ARE YOU EDUCATED? Do you know everything you need to know to best do your job? Is there anything you think you could do better with proper training? Do you know how to take full advantage of all those functions and that expensive Microsoft Office Suite of programs loaded on your office computer? Are you completely up to date on all the latest OSHA regulations? Are there coworkers in your office who could benefit from some formal training in a number of specific areas? If you are that rare individual who knows everything about everything necessary to perform your job in our industry, then this is not for you. If, like the rest of us, your skill sets could use a tweak or two, your PCEA offers a resource you may not be aware of. PCEA’s Online University may be just the place to find professionally developed online training courses in a wide range of topics and available at a reasonable cost.

As you are aware, one of the core functions of PCEA is education that benefits and enhances the member and his or her value to their employer. That function, for many years, has been carried out at the chapter level with professional guest speakers at their chapter meetings. Educational opportunities via seminars have also been an important element of our annual conventions. Several years back, the PCEA administration set out to find a resource for educational development opportunities that could be accessed at any time by individual members outside of the context of an organized meeting or other PCEA event. With that as a goal, an agreement was struck with Red Vector as a provider for thousands of available accredited training courses. Many of these courses award CE credit hours which can be applied toward requirements for professional engineering registration, AIA certification, or other contractor licensing requirements.

As sometimes happens, a new program or benefit enacted by a group administration does not survive long past the term of that administration. The PCEA Online University is too important to the function of our organization to be a “one and done” event. Many of you may not be aware that it even exists. Make a visit to our Online University portal which is provided via a link found on the PCEA.org homepage. If you make a visit and scroll through the course listings, you will find something that could be of professional benefit to you. Nobody ever suffered because they were over educated or had just too much knowledge. Take advantage of this important benefit of your PCEA membership and learn something that can enhance your value as an estimator.

In other business, have you updated your profile information and the Electronic Member Directory available via the national website?

This is one way you can plug your business with searchable information to let other members outside of your home chapter know what you do, and create business opportunities on your future projects. It is only effective if you take the time to put in good searchable information that can be accessed by our members. Just login to the Members Only section of the PCEA home web page, and update your profile information under the Electronic National Member Directory tab. It’s free, it’s easy, and it just might get you a bid invite or a subcontract on a project you otherwise may not have known about. Finally, PCEA NATIONAL CONVENTION is coming quickly, April 22-26 in beautiful Asheville, North Carolina. Be sure to start making arrangements now for attending a great convention. Let’s make 2020 a great year for our individual employers and for the continued success of your Professional Construction Estimators Association. Enjoy your winter, GO TIGERS, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Jim Cormany
PCEA National President 2019-2020

THE ESTIMATOR

Page 2
**U.S. Department of Labor Commemorates 50 Years of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 with "Protecting the American Workforce" Campaign**

**WASHINGTON, DC -**

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act) with a yearlong celebration of past achievements, current efforts, and future initiatives to protect the American workforce.

Signed into law by President Richard M. Nixon on December 29, 1970, the OSH Act was created "to assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women," laying the groundwork for the creation of OSHA the following spring. Following the establishment of the OSH Act, workplace fatalities were reduced approximately 65 percent.

"America's workplaces are safer and healthier thanks to the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the thousands of individuals at the Labor Department who have implemented the Act over the last 50 years," U.S. Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia said. "The OSH Act is a cornerstone of worker protection in our country, and thanks to OSHA's work, countless American workers have gotten home safely to their families each day."

"The creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration made real, demonstrable improvement in worker safety in the United States," said Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor of Occupational Safety and Health Loren Sweatt. "OSHA looks to continue to reduce occupational hazards and improve worker health. I am proud of the agency's half century of accomplishments and look forward to working with everyone dedicated to the agency's mission."

From the adoption of the first national health standard, to the affirmation of the imminent danger provisions and whistleblower protection laws, to the creation of training institutes and education grants, OSHA remains focused on its mission to safeguard the health and safety of the American worker.

Readers can subscribe to OSHA’s bi-monthly QuickTakes newsletter for the latest news and information regarding OSHA's efforts to protect the American workforce.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to help ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/region/01212020
www.dol.gov

**Media Contacts:**
Simone Walter, 202-693-4664, walter.simone.r@dol.gov
Denisha Braxton, 202-693-5061, braxton.denisha.l@dol.gov

Release Number: 20-0125-NAT

21 January 2020
Bill Barton
National Director
Columbia Chapter

As a recent graduate of West Virginia University with a degree in Forestry, I began my working career in Columbia, SC during the summer of ’78. I was hired to work in the Millwork Division of Columbia Lumber Company and train to become an estimator. My boss, Carl Hammond, was an old-school estimator that could take a napkin sketch, look to the sky seemingly lost in thought, then look you square in the eye and pitch a number. He told me it would take five years of intense training for me to develop that kind of skill. Since Carl was a Charter Member of the Columbia Chapter, it only came to reason that in the summer of ’83, having served my time, I was asked to join the Chapter. Thirty seven years later I’m still hard at it and loving every moment.

