



NCHPBA

U P D A T E S

B U R N I N G N E W S & I S S U E S



Affiliated with the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association

December 2004

A Note from the President



The pie is the same size, but our pieces are getting smaller. To counter that, we diversify or change the way we conduct our business. Whatever we do, change is inevitable. I am not convinced that the changes that are taking place within our industry are the best for the specialty hearth retailer. Take, for example, the changes that are taking place with barbecues, electric fireplaces and even the gas fireplace. "Big Box" stores, furniture marts, hardware stores, utilities, propane dealers and HVACs are all taking a piece of the pie, leaving the specialty hearth shop with a much smaller slice. Although these other entities have a piece of the whole pie, it is still the hearth specialty retailer that continues to belong and participate in this association.

So, looking at the slice that is left, it seems to me that solid fuel (wood, coal, pellet and corn), the fuel that started all this,

is partly the answer to either enlarging or holding on to the picture that we have left. Promoting solid fuel appliances and the many benefits that come with them is something that seems to have been left behind.

All in all, no matter what we sell, the number one thing that we as specialty hearth retailers have is "service." That brings me to the importance of NFI (National Fireplace Institute). Its education and credibility benefits are paramount to our success as hearth specialists. The upcoming HPBA EXPO in Atlanta, Georgia this February and the NCHPBA May program in Red Wing, Minnesota are events that are a "must" attend for all of us. I strongly recommend that you attend both these events, if for no other reason that to get away and have some fun with fellow hearth people. More than fun, I truly believe that the education you will receive, the industry knowledge that is shared and the government activity insights will bring you benefits many times over what it will cost you to attend.

Start planning now and I will see you there!

Economy: New Indicator Brings Good News

The "QSS" or Quarterly Services Survey has been developed to measure national revenue across three basic service sectors that have been largely ignored by government reported statistical data. The September 14th report showed that information services revenue rose 4.4% in the second quarter of 2004 to \$230.1 billion. Revenue from administrative and support services, as well as waste management and remediation services, totaled \$121.9 Billion, up 5.6% from the first quarter. And, revenue from professional, scientific, and technical services posted the largest gain, rising 6.3% to \$241.6 billion. Together, the

three sectors combined for \$598.1 billion in revenue, up 5.4% from the previous quarter. According to the Census Bureau, the three sectors constitute approximately 15% of U.S. gross domestic product, with service industries in general accounting for nearly 55% of the nation's economic activity, excluding retail and wholesale trade. Prior to the QSS, the bureau's only measurements of service industry output came from an annual service survey and economic censuses conducted every five years.

Communication: The Tool for Success

NCHPBA's newly developed Communication Committee seems to have that ("The tool for success") as it's new motto. The telephone and the InterNet will be the main tools of communications with one another and you, the membership. As the Strategic Plan implementation begins, the use of the NCHPBA web page will be strengthened and input from you will be enhanced.

The Committee plans regular surveys via email and ground mail to obtain information from you to share with others or to help address issues identified by the membership. The intent is to ask you questions every one-two months. The compilation of results will be highlighted in the written newsletters and posted on the web page. The Committee also plans to feature helpful hints in each newsletter to help you grow your business or help with various communication issues.

The first survey the Committee is working on is on the use of computers by the NCHPBA membership. For example, the questions may ask if you are using them for the mundane such as inventory and finances or have you found it useful with consumers and have them on the showroom floor as well.

Past President, Russ Dimmitt from Copperfield Chimney Supply chairs the group consisting of: Mike Hauf – North Central Service, Inc., ND; Mike Grunwald – Hearth and Home Technologies, WI; Jeremy Parsneau – LaCrosse Fireplace Company, WI; Cliff Lemme – Northern Fireplace Distribution, MN; and Tony Leggett – The Fireplace Professionals, SD. The first survey will be coming your way soon. It is planned to only take a few minutes of your time. The information gleaned should be very interesting and could readily help each other.

Spring, 2005

Plans are underway for the May 2005 program to be held again in Red Wing, Minnesota. Our numbers were the best ever. People loved the program, the golf, the cruise and the food was outstanding. So – we are going to do it again.

The Education Committee is comprised of the following: Rodger Holland-Even Temp (Chairman); Jan Hildebrand-Burning Desires; Patty Fryk – Marcells of Wisconsin Rapids; and Alison Van Lanen – Truttman Hearth Ware. They have held three conference calls and have determined an education program sure to please.

Sunday will be reserved for golf and a Red Wing outing for those who are not into hitting a little round ball around. The evening will again give rise to a serene cruise up and down the Mississippi River with the usual sumptuous buffet of the *Island's* gourmet German chef.

