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Rhode Island Builders Association president's message: Give back to the community

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Nobody questions the fact that we in the residential construction industry are swamped with demands right now. Simply making a profit in this slow market is a full-time job. But even if you don't have a minute to call your own, you can't neglect the crucial tasks that involve marketing your business.

One of those tasks is developing and maintaining a good image for your business, and an important way to help do that might not be all that obvious: Giving back to the community.

There are many ways to do this, and some do not require a great deal of time on your part. If you're a supplier, this might involve something as simple as giving customers a free keychain or mini-flashlight if they bring in an item for donation to the local food bank. If you're a builder or remodeler, making the time to participate in a holiday food drive or volunteering a day to do some basic repairs at the headquarters of a local charity can go a long way to enhancing your image and that of our entire industry.

If you have a staff and/or if you're a family business, get the rest of your people involved too.

One of the best charities I know of is a direct offshoot of the Rhode Island Builders Association and our respect for those who have served our country. It's our own Builders Helping Heroes (BHH) program. By volunteering labor and equipment, and by donating materials, our members help BHH make needed repairs and renovations to the homes of Rhode Island veterans, and the families of those, wounded or killed in armed conflict since Sept. 11, 2001.

We plan to line up some new BHH projects in 2012. Watch for more news at www.RIBUILDERS.org or call (401) 438-7400.

I know that when our members give back like this, they don't do it to get a line in the newspaper or their pictures on the evening news. They do it because they mean it. They do it because we're people too.

But if, as a byproduct, the image of RIBA, our member companies and our industry gets a boost, there's nothing wrong with that. It's our way of communicating that we care.

That's especially appropriate as we begin a new year with the hope of brighter times for all of us. Ultimately, brighter times come from us and from our actions. RIBA members: Let's shine in 2012!

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