

Are there any other careers you considered?

I've thought about it and to tell you the truth this is my first love. I've been very lucky over my life that I also do things on the side. I teach at Florida State University, I teach budget and finance and personnel management. It's really fun – a whole other world. I've always had something on the side that kind of keeps me going.

What was the turning point in your career?

I was running this construction company – and mind you I'm not very handy with a hammer, so I really had to learn the construction business from the ground up – and I did that for about six years. My wife and I were on vacation in Florida and we were at Disney World. There is a series of strip malls there and it's the same thing over and over again. I turned to my wife and said, "This is not what I do for a living and it's really depressing, I have to do something different." It's the only job that I've ever had that wasn't my cup of tea. So that motivated me to go back to school. I thought, "If I'm going to go back to school I want to do something that I can feel like I've made a difference in the world."

How has the transition gone in your new job?

They have been so welcoming here (at New Horizons) and you can just see the management team and the board of directors, these are rock stars and I feel like I got plopped into a group of rock stars. I'm really excited to be working with them. I'm just excited to roll up my sleeves. There is so much excitement in terms of where we're heading with this organization.

What's the most important part of your role here?

As CEO, it's setting the tone for the organization. Everybody in this organization is equally important. I don't care if you're at the front desk, if you've been here for 100 years or you're a new employee. If you give people a chance to have input and help shape the organization and help to create that as part of the vision, it's a unique position to be in to be able to listen and to implement ideas.

What's the biggest challenge?

I'm the new guy here so the first challenge is getting the community to know who I am. A lot of times people feel like nonprofits are there because they want something. I want to give as much as I get, so I really want to



Snack Time: Brauer checks a batch of chocolate chip cookies with client Jose Torres in the kitchen at New Horizons.

exchange. The challenge is getting to know all the players around here and I'm really excited about learning the business folks here and seeing what their needs are.

What are your plans for this organization?

I hope to do some mixing and mingling and different community event, certainly would be open to have anybody come tour the campus here. I hope to go out and personally meet local politicians. I just expect to be out there a lot.

What is the most rewarding part your job?

Seeing the success of people and knowing that we are going to challenge both our own and other people's expectations.

How do businesses fit into New Horizons?

Again, I feel very blessed I fell into this field, but I realize if I were running a major company today, if I didn't have exposure to this business, how would I learn about how cool it is to have people with disabilities on your staff? As you're growing up and you're trying to find your way in the world, you try to fit in. And really what I've learned from all of this is the things that make us different make us interesting. To have somebody with a disability on your team, it's just a piece of who they are but it makes it interesting. It changes the workplace a little to broaden your own perspective and your own vision of what somebody could achieve.

What is one of your memories at New Horizons so far?

I have to say coming on the campus the first day and meeting the clients, it's just absolutely overwhelming to be in a place where you

feel like you're coming home. I can't wait to get to know the folks and their stories. I loved meeting some of the folks for the first time.

Is there anything you would have done differently in your career?

I don't think so. I feel like everything I've done in my career has lead me to where I am today. So even the construction job that I ended up doing for almost six years, it wasn't my favorite, but I learned so much.

What are your hopes for New Horizon?

Position ourselves so that we are on the forefront, the cutting edge of what's possible for folks with disabilities. There's no reason we can't do that. I think we have a great team here. We're very lucky here in Southern California to have a 7-acre campus. It's amazing looking at new ways to provide for folks and I just think it's going to be a really exciting time. We have all the ingredients to do something pretty amazing.

Who are the people you admire most?

When I was younger, going back to college at Berkeley and working in the restaurant business, I met a mentor who was another serial entrepreneur. He had such confidence that I feel like I learned so much from him just about being confident and taking a risk and diving in and doing business. With him I learned you have to take a chance, you have to learn the business side of stuff and then you take a chance.

What are your hobbies?

I love to hike. I'm an avid tennis player. I read a lot. I have two amazing grown daughters. I'm married so we love to travel together, it's the way I get everybody back together. If you come into my office, you'll see a lot of travel posters because I love going to other countries and other states and learning and observing.

How long do you plan to stay at New Horizons?

I'm 57 and at some point, I'm going to retire. I'll find something new to do but I'll tell you I'll always be on a board or connected to folks with disabilities because it's just been such a rewarding thing for me personally.



Tech Talk: Clients Anulfo Jackson, left, and Raul Moran discuss video projects with Brauer in campus' Tech Media Lab.