Dave Pomeroy will provide two business programs. One will be the program he could not provide in 2004 (due to his having heart surgery two days before our event) of *Marketing Multi-Level Service Plans* and the second will be on *Motivating Employees, Handbooks and Evaluations*.

The afternoon business track will have a program on Risk Management and the Red Cross will provide a program on Back Safety. During the research by staff on insurance problems, the need to host programs on Risk Management was a critical recommendation. This is the first of many such offerings. One Risk Management firm has posted a few photos of why education is needed. These are included for your enjoyment as NCHPBA is sure that none of our members would conduct themselves in such a fashion!

The service folks will have Mike O'Rourke providing the 3

hour HearthCheck program, developed by NCHPBA. This is a must for service as well as sales staff. The afternoon will hold a program on "Tools of the Trade" and a class by Rick Vlahos on "Why Isn't My Wood Burning?"

Bob Marcell will provide a brief overview to all attendees later Monday afternoon on The Outdoor Room – Marketing Concepts and Photos. This is becoming a major thrust with builders across the United States and we must stay competitive. The Outdoor Room exemplifies our association as it integrates ALL components of our industry.

NCHPBA will host for the first time, "Hearth Jeopardy." The Weakest Link was such a hit two years ago, Rick Vlahos has developed a new teaching method. He says this one gets raves.

The evening will be time for a relaxing banquet. The program has been redesigned to hold the annual meeting during lunch so we can eat and drink and be merry – or, in this case, entertained. NCHPBA is providing an evening with Gary Tyson. There will be comedy, magic, mentalism and even hypnosis. Who will be hypnotized? You have to come and find out. This is sure to be fun, fun, fun!

Tuesday will have the option of three separate events. One is NFI Gas Certification Review and Exam, the other is NFI Woodburning Certification Review and Exam and the third option will be an American Red Cross CPR program.

The Board of Directors will have its brief (2 hour) meeting from 12:30 – 2:30. All are invited to that as well.

The intent is to have NFI Continuing Education Units for all program offerings. There will be the opportunity for 5 hours of health and safety alone. Check the NFI web page for your status of CEU's and plan accordingly.

CODES

Do you own a set of the HEARTH Building Official Handbooks? If you don't, you should think about purchase soon. HEARTH (who just changed its name to the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Education Foundation) has been marketing these handbooks to Building Officials throughout the United States and has now attended several International Codes Council meetings with booths and education offerings. Don't let yourself be embarrassed when a building official in your area starts talking with you about information in the handbook and you respond with a "blank stare." Be prepared. That's not only the motto of the Boy's Scouts but just plain and simple sound advice.

Be prepared by having a set of the Handbooks AND having read them. Plus – be extra prepared by having a set of the most recent State Codes in your office and in three-ring binders in each of your service vehicles. Make sure your installation staff is current with the Codes. Sometimes building officials have old versions. Most Codes are in downloadable versions from the state government web pages. Your NCHBPA Codes Coordinators and staff are here to help. Give us a call with any question. A purchase order form has been included with this newsletter to help you get your set of Building Officials Handbooks now!

SEPs or SEPs

Those self employed in business may soon become confused with the new talk about SEPs. The context of the conversation should help clear the air (excuse the pun). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed Supplemental Environmental Projects (aka SEPs) as one method of dealing with companies that get fined for air pollution. The fines could get earmarked for specific environmental actions. Efforts by HPBA are helping those at EPA recognize that Stove Changeouts could be one of those projects for use of the monies from the pollution fines.

Several key staff at the EPA are already convinced that Stove Changeouts are extremely good at reducing the emissions

from wood combustion. There are several Stove Changeout projects to occur in 2005. One will be in Libby, Montana with two others in Dayton, Ohio and Pittsburgh, PA. PM2.5 non-attainment is the impetus for the Dayton and Pittsburgh changeouts. SEPs, however, could occur anywhere in the U.S. and any of the Affiliates could be approached to conduct a Changeout with fine monies. NCHPBA has had experience conducting two Changeouts (in 2000 and 2001) and will be ready if approached. Critical to any changeout is the government partnership so if an opportunity presents itself with SEP funds, we will be ready to jump at this opportunity.

HHOT

New Hands-On Training Sessions Announced for EXPO in Atlanta

Arlington, VA – HEARTH Education Foundation is pleased to announce the addition of the HHOT, Hearth Hands-On Training, Program to launch at the 2005 EXPO in at the Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, Georgia. There will be six 3-hour sessions held on the show floor (Booth 2459) Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, February 24-26. There is an \$89 registration fee for each time block that can be selected when registering for the show, or upon arrival, space permitting. Session content will be over 20 hands-on exercises covering installation to troubleshooting hearth systems.

