

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE (FORMERLY WOODWORDS)

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"The Builders / WTCA Chapter Partnership" by Joe Kannapell, WTCCA

"All politics is local," said Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, in his primer on politics. Even though "Election 2000" is a national election, all the Presidential candidates are down in the precincts, kissing babies and visiting schools. Politicians start to "schmooze" their constituents long before the November 2000 Election.

Shouldn't WTCA Chapters begin to "schmooze" their builder customers way before a project gets held up because of a truss problem? The WTCCA—the DC Capital Area Chapter—has begun to foster a productive alliance with the local homebuilders association. This alliance works for at least 3 reasons:

1. Homebuilders are our customers and we need to understand their perspective, on a formal association basis, not just informally in the normal course of business. Problems that affect builders will affect us.
2. The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) is one of the most powerful political groups in America. Local Homebuilders associations take on many tough issues with regulators, such as zero growth, escalating land development fees and zoning issues. They are likely to know City and County government people by their first names. We can "piggyback" on their access.
3. We have an opportunity to proudly represent our (somewhat subterranean) industry as a united, professional group. The voice of a local chapter, backed by a strong national WTCA, is much stronger than the voice of the "lone wolf" manufacturer.

We have had immediate response from 2 local homebuilder groups in two separate Virginia municipalities, when permits were held up because of truss issues. In the first instance, we suffered because we were not included in a private meeting among builders and the County. In the second instance, the results were much more immediate because we were speaking to the City alongside the builders.

How do we begin? Each WTCA Chapter should develop a plan to get on all the local homebuilder's monthly (or quarterly) meeting agendas. Beyond the benefit of gaining visibility, is the opportunity to listen and learn what we can do to improve business for all concerned.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Joe has provided wonderful insight here. The model suggested by Joe for all chapters fits well into our chapter theme for the year of "putting a human face on the truss industry." We need to add the fire service, building officials, city, county, state and national governmental officials to Joe's list. As

Joe said well, all politics is local and we can be reactive to the negative impacts on our industry or be proactive and ensure positive impacts on our industry. The choice is truly ours.

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