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President's message: Give us an insurmountable challenge!

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How many times have the media played Taps for the economy over the last few months or jumped the gun on this or that statistic? How often have they all but ignored signs of good news in the shelter industry, such as the uptick in multi-family home sales in December?

Some of us might opt for the cynical view and say, "What signs of good news?" But all you have to do is look around and you'll see them. That's because nothing can keep Americans down for long. Give Americans a challenge - especially an insurmountable challenge - and the most creative and dynamic among us will think of ways to surmount it.

Look at our own members in the Rhode Island Builders Association. Joe Samra of MEJJ Development is building the state's first "green neighborhood" in Cumberland. Barry Eyre of Saint John Stone in North Kingstown has gone international and tripled the size of his business. Re/Max Heritage is preparing for the inevitable rebound in the housing market by building its own, larger headquarters in East Providence, with several RIBA members working on the project.

Our members in general are talking creatively about saving money and attracting jobs by working with neighborhood homeowners in groups.

Our educational programs are in demand. Looking to better themselves and their businesses, 54 remodelers, nearly all RIBA members, turned out on February 4th for a seminar on marketing and sales during tough times.

Our lender members have made it clear that there is financing available for construction and remodeling as long as customers are credit-worthy.

We're meeting the slow times, taking them by the "horns," and speeding them up!

Now comes our annual Home Show, set for the Rhode Island Convention Center March 26th through 29th. It's our 60th anniversary show and promises to be better than ever. It's also a good annual measure of what local homeowners and potential homeowners are thinking about the market.

Even if you haven't thought of some new and creative way to boost your business lately, come visit the Home Show, and encourage your friends and colleagues to do the same. You never know what new ideas you might pick up!

You won't even have to pay admission: RIBA Member Night is Thursday, March 26th, and you will receive your free member passes in the mail. Visiting the Home Show also provides a unique chance to meet other members, see the latest products and services, pick up a copy of RIBA's 2009 Membership Directory and Buyer's Guide and generally show support for our association.

You and your "significant other" will especially enjoy the "Rejuvenation Nights," with everything from chocolate and wine tasting to complimentary massages and facials.

Let's fill up that half-empty glass!

Michael Artesani is the president of the RI Builders Assn., East Providence.