Within a short period of time I became fully entrenched in local chapter activities. I was asked to serve on the board for several years and soon enough progressed through the other positions of leadership, including Newsletter Editor. I have served as our Chapter President for four terms for a combined nine years. As National Director, though, I could feel the draw to the National level. After several terms as National Director, I took the plunge and ran for the office of Vice President; then President-Elect. I served as your National President in 2015 – 2016.

Outside of the numerous conventions and people I have met along the way, some of my most memorable moments in my PCEA experience began in 2013 when, along with several Catawba Valley Chapter members, we were able to charter our first Student Chapter at Appalachian State University. In 2014 I was recognized with the Rudolph John Barnes Award. And in 2016 was the impetus behind re-chartering the former Piedmont Chapter in Greenville, SC.

Over the many years of PCEA involvement I have been fortunate to have had the support of my family and numerous employers. My wife and I raised three wonderfully talented children who all participated in the usual soccer, cross country, basketball, student government, and scouts. All three are graduates of the University of Georgia and live in the Atlanta area. I have, also, been blessed with three beautiful grandchildren. Pops travels to Atlanta a lot!

Member Highlight continued, page 10 ...

Asheville Awaits!

64th Annual
PCEA National Convention

more information
on page 7
Chapter Reports

Triangle Chapter
Greetings from the Triangle Chapter. Business is good in the Triangle as we enter the fall and winter months. After a rather dry summer, more and more construction projects are underway and everyone is busy.

In September, our speaker had to cancel at the last minute so President Adam Blalock held a “town meeting” and discussed with our members what projects they had upcoming, discussed problems they are having on projects and how to remedy them, and issues everyone was having quoting all the work in the Triangle area. In October, we had Sara Zarzour of Trimaco, Inc. present items on how to protect job sites from damage after finishes are installed. They have items from cardboard floor coverings to plastic liners to protect hospitals and cleanroom applications.

A sporting clays event was held on October 11th at Drake’s Landing in Fuquay-Varina, NC. Rick Embrey hosted a good event with a great meal afterward.

We have been holding our monthly meeting every 3rd Thursday of the month at Casa Carbone at 6019 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, NC. Social starts at 6:30 PM. Come visit us if you are in town.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin Sherron
National Director, Triangle Chapter

Upstate Chapter
The Upstate Chapter had a great quarter which included our annual fundraiser that followed the presentation of our first ever scholarship recipients with checks along with some great monthly presentations.

We were able to award two $500 scholarships to South Carolina area students and have now opened the application process up for the 2019 - 2020 school year.

Our 2nd annual golf tournament in September was held at Willow Creek Golf Club in Greer, SC and was a great success.

Our Christmas party this year will continue to be held at the Swamp Rabbits game in December, which is the Teddy Bear toss.

We have been working with the students at Greenville Tech and are working to get in front of the Clemson University students to gain interest in participating as student members and potentially starting up student chapters.

We have a very exciting charity event coming up, which we hope to tell everyone about by next year.

Please feel free to join us any 3rd Thursday at Barley's in downtown Greenville for pizza and a beer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Richard Heath
National Director, Upstate Chapter #23

Charlotte Chapter
Greetings from Charlotte! As we approach the end of the year it is a good time to look back and reflect. This was another great year for our chapter. Our membership continues to have modest growth and we had a record setting return from our golf tournament. We had two very interesting presentations since the last National board meeting. One on the technical aspect of fire stopping as well as some new methods to quantify as provided by a local distributor. The second was a state of the market presentation focusing on the Charlotte Multi-Family Market given by a fixture of the industry John Huson with Carocon.

Going forward, our Member Drive challenge is in full swing and so far I think my money is safe but we haven’t reached June yet! Look out Orlando, give us another few years like this and we might start getting close to as big as you guys are.

Our upcoming meeting is our annual Holiday Party. We have it a month early since we don’t meet in December and it is the first party of the season so we are setting the bar for all the office parties to come. This year we are going to be in the lower level of the Dilworth Grille. They have had excellent service and reasonable prices all year so we are looking forward to continued excellent service if not quite the view we had last year. This is a member plus one event so as I always joke, “you can bring your wife or girlfriend, you just can’t bring both.”

After the Holiday break the next big thing on the Horizon is our annual Trivia night. This event usually brings in $2,000 to $3,000 so is a great fill in fundraiser outside of golf, and one that can be done indoors which makes it a great one for the winter months.

That’s all for now,

Pete Martinez
National Director, Charlotte Chapter

Chapter reports continued, page 8.....
Should contractors risk moving into niche building sectors?

In the construction industry, the term “specialty contractors” usually refers to subcontractors who deal exclusively with one piece of the construction process like metal framing, flooring or curtain walls. However, all but the largest conglomerates are niche contractors in some way.

Some focus on public work, while others work only in the private sector. And some target particular markets like schools, hospitals, industrial facilities, multifamily, data centers or bridges.

Growth is the goal of many construction companies, and some owners dream of expanding into new lines of business. However, before trying to make headway in another niche, there are important factors contractors should consider.

Private v. public work

Construction companies get into a rhythm when they’re focused on a niche. There is usually a fairly predictable flow of invoicing, receipt of payments, paperwork deadlines, work hours and other management functions. Dealing with different customers and new types of projects, though, can present challenges on many fronts.

