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2013 RIBA Home Show draws praise from all comers

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If what happened at the Rhode Island Builders Association's booth at the 2013 Home Show is any indication, work opportunities may be starting to become easier for residential contractors in southeastern New England.

That's the message from RIBA executive director John Marcantonio.

"Many more people than last year were approaching the RIBA booth, asking for contractors who could build new homes, put on additions and do remodeling for them. So the association passed out a lot more information and directories than previously. We know things are still difficult, but I really feel there was more opportunity for builders and remodelers at this show than there has been in the past," said Marcantonio.

"This shows that, whether contractors are members of RIBA or not, they need to exhibit at the Home Show," he added. "We passed out a load of copies of RIBA's 2013 Membership Directory and Buyer's Guide, but there's nothing like contractors being at the Home Show in person."

That show visitors were really interested in finding contractors was echoed by Stephen Fitzgerald, of Fitzgerald Building and Remodeling, one of many RIBA members who exhibited at the show, April 4 - 7 at the Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence. It was the 63rd annual Home Show that RIBA has presented for the homeowners of southeastern New England.

"There are lots of people and interest, and the weekend is young," Fitzgerald told The Rhode Island Builder Report early on Saturday, April 6, the show's third day.

The Home Show opened on Thursday, April 4, with a ribbon cutting at the show heart: the 902 s/f Saco Bay Model Modular Home organized and set up through CRM Modular Homes and member Carol O'Donnell. Providence Mayor Angel Tavares cut the ribbon just after 3 p.m., and was the first visitor to tour the house. He was accompanied by RIBA President Felix A. Carlone, Immediate Past President Robert J. Baldwin, Secretary David A. Caldwell Jr., Ms. O'Donnell, members John Bentz and Thomas A. Lopatosky, and Executive Director John Marcantonio.

During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the mayor presented RIBA with a citation "in celebration of your completion of a full-sized house on the floor of the Rhode Island Convention Center at the 63rd Annual Home Show, in partnership with CRM Modular Homes...."

As the show's centerpiece, the model home was the showcase for everything from paint and lighting to appliances, furniture and landscaping. The house was decorated by 2011 White House holiday decorator Karen Corinha of Corinha Design, assisted by Beth Champlin of Expressive Interiors. Landscaping was provided by the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association.

Suppliers and vendors from all over New England helped make the model home a success.

Elsewhere in the show, there was something for everyone. Two separate seminar areas offered cooking demonstrations by famous chefs, homeowner advice on various topics from a number of speakers, including RIBA members Steven L. St. Onge and Prudence Stoddard of R.I. Kitchen &

Bath Inc.

In addition, there was entertainment for children, arts and crafts, music, and antique appraisals by expert Daniel Buck Soules. And there were giveaways, including the immensely popular RIBA bicycle giveaway for children.

Around the show floor, other RIBA members reported good numbers.

"We've been pretty busy, and it's getting better all the time as more people come in," commented Jeanine Lantini of Lighting & Design by J&K Electric on Saturday afternoon.

At the Washington Trust booth, Jason Quinlan and Cathleen Studley noticed lots of interest in mortgages.

"Seems to me like there's more interest than last year," said Studley.

By Saturday afternoon, Michael Gorman of Lopco Contracting was reporting to his boss, Mr. Lopatosky, that there was already a long list of leads.

In his 17th year at the show, Ty Ereio of New England Sola Concepts Inc. noted large crowds and considerable interest in his products.

At the RIBA booth, at the show entrance, Marcantonio, along with staffers Elizabeth Carpenter, Robin Barlow, Elise Geddes, Sheila McCarthy and Katelyn Lombardi put in long hours to welcome guests, offer show information, provide material about RIBA for potential members, and distribute the 2013 Membership Directory and Buyer's Guide.

Adjacent to the booth, member volunteers offered visitors information about RIBA's Builders Helping Heroes charity and the project in Burrillville to build a home for a wounded Afghan War veteran, and took donations. Donors were able to sign 2x4s that will be used in building the house.

Dan and Trina Crowell of East Providence, in the market for a new wall and some paving work, headed for the Consolidated Concrete Corp. booth with their 6 year-old nephew. Later, Crowell summed up their show experience.

"We really liked the show! Consolidated is going to put us in touch with some contractors, and our nephew was thrilled about sitting in the cement-mixer truck!"

Watch for news of the 2014 Home Show and plan now to exhibit your products and services. If you're a RIBA member, there will be many great incentives to become an exhibitor.

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