

BIA Members Address Key Issues in Today's Changing Market



Builder's Panel from left to right – Rich Wajda, (IBA, CEO); David Compton, (IBA President); Robin Verta, J.C. Builders; Tim Henderlong, Henderlong Homes; Ed Kelly, Kelly Construction; Jack Davids, Tri-County Development and Rich Cook (BIA President)

More than 125 members turned out for the Building Industries Association of Northwest Indiana, Inc.'s (BIA) General Membership Meeting last Thursday at Teibel's Restaurant in Schererville. While the perch lunch is always a big draw, this record crowd gathered with the threat of another imminent snowstorm to network with their peers and special guests from the Indianapolis-based Indiana Builders Association (IBA).

David Compton, IBA State President and a partner with R.N. Thompson & Associates of Indianapolis with nearly 20 years of experience in the construction industry specializing in acquisition and development, paid tribute to "how well the locals are doing in the current economic times."

"The center of the state could take a lot of lessons from you," he said.

Compton also applauded the BIA for reaching and exceeding its membership goal of 500 in 2007 and declared 2008 "the year of retention."

"We've got some difficult challenges," he said. "That's why I call upon the longtime members to help keep the fresh blood flowing through this organization. Those of you who have been members for 25-30 years worked through the last severe downturn in 1979 and the early '80's. I challenge you to share your experiences to help our members stay successful."

Following a brief overview of why Indiana is a good place to do business when compared to some of the hurdles builders face in neighboring states, Compton turned the podium over to Rick Wajda, IBA Chief Executive Officer, who detailed the organization's current lobbying efforts toward making Indiana a better place to live and work while keeping everything affordable.

"We rely on members to tell us how new legislation will affect your business," he said. "We publish a general report that thoroughly covers the current issues impacting the home building industry, and it's important for your voice to be heard. Legislators are very susceptible to the concerns of their constituents."

BIA member Tim Henderlong of Henderlong Homes discussed how the passing of House Bill 1164 will help developers with their current lot situation by taking builder model homes off the tax role for 3 years beginning with the assessment of undeveloped land in 2008. Wajda added that the Senate is scheduled to vote on the bill March 14.

Tips for gaining a competitive advantage through green lot design, preparation and development were presented by Robin Verta of J.C. Builders; a brief look at the state of the industry with a plea to not get carried away by the doom and gloom reported in the national media along with a look at how local builders can take advantage of the opportunities presented by people who are buying because it is the right time for them by Ed Kelly of Kelly Construction; and finally an overview of the challenges land developers face in light of the increased time it now takes information to flow in and out of our local municipalities by Jack Davids of Tri County Development rounded out January's Builders Panel.

The meeting began with an introduction of the

BIA's new president, Rich Cook of Cook Builders, who then presided over the monthly business agenda, which included the presentation of a \$2,500



The BIA donated \$2,500 to Habitat for Humanity. Presented by President Richard Cook to Pamela Pazera, Executive Director of the NWIN Habitat for Humanity.

contribution to Habitat For Humanity.

Pam Pazera, President of Northwest Indiana Habitat For Humanity, was on hand to accept the check and thank all of the local builders and associate members in attendance for supporting the organization which built its 50th local home in 2007.

From their, the meeting included an overview of upcoming events and the many opportunities for members to showcase their particular specialty.

A members-only Builders Showcase is scheduled for February 28 giving Associate members the unique opportunity to introduce their latest products and services to Builder members who will also have the chance to win a Las Vegas vacation getaway sponsored by the BIA.

For the public, the BIA is in the process of finalizing plans for their 9th annual Home Improvement Expo at the Lake County Fairgrounds March 14-16. With 122 vendors already on board, this year's event promises to be bigger and better than ever. You can shop, compare and save on every kind of product for your home, inside and out.

"This year we plan to repeat and expand the Antique Evaluation, which was very successful last year during the Home Improvement Expo," Sharon Carlotta, BIA Executive Officer, said. "We will also continue to offer \$1 off admission for people who bring a non-perishable food item which will then be donated to a local food pantry. We were able to make a very nice contribution last year. There will also be miscellaneous door prizes for attendees throughout the show."

Other consumer events sponsored by the BIA throughout the year include their Spring and Fall Builders' Showcase of Homes events and the prestigious Parade of Homes in June.

Plans for this year's Parade already include homes from 11 of the area's most distinguished builders. The 2008 BIA Parade of Homes will take place from June 21-29 in Lowell's Heritage Falls, which is already gaining notoriety as Lake County's first "Green Community," according to developer KMN Properties, LLC.

From building a new home to remodeling a kitchen or any part of your existing home, including the landscape, consumers can turn to the BIA for expert advice. To learn more, contact the BIA office, which is located in Crown Point at 11035 Broadway, Suite C, at (219) 663-4475 or log on to www.bianwi.org.