“This is a component of our education program that we’ve been wanting to add for some time,” says HEARTH Executive Director Sue Kalish, “and with Travis Industries being a substantial partner in the venture, we can now offer this important technical training while accrediting sought after CEUs for our NFI certified industry members.”

Who should register for HHOT? Everyone from customer service personnel and sales people to experienced installers will garner new knowledge and techniques from these HHOT sessions.

Participants in groups of 2 or 3 will have options of completing a variety of supervised tasks during a scheduled time block. The same activities are offered during each of the six time blocks. There will be sessions for those with minimal experience as well as those with NFI certification. Coaches will be

present to guide participants through tasks to ensure that each candidate is practicing the best procedure.

“This program will allow attendees to interact with some of the industry’s most respected professionals,” notes Ms. Kalish, “and it offers training that is very hard to find time and talent for in the field.” Hands-on equipment helps adults learn faster and training modules give instant feedback.

In addition to HHOT, the educational opportunities abound for attendees to gather important knowledge and tips leading to profitable business decisions in the dozens of other management and operations seminars. Separate from the Hearth Hands-On Training, show attendees are encouraged to purchase an Education Passport for \$69. Passports grant entrance into all of the Business Management, Sales & Marketing, Technical & Safety, and Barbecue sessions. Like the HHOT Program, the preparation courses for the NFI exams, also held at the show, are not included in the Passport.

Education hours are Wednesday (the day prior to the show opening), February 23, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Thursday, February 24, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Friday, February 25, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday, February 26, 8:30 a.m. to 12 Noon.

For a complete schedule of education offerings, visit www.hpbexpo.com or call (703) 524-8030. See insert for special discount.

EXPO 2005

Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta Georgia will be the site of the 2005 HPBA EXPO. Numbers are already exceeding that of last year in Anaheim. Education events start on Wednesday, February 23 and go to Saturday, February 26. The Trade Show starts officially on Thursday, February 24 and also goes to Saturday, February 26, 2005. The Outdoor Burn area is already twice as big.

A new registration system is underway this year. All those wishing to register on line can do so IF your dues are paid by December 31, 2004. NCHPBA has already mailed out the first round of dues notices. A second round has gone out in mid-November with the final dues notice in mid-December. Don’t wait. Pay your dues and register on-line. Badges will be mailed

out starting January 3, 2005 IF YOU HAVE ALREADY PAID YOUR DUES! Since EXPO is earlier this year – don’t put things off. If you want to plan for EXPO, please note that NCHPBA will be offering Gas and Woodburning NFI Review courses and exams at the May, 2005 annual meeting in Minnesota.

If you have any questions about EXPO, the web page has lots of information on it. Go to www.hpba.org and click on the EXPO 2005 at the bottom of the home page. As always, if you have questions, just call the office at 608-829-2580. AND don’t forget if you go to EXPO and have lodging downtown, use the MARTA train service from the airport. It is very inexpensive, fast and easy.

Hint # 001

Problems understanding your computer? Yes, there are many formal computer courses at colleges, universities, technical and community colleges and private programs. You will learn many things, including what “cookies” mean in computer lingo. But, using it in the most basic sense, one of the Education Committee members, Mike Hauf, suggests that you use real chocolate chip or peanut butter cookies to “purchase” computer training from your kids or grand kids. Schools are emphasizing computer use and they know more than we do. Usually, they will be anxious to show off their knowledge for the small payment of a plate of cookies. If you take this hint, let us know how it worked.

Wisconsin: Energy Efficiency and Renewables

Wisconsin’s Governor Jim Doyle has released the report of a Task Force on Energy Efficiency and Renewables. For copies of the report, go to: www.energytaskforce.wi.gov/section.asp?linkid=33. There will probably be a series of bills next year emanating from this. Wisconsin members should download this report as ascertain if they are interested in wanting to work this process. Would require time and energy but is doable in the legislative process. Contact Lynn Meyer, Wisconsin Codes and Legislative Coordinator.

ASTM E06.54.08

Outdoor Wood-Fired Hydronic Heaters ASTM Task Group meets in Madison

HPBA hosted a meeting of the ASTM Hydronic Heater Task Group December 1 and 2 in Madison, Wisconsin to continue their work on development of consensus testing protocols for outdoor wood-fired hydronic heaters. The Midwest and north-east of the US have a relatively large number of these units. Complaints to various regulatory agencies have been received which was part of the stimulus for these meetings. NCHPBA wrote a letter to HPBA in 2001, urging their attention to this part of the industry lest regulations put them out of business.

