



# Working for Your Workers

## Connecting the Dots: Truss Manufacturer to Family Home

by Sean D. Shields

Making the connection between manufacturing trusses and identifying what holds the roof above our heads may be the best solution to the industry's work force shortage.

In a recent survey of youth conducted by the respected Gallup organization, "teachers," "law enforcement" and "computer technology" were the three most popular responses when asked what field they wanted to work in when they grew up. Shockingly, "truss manufacturer" did not make the top ten. In fact, none of the children surveyed gave this as an answer.

It is easy to look on the surface and explain this by pointing out that almost all youth are surrounded by teachers who act as instructors and mentors, so this is a logical top choice for kids. Youth also see law enforcement in their local community, see them portrayed on television and in movies as protectors, and this also follows as something they would aspire to be. Finally, given the amount of technology that surround the youth of today, it isn't at all surprising that this profession is foremost on their minds.

However, following this logic, "truss fabricator" should also be near the top of their list because almost all of them live in a house or an apartment that relies on the components made by these manufacturers to provide protection and warmth from the elements. The biggest problem is that relatively few of them know about it.

The best long-term solution to begin addressing the work force shortage facing the industry is to draw the connection between the components you manufacture and the homes they live in. The best place to start is by raising awareness of your company and products within your local community. This approach also has intrinsic benefits, such as creating additional opportunities for you to increase local market share, and obtaining assistance for employee training—a key to retaining your work force—which may be available through your local work force and economic development boards.

"We believe firmly that if you give to your community and invest in education, it comes back to you," says Barry Dixon, True House. "We find that by being involved in the community, they become aware of who we are and they come to us both for our products and for employment."

True House has participated in builder trade shows and career expos for four years and with local community organizations for even longer. Through these shows they've raised their exposure not only to a wider group of builders, but also to students who are prospective employees that might otherwise never have heard of them. For their booth, they've built a small model home out of roof truss and wall panels, and they run a short three-minute video in the booth highlighting the products they manufacture.

Currently, True House is creating a dream home to raise money for a local charity, and they're shooting a commercial to highlight the employment opportunities available at their plant.

Builder trade shows and career expos are an extremely effective way to highlight the connection between, as well as the benefits of, structural building components in residential and commercial construction. Rick Parrino, Plum Building Systems, has been exhibiting at shows for six years. He's also been closely involved in the

Continued on page 28

# The Reality of Working Smarter, Not Harder is Here

Increasing production and quality on your wall panel line isn't a matter of adding labor; it's adding the right automation and using your valuable labor dollars elsewhere.

Viking's Wall Panel Assembly equipment, whether you choose our manual or our powered conveyors, offers walk through design, Panel-Pro event driven software, installation and training, unparalleled service and support, and our 30-year commitment to quality and customer satisfaction. Please contact us today to find out how we can help you work smarter, not harder, to achieve your business goals.

# VIKING

## WALL PANEL ASSEMBLY SYSTEM



Component Assembly



Squaring Station



Sheathing Bridge



Routing Bridge



Framing Station

**"No automation manufacturer drives more nails. VIKING. The Powerhouse of Automation."**



For more information, call us toll free today at:  
**1-800-328-2403**  
or visit [www.vikingeng.com](http://www.vikingeng.com)



5750 Main Street N.E. • Minneapolis, Minnesota 55432-5437 U.S.A.  
763-571-2400 • Fax: 763-571-7379  
e-mail: [sales@vikingeng.com](mailto:sales@vikingeng.com) Employee owned since 1981

©2005 Viking Engineering & Development, Inc. The Viking ship logo, is a registered trademark of Viking Engineering & Development, Inc.

