



Human Faces

Mixing Business with Education

Members of the Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association educate builders and themselves.

by Marisa Hirsch

It seems like just about every industry has an association, yet many people seem to only be aware of their own. So, when opportunities come along for different associations to work together, it's educational for everyone involved. When WTCA's Wisconsin Chapter, the Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association (WTMA), learned about an opportunity to work with the Madison Area Builders Association (MABA), they saw it for what it was—a chance to show that a local component manufacturer association exists, and has members who are out there working hard.

On April 30, 2008, WTMA put on a presentation for area builders at MABA's request. The chapter presented two live Truss Technology Workshops (TTWs): *Wood Truss Inspection Checklist* and *BCSI*. (See sidebar for information about TTWs.)

"I thought this would be a good opportunity to highlight the chapter," said Steve Johnson, WTMA president. "[A chance] to let these guys know we have an association too, and we're out there supporting the builders."

Mutually Beneficial

Kaya Freiman, communications director at MABA, contacted WTCA staff in fall 2007 to inquire about the possibility of a WTCA seminar for area builders. Staff then contacted the chapter about sponsoring the event and, over the next few months, a plan came together that the chapter and MABA felt good about. Along with the presentations, each MABA attendee received a certificate and several informational handouts, including the entire **Truss Technology in Building** series, a *BCSI* booklet and a related *SBC* article.

Freiman said that from MABA and the attendees' perspectives, the six-hour seminar was a success. Attendees received six Continuing Education Units (CEUs), the maximum number possible for a six-hour presentation. This is important because the maximum number of CEUs is not always granted by the Department of Commerce. Sometimes the department awards a smaller number of CEUs, depending on a particular seminar's content. For each CEU seminar, MABA is required to send a written application to the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. This form includes background information about the speaker, the speaker's company or association, and an outline of the presentation—including the number of hours it is and the number of CEUs requested for it.

"We try to focus on technical courses to get the most CEUs," said Freiman. "The department can deny [the seminar], or [limit] the number of CEUs you're requesting. Somebody could put on four hours of sales or marketing information and request four CEUs, but only get one. That's why we try to stick with scientific, technical or legal subjects."

Though Johnson was the presenter at this event, he invited all WTMA members to attend and participate. As a chapter event, it was not designed to be a sales pitch for one company, but a forum to highlight WTCA's Wisconsin Chapter and its member companies that supply these builders.

Johnson began the day with introductions. He and the other WTMA members in attendance explained who they were—Joe Michels, P.E., manager at Brunzell Lumber & Millwork, and three members from Automated Products, Inc.: John Bujalski, COO

What Are Live TTWs?

Live TTWs are PowerPoint® presentations (including slides and scripts) developed by WTCA and presented in person to an audience of construction industry professionals. These face-to-face presentations offer a great opportunity to meet industry professionals and educate them about component construction. Here are some of the basics of live TTWs:

- TTWs cover a wide range of topics. Choose from topics such as:
 - Overview of BCS
 - 4 Steps to Safe Truss Installations
 - Mold
 - Code Issues
- TTW PowerPoint files are available online (ttw.sbcindustry.com).
 - WTCA members can buy one-year's access to download TTW PowerPoint files for \$50.
 - Chapters can receive access to PowerPoint files for free.
- WTCA staff is here to help. Whether you need a little help, or assistance developing a new presentation from scratch, WTCA can help with all aspects of your presentation, including:
 - Planning/organizing the event
 - Recommending a course and handouts
 - Providing invitations, sign-in sheets, signs, thank you notes, etc.
 - Qualifying a course for CEU credit

For more information, contact Trish Kutz at WTCA at 608/310-6768 or tkutz@qualtim.com.

and vice president; Paul Werner, information technology and senior design engineer; and Jim Perkins, sales manager.

Next, Johnson explained a little bit about WTMA and what it does, as well as how it relates to WTCA. He also talked a little bit about the SBC Research Institute (SBCRI) and the work that's done there. The 11 attendees then introduced themselves. After that, Johnson explained that the seminar would be open-forum style and that everyone should feel free to participate and to ask questions.

The Wood Truss Inspection List TTW took up the first two hours of the day. There was a short break after that, and next was the first part of the BCSI TTW (B1-B3). B4-B11 were presented after lunch, and the day concluded with Doug Oomens of Simpson Strong-Tie Co.

