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President's message: Make this a learning experience

November 12, 2008 - Rhode Island

First of all, I thank my predecessor, Tom McNulty, for his two years of outstanding leadership of the Rhode Island Builders Association (RIBA). I also thank our nominating committee, our executive committee, our board of directors and our members for electing me to the office of president. It is a great honor, and it is a position with much honorable history behind it.

I also thank and congratulate my fellow officers: vice president Bob Baldwin, treasurer Steve Gianlorenzo and secretary Felix Carlone. It's going to be a pleasure working with all of you. I also look forward to working with Roger Warren, our executive director, and the great RIBA staff.

We all face a weak economy, and I expect that we will have to make some difficult decisions together.

Addressing RIBA members on the issues facing our industry, however, is like "preaching to the choir." This magazine's readership includes the true professionals of the shelter industry. Most of us are experienced enough to have gone through bad economic times before.

Many of us remember 1978, when interest rates hit 21%. We remember the credit union crash of 1991, and the "dot.com" burst of 2001. To our younger members, I say "persevere," for "this too shall pass," and you will be stronger for it.

Keep a positive attitude, and don't believe everything you read in our state's major newspaper. This is an election year. Consider the source and their goals.

Make it a learning experience

Even these tough times are a learning experience, so make decisions with your heads and not your hearts. The businesses you save will be your own. I strongly recommend that, whenever possible, you do business with fellow RIBA members. By supporting each other, we are all supporting RIBA, which in turn fights for all of us. The business circle of friendship is always important, and never more so than during weak economic times.

I urge all of you to remain active members of RIBA, and I ask you to encourage your subcontractors and suppliers not only to remain members, but to recruit others to join our organization. We have much to offer in networking opportunities, insurance programs, education and safety training.

There is strength in numbers, and our strength is your strength!

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the efforts of Ken Jones, chairman of our workers' compensation committee. At virtually the last minute before renewal time, Beacon Mutual Insurance Co. refused to insure our workers' compensation safety group.

Ken, doing yeoman's work, was able to put together a program with the some new insurers, The Renaissance Group. We're off to a good start and look forward to rapid growth. Ken, we all thank you! Watch The Rhode Island Builder Report for further information.

Last September, RIBA began hosting a weekly radio broadcast called "You're Home." We've just completed our first year, and the program has been well received. The hosts are Tom McNulty,

Colin Kane, Felix Carlone and myself. Each show has two co-Â-hosts and a guest. This is your show. Every member of RIBA is welcome to join us to talk about his or her specialty.

As of October 18th, we moved the show to WPRO (630 AM), and we'll be heard on Saturday afternoons from 3-4 p.m. Call Joanne DiGregorio at (401) 438-7400 if you'd like to participate.

America had a hugely important election on November 4th, and I congratulate every one of you who voted! Please take a few minutes to review how your newly elected local senator and representative stands on issues important to you, your family, your business, and RIBA. Rhode Island is in a tremendous economic mess, much of it caused by the state's give-away programs. Speak to your lawmakers.

Licensing issue

I plan to work closely with Ed Ladouceur and Steve Carlino on the RIBA legislative committee. Ed and Steve tell me that, in the near future, we will face legislation requiring contractor licensing. It's important that this legislation be written in a way that's favorable to all of us, the true professionals.

RIBA has recently formed a remodelers committee, under the co-chairmanship of Joe Cracco and Tanya Donahue. They have plenty of upbeat ideas, and their monthly guest speakers are experts in their fields. I plan on working with Joe and Tanya, and their committee, in making this even more successful for RIBA's many remodelers.

I'm in the process of meeting with all committee chairs with the thought of keeping RIBA the organization that all true professionals in the shelter industry will want to belong to.

Once again, I thank you for your confidence, and I ask you for your help and support.

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