For reader service, go to [www.sbcmag.info/adt.htm](http://www.sbcmag.info/adt.htm)

**S.T.A.R.**  
Stock Truss Roller for Accelerated Replacement  
**PROGRAM**

**KLAISSLER**  
1014 PROGRESS STREET  
MUSKOGEE, OK 74453  
PHONE: 918-687-4444  
WWW.KLAISSLER.COM

For reader service, go to [www.sbcmag.info/klaisler.htm](http://www.sbcmag.info/klaisler.htm)

**WTCA**

**Many Thanks to Our TTT  
Online Training Partners**

**Robbins Engineering, Inc.**

**MII MiTek**

**EAGLE**

**ALPINE**

**TRUSWAL SYSTEMS**  
INTELLIGENT BUILDING SOLUTIONS

For details, contact  
WTCA at  
608/274-4849  
or visit  
[www.sbcindustry.com](http://www.sbcindustry.com).

**WTCA**

For reader service, go to [www.sbcmag.info/wtca.htm](http://www.sbcmag.info/wtca.htm)

## Working for Your Workers

Continued from page 26

educational outreach efforts of his chapter, the Iowa Truss Manufacturers Association (ITMA) in presentations to building and fire service officials.

"This outreach makes a difference. Our company is gaining name recognition, and as our company grows, our employees benefit from both more opportunities for advancement within the plant and additional training opportunities available through local grants," says Parrino.

Within the community, Plum is also active in raising money for local charities and has an ongoing agreement with Habitat for Humanity of Iowa to donate components. That work has earned them recognition locally and helped them get grant money for employee training. Not only does the money go toward production, design and safety education, but it also helps to fund personal growth seminars for Plum's employees.

Another company that has benefited from its relationship with the local community is Shelter Systems Limited. Through the help of their economic development board, they were able to get a Maryland state training grant to provide additional training for their employees. In addition to participating in trade shows to promote their company, they also open their doors and invite members of the community to use their facility for their meetings.

"The Chamber of Commerce holds its meetings in our board room, and other groups do too. We also give a number of plant tours each week, for customers, competitors and students, and let the facility speak for itself. It's a great marketing tool," says Dwight Hikel, Shelter Systems Limited.

By opening their doors to the public and seizing on opportunities to draw them in, Shelter Systems Limited exponentially increases the number of individuals aware of the quality of their products and workplace environment. This, in turn, is leading to additional business opportunities and more individuals seeking out employment with their company.

Shelter has also gone the extra mile in reaching out to its local community college by donating money to set up a scholarship with the company's name on it. It's a significant investment in creating recognition of the industry amongst individuals who will soon be looking for jobs. It also solidifies that connection between "truss manufacturer" and the house they grew up in. The scholarship was established within the last year, so only time will tell how many recipients come to work in the industry. **SBC**

*In the June/July issue, this column will explore how other component manufacturers have successfully built relationships with their local educational institutions and discovered a wealth of potential employees.*

**SAVE 18%**  
**ON YOUR NEXT PROJECT**



[www.southernpine.com](http://www.southernpine.com)

504/443-4464 • FAX 504/443-6612

For reader service, go to [www.sbcmag.info/spc.htm](http://www.sbcmag.info/spc.htm)

**DISCOVER THE COST SAVINGS** when using Southern Pine, offering superior strength, stiffness, and plate-holding ability. The Southern Pine Council's new brochure *Southern Pine for Structural Components* details these savings using a direct design comparison between lumber species for a typical project. Request or download your free copy at [www.southernpine.com](http://www.southernpine.com), your source for the latest Southern Pine lumber information.

**SOUTHERN PINE: YOUR CHOICE FOR COMPONENTS**

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS™

THE FUTURE OF FRAMING

[www.sbcmag.info](http://www.sbcmag.info)

Dear Reader:

Copyright © 2006 by Truss Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. For permission to reprint materials from **SBC Magazine**, call 608/310-6706 or email [editor@sbcmag.info](mailto: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).



6300 Enterprise Lane • Suite 200 • Madison, WI 53719  
608/310-6706 phone • 608/271-7006 fax  
[www.sbcmag.info](http://www.sbcmag.info) • [admgr@sbcmag.info](mailto:admgr@sbcmag.info)