More to Come

Though the MABA seminar was the first one like this for the chapter so far, Johnson said WTMA is planning to do similar presentations in the future. For example, they are looking to do something comparable with the Milwaukee-area Metropolitan Builders Association, where they'll highlight their members that supply that area of the state.

"With all the credits these builders need, we've got the perfect opportunity to get in front of them," said Johnson.

Throughout the MABA seminar, Johnson called on other WTMA members in attendance to contribute their thoughts and viewpoints about the information being discussed; attendees also asked some questions. This allowed for additional discussion and interaction among chapter members and attendees—which contributed to the attendees' positive reactions. Freiman said this was mentioned in the anonymous surveys she distributed for the attendees to complete.

"Everyone thought the level of teaching was great, liked the speaker, and appreciated the fact that there were other WTMA members there," Freiman said. "They liked getting to hear a few different viewpoints. Overall, it was a very positive response."

Johnson said that participating in and/or sponsoring seminars like this one is an effective way to show that WTMA wants to better the industry and help builders to be informed and prepared. "That's the biggest thing," he said. "There's a risk factor for them if they don't understand the product and how to deal with it. There's a lot of risk that could be eliminated or lessened if they have a little training." Continued on page 22

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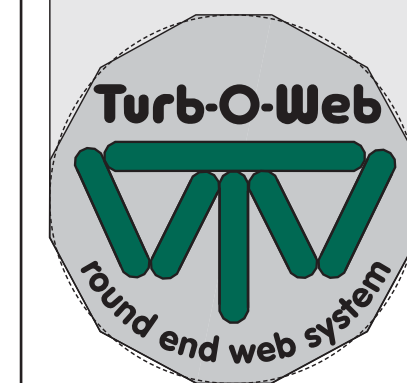
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at a glance

- ❑ The Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association (WTCA's Wisconsin Chapter) presented two live TTWs to a local homebuilders association.
- ❑ The attendees earned CEUs for attending the day-long presentation.
- ❑ Chapter President Steve Johnson said that in addition to the information presented, the event highlighted the benefits of being a WTMA member.
- ❑ WTMA members held a meeting the following week at WTCA and toured the new SBCRI facility.



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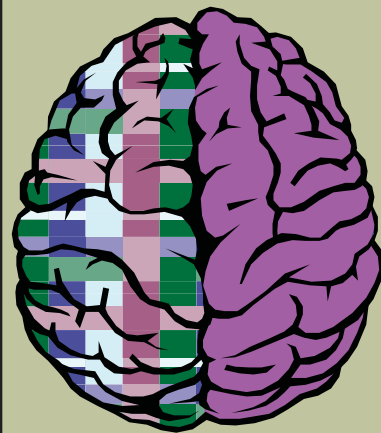
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MABA and the attendees appreciated WTMA's efforts. "We would like to thank Steve Johnson for presenting, and the association," said Freiman. "He did a fantastic job, and we were really happy to work with the association, and hope that we can continue to have a positive relationship in the future."

Relocation for Education

The week following this successful presentation, on May 8, WTMA held its quarterly meeting at the WTCA offices in Madison, WI. Johnson said reason they did so was because they wanted someone from the Wisconsin Safety and Buildings Division to speak at a meeting. Johnson thought that would be more likely to happen if the meeting were in Madison. Larry Swaziek, P.E., program manager at the S&B division, did speak at the meeting about the new Wisconsin Commercial Building Code.

Another reason to have the meeting at WTCA was so that the chapter members could see SBCRI. So, after Swaziek spoke and other business was finished, the group toured the facility. Keith Hershey, WTCA director of R&D and industry projects, guided the tour and fielded questions about the kinds of products being tested in SBCRI, how the data is and will be used, and plans for future industry testing. The group was also able to see some of the equipment in action.

"Many of our members had not had the chance to see the research facility they have donated time and money to," Johnson said. "They were impressed with the facility. I received comments that this quarterly meeting was a really productive, beneficial meeting—one the members like to see from their association." **SBC**

A Note about SBCRI & WTCA

The SBC Research Institute offers an extensive list of testing options under a variety of application, attachment and loading conditions. All of this will lead to more accurate and efficient design and improved installation/use of structural building component products. View a talking brochure at www.sbcrici.info or contact Keith Hershey at khershey@qualtim.com or 608/310-6704 to schedule a tour of the facility.

WTCA is happy to accommodate member meetings, and has done so for both chapters and individual companies. If you're interested in holding a meeting at WTCA headquarters in Madison, WI, please contact Megan Dahl at mdahl@qualtim.com or 608/310-6731.

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