

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

April 2003

WTCA Update

www.woodtruss.com

A Face on the Industry: Community Partnering by Carl Schoening, WTCA Membership Committee Chair

Amazing as it might sound, it has been suggested that I once again take to the Soapbox. I know you are all wondering, "what more does this guy have to say?" Well, here I go.

Component manufacturers across the country tend to be successful, respected members of the community. Why not leverage that to promote our industry as a whole? If there is a local chapter in your area it is easier. Create a community projects committee. The committee can search for outreach projects in your area. The more visible we, as an industry, can be at the local level, the more power we will have as a national organization. Our elected leaders read the papers from their area. If component manufacturers, our national association and chapters are visible at home, we will be more easily recognized when we visit the Washington, D.C. offices of Representatives and Senators in Congress. I have always been a big fan of pitching in and helping where possible. Here are a couple of ways to do it on a local level.

Homeless shelters are certainly at the forefront of everyone's mind. If component manufacturers join together on this type of high visibility project, the rewards to all will be great. Community leaders, building officials, builders and developers will associate those participating companies with charitable deeds instead of just a company after their business. This type of project shows our industry in a very positive light. In many cases, you can get other vendors to participate as well. Associate members are willing to help customers and are looking for that type of publicity too.

If there is not a chapter in your area, contact the other component manufacturers and discuss the possibility of joint participation on a project. Eagle Scouts are always searching for that one project and can always use a little help. In one case I can remember a component manufacturer helped an Eagle Scout design and build a series of footbridges through a hiking area. The Scout accomplished his task and a marker at every bridge had the component manufacturer's name listed on it. How valuable is that type of advertising? Anyone associated with that Scout Troop that knew of the project and knew of the component manufacturer. When they need materials for a personal project, who would you guess they think of first? Do you think they thought of our industry as a generous community partner? It might have been if the component manufacturers of the area all participated.

Doing these types of projects has a greater value than you might recognize. Generally, Eagle Scouts receive recognition from state or national elected officials. This could be your way of opening the door to your Representative's office. If they see component manufacturers as visible

members of the community, they will be more willing to fight on your behalf. If homelessness is one of their campaign issues, participating in projects designed to lessen this plight will definitely make you a valuable ally. Habitat for Humanity projects are easy for our industry to be involved with.

If you don't feel that component manufacturers in your area can make this type of commitment, there are other ways to be acknowledged by elected officials. You can make donations to their campaigns. That puts you on a list. That list always comes out when you call or visit. They will recognize you and be more willing to listen. You can also volunteer as a campaign worker. This takes a lot more time, but sometimes puts you in more intimate contact with the candidate. If you are in the same room, you have a better chance of them hearing your problem and they can more easily associate a face (and a vote) with the issue. You must be sure that elected officials know the value of the component industry. How many jobs does the component industry provide in your area? How many tax dollars are attributed to component sales? This is the type of information we need to convey on a local level. Elected officials need to know our industry's value to the community. You must make them aware. Educate them and support them so they will support you.

There are a number of ways to promote our industry and get support for our cause. It first takes commitment at the local level. Component manufacturers must begin to think of themselves as the first line of defense against bad legislation. Our association does a fantastic job in protecting and defending our industry, but it needs everyone's participation. It is too easy to simply do business and allow someone else to defend our industry. If we don't begin to work as one, we will be at the mercy of others setting rules for our industry. When that happens, we will see industry value and product margins erode.

I will leave you with this challenge: Get out there and find ways to promote our industry in your community. Talk to the other manufacturers in your area. Create an atmosphere of cooperation. Find ways to open the door to the office of your elected officials. Look for ways to improve communication and support our association activities. These things will keep our industry healthy and prosperous.

Carl Schoening is National Manager, Plated Truss Products for Simpson Strong-Tie.

[SBC HOME PAGE](#)

Copyright © 2003 by Truss Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. For permission to reprint materials from SBC Magazine, call 608/310-6706 or email editor@sbcmag.info.

The mission of Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC) is to increase the knowledge of and to promote the common interests of those engaged in manufacturing and distributing of structural building components to ensure growth and continuity, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. SBC will take a leadership role on behalf of the component industry in disseminating technical and marketplace information, and will maintain advisory committees consisting of the most knowledgeable professionals in the industry. The opinions expressed in SBC

are those of the authors and those quoted solely, and are not necessarily the opinions of any of the affiliated associations (SBCC, WTCA, SCDA & STCA).