

June/July 2001

President's Message



MARY PAT KELLER

"Open Quarterly Meetings: Let Your Voice be Heard!" by Mary Pat Keller, 2001 WTCA President

As readers of *WOODWORDS*, you know how strongly I feel about being actively involved in WTCA. If you're unsure how to become more involved in WTCA, one way to jump in is to attend an Open Quarterly Meeting. These meetings are a great way to see the depth of knowledge that this association has on all the issues it is dealing with and, from this foundation, learn how the decisions about our association are made. It doesn't matter if you're not a Board Member; you can voice your opinions

and influence WTCA's position on issues. We are committed to the belief that the best industry-wide decisions are made when we have all the facts before us, and members who bring us new facts help us greatly.

Recently, I think that WTCA had one of its best Open Quarterly Meetings ever. This meeting, held in Washington, DC, included WTCA's first Legislative Conference. The purpose of this conference was to let those of us who attended make contacts with members of Congress and other key governmental and trade agencies. We met with our elected officials and members who sit on key legislative committees to discuss the issues affecting our industry.

Most of us were somewhat intimidated the first day. We were on their turf, playing with a set of rules we were not altogether familiar with, and of course, trying to make a good impression. However, fears were put to rest with the first meeting. We were all pleasantly surprised by how forthcoming and accessible everyone was. In addition, WTCA staff planned everything so well that we were all relaxed. By the end of our meetings, all in attendance were in the swing of things.

The Legislative Conference served several purposes: It gave us a better understanding of how the legislative process works; it allowed us to introduce WTCA's perspective to our Congressional Representatives and other government agencies; and it got WTCA members actively involved in WTCA business. We can all get mired down in our own little world, but a meeting like this makes the benefits of our association apparent. We exchanged ideas, solved problems, developed relationships and gave direction to the legislative and other governmental decision-makers who can have a huge impact on the success of our businesses.

One of the things I learned was that not all of the legislators are up to speed on every issue. That would be a daunting task. I now understand the role of the legislative assistant (LA) and its importance. LAs are the people who the congressperson relies on to know the issues and their

constituents' attitudes about them. I found speaking with these assistants to be a great opportunity to educate my lawmakers about WTCA's position on important issues and also to introduce them to a segment of small business of which they were mostly unaware.

Some of what made this Open Quarterly Meeting stand out as one of the best was the presence of a lot of new faces. Members who hadn't attended meetings in the past found their way to this meeting. It was great to meet them and learn about their businesses. But it was even better to see them becoming engaged in the meetings and contributing their opinions about WTCA. This is why we formed an association, and this is what will make it thrive—involved members.

With the success of this meeting, we unanimously decided to hold a Legislative Conference in Washington, DC every spring as our Open Quarterly Meeting. However, there will be three more Open Quarterly Meetings before we meet in Washington, DC next spring. I urge you to attend one of them and get the full benefit of your WTCA membership. By attending, you will see first-hand all that this association has to offer to help your business grow as well as make a few new friends in this industry. After you attend, I promise, you will have a better sense of why you joined WTCA in the first place.

[SBC HOME PAGE](#)

Copyright © 2001 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).