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WTCA Update

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A Grassroots Memoir by Bob Becht, WTCA Membership Committee Chair

Grassroots success is the tie that binds the WTCA membership. What are you doing to grow the roots of change?

I am writing this at the WTCA spring Open Quarterly Meeting in San Diego. I couldn't be doing this in a better place. At every turn I am faced with national and state issues that will have to be addressed and implemented by a grassroots work by the chapters. At the Membership Committee meeting we focused on strengthening the bond between the chapters and WTCA-National for the benefit of both.

As Membership Committee Chair, my goal is to get the grassroots closer to the grass. Some chapters and many members are unaware of the work WTCA is doing. The chapters need to be more engaged with WTCA-National. To accomplish this we have set up a monthly chapter presidents teleconference to strengthen our chapters, provide support and share grassroots accomplishments. An example of grassroots success that quite a few of our chapters are involved with is Truss Technology Workshop (TTW) presentations. TTWs have been presented to code officials and builders to fix problems. A thousand good ideas are floating around out there; hosting TTW presentations fosters communication and the exchange of those ideas. We can also hear about the bad ideas. Bad ideas can be as important, if not more important than good ideas. One chapter's bad idea could be turned into a good idea by the input of other chapters.

Another of the committee's goals is to urge the chapters to do grassroots organizing with local, state and federal government. The county commissioner can be the most important politician in our life. It's our job to initiate an open dialogue with them. The chapter presidents teleconference is an important part of providing support and ideas for grassroots legislative work.

To assist chapters in forging relationships with state and local legislators, the Membership Committee is working with WTCA-National to create several educational tools. For instance, WTCA-National and chapters will be putting together a list of component manufacturers in each state that accounts for number of employees, sales and payroll. We can take this to elected officials to reinforce our position and define the industry's impact on jobs and payroll. Secondly, WTCA is in the process of creating a legislative-specific web site. The new site will have web links to industry issues like a legislative watch list. We will be encouraging chapters to monitor local issues and work for truss industry interests.

My own grassroots involvement stems began prior to my position on the Membership Committee. I was involved in a grassroots effort when a South Florida building department started asking for

sealed truss placement layout diagrams. The South Florida chapter (SFTCMA) formed a committee of truss engineers and component manufacturers to meet with officials of the building department in question. We were led by an engineer who had connections in the building department. We brought ANSI/TPI/WTCA 4-2002, some of which had originated in our chapter and further refined by WTCA. We also had WTCA's statewide victory on sealed truss placement diagrams (layouts or placement plans) in our pocket. Our first meeting went well; we figured out that the building department wanted the same thing we did. The problem was miscommunication: some plan reviewers and builders just hadn't gotten the message. Then we had a meeting with the plan reviewers and inspectors to close the deal. Our next—and most difficult—task was to convince the builders they did not need sealed truss placement layout diagrams, which took almost a year.

Today the problem is behind us. When the same issue came up with another building department, it was solved before it became a problem. This success story was recently repeated in Jacksonville. WTCA and its chapters have had the same success in San Diego, North Carolina and many other places. Chapters can use this work to build on each other's success.

For grassroots success, we need more roots. To this end, the Membership Committee is focused on recruiting more WTCA members. BCSI 1-03 has the potential to be a powerful recruiting tool. Because of BCSI, truss plants that didn't know the kind of work that WTCA was doing now know the value of WTCA and the TPI/WTCA partnership. The Membership Committee is also bringing the recruitment drive to the grassroots level. For instance, SFTCMA will be launching a membership drive coordinated with WTCA's national drive. To encourage participation, SFTCMA will give shirts and jackets to the top recruiters. We wanted a new cool logo to make the shirts and jacket better prizes, so we asked WTCA staff to help us design that new logo.

Using the chapter teleconference, we are going to spread ideas like this across the country. Plate and hanger representatives are some of our best grassroots representatives for recruiting component manufacturers to become members. Our membership drive will provide exciting recruitment recognition for individual sales representatives and BCMA promotional opportunities for corporations.

It wasn't just the Membership Committee meeting that was all about building chapter and WTCA membership. The Marketing Committee came up with a dynamite campaign to educate WTCA members and non-members about the valuable member services and products WTCA has to offer. These products and services are tools we can use to enhance the professional image and promote the value our companies provide to customers. This has tremendous value in meeting WTCA's core mission of protecting, advancing and promoting the interests of member manufacturers.

I am sitting in my hotel room looking out on a beautiful sunny day in San Diego. After days of "wrath of God" rain, the sunshine reflects my good mood. I think this is an omen for WTCA. We are definitely in the sunshine, with many milestones behind us and many more to achieve. All of the hard work going on within WTCA will translate into new members making me, as Membership Committee Chair, very satisfied.

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