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RIBA Home Show sees 43% increase in visitors over '13

May 08, 2014 - Rhode Island

In a dramatic record for recent years, attendance at the Rhode Island Builders Association's 64th Annual Home Show was up 43% over 2013.

That was the news from RIBA as we went to press. The association hosted the 2014 event April 3 - 6 at the Rhode Island Convention Center.

In an interesting twist, many survey respondents said they had come to the Home Show to look for builders and remodelers and would like to see more contractors exhibiting.

A gorgeous model home, crowded aisles and smiling exhibitors were hallmarks of the show throughout its four-day run.

"Pleasantly busy" and "steady" was how Steve Bator of Stormtite Home Improvement, one of some 225 exhibitors, described the Home Show flow. "And the visitors seem very serious about work, and qualified," he said.

The show opened promptly at 3 p.m. on Thursday, April 3rd, following a ribbon cutting at the show's heart, the 2,000 s/f Model Home, by Providence Mayor Angel Tavares. He was joined by three other 2014 gubernatorial candidates, State Treasurer Gino Raimondo, Ken Block and Cranston Mayor Allen Fung. Also present were officials of RIBA, along with Carol O'Donnell of CRM Modular Homes and interior designer Karen Corinha. There too were officials of the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association (RINLA) whose members designed the landscaping, including the "Edible Front Yard" for the model home.

Lined up to tour the model home as the show opened was the first of many crowds that were to characterize the show for four days.

RIBA executive director John Marcantonio reported that the show attendance total passed the 2013 Home Show figure on Saturday. Crowds on Sunday were undiminished, indicating an attendance record for recent years.

Along with the aisles, exhibits and the model home, the show's special attractions were generally standing-room-only. That included the Energy Expo, sponsored by National Grid and the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources; professional seminars, cooking demonstrations and other events. Crowds lined up on Thursday evening to have their pictures taken with the three Boston Red Sox World Series Trophies, at the show courtesy of National Grid. On Sunday, one of the New England Patriots cheerleaders appeared at the Verizon booth to sign autographs.

Many visitors entered drawings to win iPads (won by Brandy Bacon, Maryellen Crowley and Michael Hendojr), a \$5,000 Home Energy Makeover (won by Kelly Rodgers of Chepachet) and a seven-night cruise to Bermuda (won by George Brimmer of East Providence).

The exhibitors, of course, are the people who really tell the story of a Home Show's success.

"This has been the busiest Home Show in 10 years," said Jay Pires of Douglas Lumber, Kitchens and Home Center. "Lots of qualified people and lots of leads."

"It's crazy busy!" said Tim Johnson of Propane Plus. "Lots of qualified people and good leads." Allison Kowal of Meridian Custom Homes Inc. agreed. "We've been very happy with the show. We got some great leads."

Cheryl Boyd of Arnold Lumber Co. summed it up: "There were lots of people who knew what they wanted. They were looking for contractors and looking for products."

Visitors like Joe and Pat Alexander of Burrillville were impressed with the show. "There's a huge array of products, just about anything you need," said Joe.

There was a great deal of praise for RIBA's hard-working Home Show committee, which includes chairman Ronald Smith of Ron Smith Homes LLC, Cheryl Boyd and Louis Cotoia of Arnold Lumber Co., RIBA operations/project manager Elizabeth Carpenter, O'Donnell (who provided the model home), Robert Yoffe of Yoffe Exposition Services, Corina, along with Cynthia Valenti-Smith and Bethany Palagi of Washington Trust Co., and Mary Cool of California Closets.

RIBA officials singled out CRM Modular Homes for providing the Model Home, and Cotoia for supervising the home's assembly and dismantling.

It's never too early to plan your company's exhibit at the 2015 Home Show.

Visit www.RIBAHomeShow.com.

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