Consensus building for testing protocols and standards is an arduous process to say the least. Topics are covered and then re-covered. Minutia details are debated. For example, great lengths of discussion centered on the size of wood needed for the test. It has become quite apparent that data is needed on a variety of issues regarding use of these units. As testing begins, funding from industry and various government entities is being sought to aid this process. Agencies involved to date are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and various state agencies for air quality and energy. Regulators from Vermont, New York, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota were in attendance. Others participated via teleconference. A number of industry folks from Canada, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Wisconsin and Minnesota were also involved. NCHPBA staff provided assistance to HPBA Director of Public Affairs, John Crouch.

The meeting also included a visit to Intertek Testing Services laboratory where a generic hydronic heater was being tested. Other hydronic heaters were also on display. Rick Curkeet from Intertek provided a tour of the whole facility to attendees. Photos are of some of the group watching the hydronic heater being loaded with a test run, the heater and part of the testing facility and two heaters on display.

To the Board and Members of NCHPBA:

I wish to express my appreciation for your support for the ASTM meeting in Madison. Karen's assistance was, always, professional, proficient, and priceless. By the end of the day and a half of meetings this group had established a reasonable dynamic, as groups always do. But they didn't start out there. This group has only met for two times before this meeting and there are always new members at each meeting, which means the group needs to re-establish itself each time. It was tremendously valuable to me, to have a partner there. I sincerely appreciate your support of Karen's time in this effort.

*John Crouch, Director of Public Relations
HPBA-Sacramento*



Focus: the HIT Team

No, NCHPBA is not getting involved with underworld activities, it is just the name given to a Task Force to develop an education program with a Community College in Hibbing, Minnesota. The name means "Hearth Installer Technician." We could have named it "Hearth Installer Specialist" (HIS) but then someone might think we are being too male oriented. The "HIT" name is more of a "tongue in cheek" misnomer. The "HIT Team" is not going to terminate anything but, in fact, *start* something really big. The "HIT" Team is working with Pete Stoddard and Keith Erickson from Hibbing Community College to develop a module adjunct to their current HVAC and Major Appliance curriculum that will enable graduates to be able to install gas hearth appliances as well.

Hibbing Community College currently has a refrigeration, heating, air conditioning and appliance program. They have: a one-semester "Residential Heating Technician" certificate program; a one-year "Residential Appliance Technician" diploma program; and a two-year "RHAA Technician" diploma program. The demand for qualified technicians is huge. Their flyer indicates that the U.S. Department of Labor estimates employment for RHAA technicians to "increase 21% to 35% faster than average through the year 2010."

NCHPBA is working with HEARTH/NFI and Hibbing College on this project. There are now two goals. The first is to help them develop a module to add to their current curriculum. Then, in conjunction with the activities of HEARTH/NFI on cur-

riculum analyses, we will incorporate that into development of a "stand-alone" hearth installer program for gas and solid fuel.

The "HIT Team" has had several conference calls already. We are excited by the opportunity this presents. Students can go to such a program out of high school and be prepared for the hearth industry work force with a major jump start or this can be a site for new employees to get formal training and be better workers. Lots of details have yet to be addressed. The Hibbing Community College staff have indicated that whatever we develop can be shared with other schools throughout the country so this can be considered a pilot for implementation nationwide. Just think – this could be survival for this industry. Whether it be a diploma or certification program, it will be great!

Many thanks to the people donating their time to benefit the industry as a whole. "HIT Team" members to date are: Pete Stoddard and Keith Erickson (Hibbing Community College); Lynn Meyer (American Home Fireplace & Patio); George Breiwa (Chimney Specialists, Inc.) Russ Dimmitt (Copperfield Chimney Supply); Steve Thiers (Hearth & Home Technologies/HEARTH); Rodger Holland (Even Temp); Bob Marcell (Marcell's Specialties, Inc.) and Dave Pomeroy (Dave Pomeroy Signature Training). Staff involved are Karen Teske-Osborne (NCHPBA); Ben Weathersby and Sue Kalish (HEARTH/NFI). Thanks also goes to Bob Wise from HEARTH/NFI who participated in the first conference call.

Wisconsin Department of Energy Staff and Heart(h)

Alex Depillis from the Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Energy, had a recent trip to Europe and thought we would enjoy his photo by a heart(h). It was a sculpture on exhibit at the Café Montmartre. Depillis was involved in the Great Stove Changeouts in our affiliate and now active with the new ASTM Hydronic Heater Committee.



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