

## **President's Report Winter Board 2010 Mel Zelmer**



Since officially taking office the first of January things have been busy. I traveled to Watertown to attend the HBA annual banquet and installation dinner. What an upbeat group they are. The chapter is 82 members strong and continues to grow. Their new building is great. Next I attended the International Builders Show in Vegas. Weather was crappy and my flight experience was equally bad. Sprained my ankle on Sunday and spent my first day and a half there in my room, but still managed to get some good information. The "attitude" was much more upbeat than the last three national meetings I attended. The skies are not bright blue yet but at least they are not dark gray anymore. Tuesday morning was opening ceremonies, with singers, speakers, and a special address by Dave Barry, nationally syndicated columnist and humorist. I spent Wednesday touring the show and dropping in and out of various committee meetings. Wednesday evening was the spike appreciation reception. This gala is by invitation only to all member recruiters - SPIKES. The group STYX performed. Thursday was the board meeting. The best news was that 2009 is behind us and things are starting to look up. NAHB Chief Economist David Crowe was cautiously optimistic yet encouraging. Unemployment is still high in most states and foreclosures are still happening but at a receding rate. He predicts about 2-1/2% growth in 2010 and 2011. Inflation is still down and mortgage rates should remain 6% or lower for the next 2 years. House prices will remain static. Houses being purchased now average about 3.3% of annual income, down significantly from a few years ago. Nationally we are seeing a huge increase in the 65+ age population, with the Midwest seeing a 43% increase by 2020. Senior housing is probably a good future market.

On the state level we are busy with legislative issues, the main one being the residential fire sprinkler issue. We are introducing a bill to exempt fire sprinklers in residential construction from any adopted building codes. The bill appears to have broad support from local and state elected officials.

Our Winter Board meeting is scheduled for February 2 and 3, where we will also be hosting our elected legislative officials at our annual oyster/chili reception. Hope to see a good turnout for this very important event.

Things have not been great in the construction industry the last couple of years and some of us have experienced huge setbacks so I want to close with this. A philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, rocks about 2" in diameter. He then asked his students if the jar was full. They agreed it was. So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They again agreed. The professor picked up a box of

sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He then asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "YES". The professor then produced two cans of beer from under the table and proceeded to pour the entire contents into the jar - effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed. "Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the important things - your family, your partner, your health, your children—things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else. The small stuff." "If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued "there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party and fix the disposal. Take care of the rocks first – the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand." One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the beer represented. The professor smiled. "I'm glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of beers."

Till next time, Mel