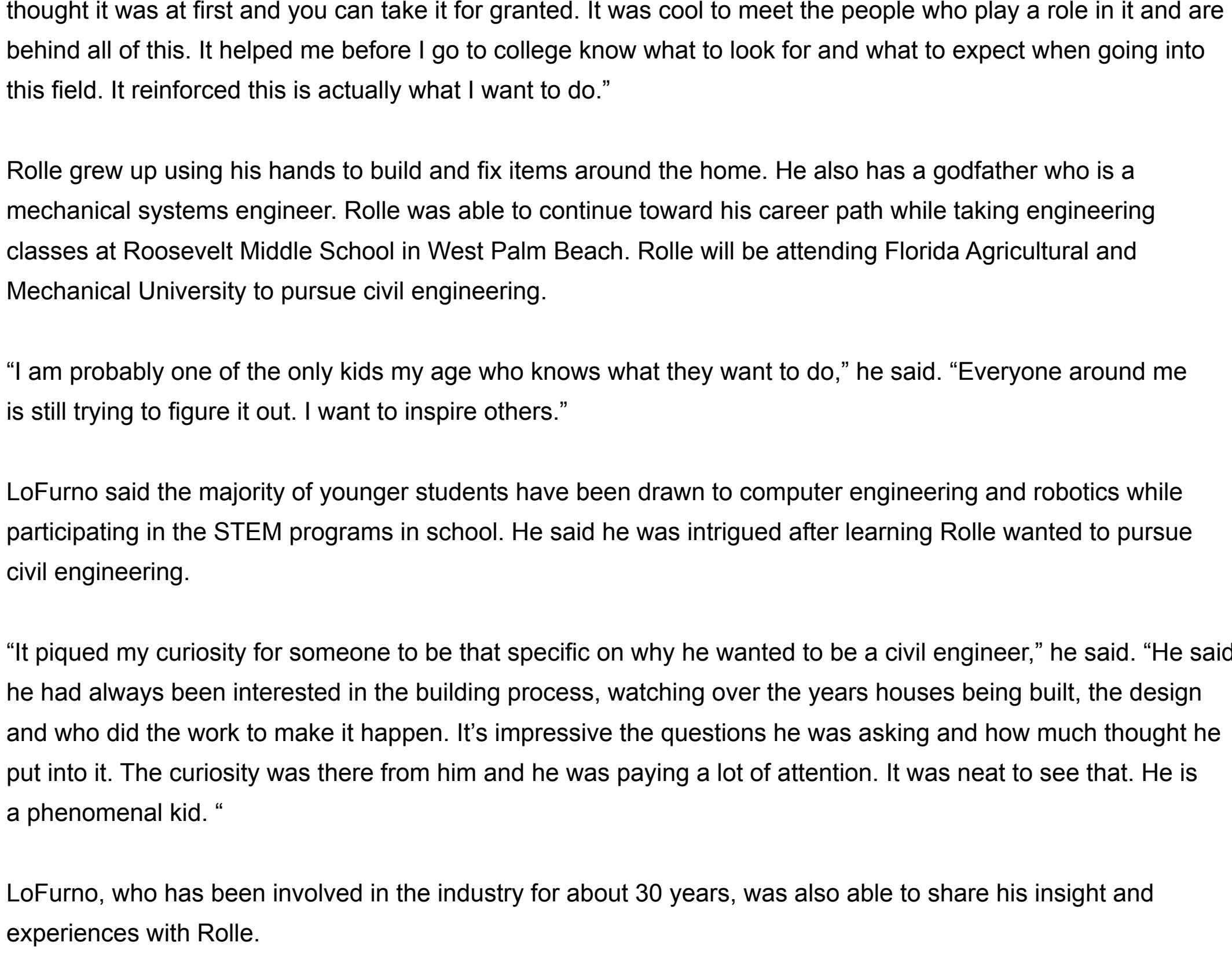
"It piqued my curiosity for someone to be that specific on why he wanted to be a civil engineer," he said. "He said he had always been interested in the building process, watching over the years houses being built, the design and who did the work to make it happen. It's impressive the questions he was asking and how much thought he put into it. The curiosity was there from him and he was paying a lot of attention. It was neat to see that. He is a phenomenal kid. "

LoFurno, who has been involved in the industry for about 30 years, was also able to share his insight and experiences with Rolle.

"It's an extremely rewarding business to be in and it's a lot of fun," he said. "It's an industry that I love. We do not have a lot of younger people coming into the industry. We want to talk to them and encourage them. It's an amazing opportunity and there are so many different facets of this industry from the development and construction side to working as a consultant, subcontractor and for the builder. The opportunities are endless. It's a great career."

LoFurno has been involved in the land development in several areas, including Boca Raton, Delray Beach and Boynton Beach. He recalls farm fields on Hagen Ranch Road turning into communities, the extension of roads and the rapid new construction on Lyons Road.

"This is the primary area we have done development since I have been with GL," he said. "It's phenomenal to see the growth. It's a cool thing to be able to go back and look at developments that you did."



GL Homes Director of Land Development Anthony LoFurno, Kelvin Rolle, GL Homes Project Engineer Heather Swanson and Kelvin's mother LaTishia Rolle toured the new Valencia Grand construction site in Boynton Beach. (Tracey Benson Photography)

Rolle's mother, LaTishia, accompanied him on the hard hat tour and was grateful to the GL Homes team.

"It's very exciting and he has always wanted to be a civil engineer," she said. "This brings it all together for him and gives him a real-life example. This gives him a great opportunity before he goes off to college to really make sure this is what he wants to do. He is loving this right now."

Kelvin's parents met while working at the Boys & Girls Club. LaTishia said it's been special for her children to have this opportunity as well.

"It brings life back full circle," she said. "I knew the things that I tried to instill in the club members there so I wanted those same things for my children. I just knew the Boys & Girls Clubs would provide those wonderful opportunities for them. The opportunities have exceeded what they were previously. We never expected something like this to happen for him to explore his career choice in high school."

Kelvin also competes in varsity football, wrestling and track and field at The Benjamin School in North Palm Beach. He wrapped up his final varsity football season this past fall while playing on defense with his twin brother, Kaleb, who was a 2022 Palm Beach County Youth of the Year finalist.

Kelvin was selected as the 2023 Youth of the Year for the Florence De George Boys & Girls Club of West Palm Beach. He is one of seven nominees for the Palm Beach County Youth of the Year award. The winner will be announced on Feb. 3.

"It feels great to show everyone what the club has done for me and the type of person that the club has helped me become," he said. "My favorite aspects have been engaging with younger members and being a positive role model. The club has allowed me to build relationships with a lot of the young kids and to help them. I have put so much time and energy into the Boys & Girls Club and it would be the perfect ending."

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