One of the bumpiest transitions, said Bill Fischer, partner at accounting and consulting firm Grassi & Co, can happen when a contractor that is accustomed to working in the private sector pursues public projects.

Many of those contractors, he said, step into a world of compliance issues they have never dealt with. Having to pay, track and pay prevailing wage rates is one. These rules make a job more expensive if the firm’s previous private-sector work did not have such requirements.

Underestimating this or the other extra compliance costs related to public work during the procurement process could be disastrous for a new player that all of a sudden finds itself the low bidder for a project that will start off saddled with over-budget items before even breaking ground.

And about those draw payments: invoice turnaround time on public projects can be much slower.

“There’s a lot of bureaucracy involved,” said James Miller, partner and member of Marcum LLP’s national construction industry group. “And then you’re really at the mercy of that process of getting (pay) requisitions processed by public entities, which tends to take a lot longer than private jobs. If you don’t have the history of managing your business based on those types of terms, that’s where we see a lot of companies fall.”

This can lead to the kind of cash flow issues, he said, that can put a contractor into a different risk category with lenders, particularly when the bank or credit issuer digs into the state of the company’s operations and sees that taking on projects in new markets is causing a disruption.

The culture of public work is also very different from that of the private sector, Miller said.

“When you’re in the private sector,” he said, “you tend to focus on relationships.” That includes leveraging those relationships in order to successfully negotiate for better payment terms and schedule adjustments, as well as to facilitate change orders and the resolution of other issues.

And, as those relationships grow and thrive, referrals can lead to new work and other fruitful customer relationships.

Not so with public work. Yes, it’s important to have a good relationship with government procurement officers, but they have little leeway as far as contract administration and certainly can’t negotiate future work, at least for the most lucrative contracts. There are pre-qualification requirements that all contractors must meet, and, when there are problems on a job, Miller said, they are typically not solved face to face but by a designated group to which the contractor submits the necessary documentation.

Continued, page 10 ...
Registration is live for the 64th Annual PCEA National Convention!

Visit our registration page for more information

Details about becoming a Convention Sponsor can be found on our Sponsorship Registration Page

Book your stay today at the Cambria Downtown Asheville!

Stay Tuned! The Call to Convention is coming soon!
Central Savannah River Area Chapter

Greetings from Augusta!

We have been busy since our last National Board meeting. Our low-country boil in late August was successful with approximately 30 people attending. Mark Halvorsen with Movement Mortgage was the guest speaker at our September meeting. He discussed what his firm has to offer clients and how they differ from other lenders.

At our October meeting, David Lewis talked about problems he, as well as many others, face in today's market. Also in October, we hosted our annual James Hutto Memorial Golf Tournament at Bartram Trail to raise funds for our scholarships. Nineteen teams participated, with a team from Herc Rentals winning. The 50/50 raffle was also held, with the winner receiving $850.

As always, you are welcome to join us if you are in the area on the second Thursday of the month. We meet at Logan's Roadhouse at 11:45 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Gaskin
National Director, CSRA Chapter

Orlando Chapter

Orlando Here;

We have had some very good events in the last quarter. Steak on the lake was a big success in September, and we hope that it will bring a surge in membership. The August and July Member meetings were well attended with a new local developer in July and the City of Orlando Historical Building manager, in August. We have another new developer speaking in October about the new "packing district" that is in the Orlando Area. We had a social event at a local brewery, and we helped a local charity with a back-pack stuffing event for underprivileged youth. Our fall golf tournament is scheduled for 11/22 and is selling quickly. That is our big money maker for our scholarship fund. The member Holiday Party is scheduled for December 12th, and is already generating quite the buzz.

Regards,

Tim McLaughlin
President, Orlando Chapter

Columbia Chapter

Greetings from the Columbia Chapter!

The Columbia Chapter is holding strong with an enthusiastic core leadership. We do have one item of note, however, we have lost our Chapter President, Matt Weatherford. Matt has moved his family back to the Charleston area where he has taken a new position with Samet Corporation. We look forward to working with Matt on chartering a new chapter in Charleston, after he gets settled in.

With Matt's exit we have shifted and shuffled some of our officers around. Serving as Chapter President is Will Mullendor with Mashburn Construction; First Vice President is Ford Tupper with Sumwalt Associates; Second Vice President is Daniel Rivers with Ready-Mix Concrete; Anthony Reddish with WB Guimarin continues as Secretary; and Whit Suber with Argos continues as Treasurer.

October was filled with lots of activity for the Chapter. Our semi-annual membership drive, "Stew in the Woods", was enjoyed by all in attendance with mounds of low country boil and steamed oysters. We have the use of a not-so-rustic hunting lodge on the outskirts of Columbia which serves as a majestic setting for this annual event. The following day we conducted our Annual Golf Tournament held at the Fort Jackson Golf Course. Through the generosity of our members, sponsors, and a full compliment of 18 teams, we were able to net over $6,000 for our General and Scholarship funds.

This past weeks November meeting we returned to our regular meeting place at the Longhorn Steakhouse on Gervais Street in the Heart of the Vista. Our guest speaker was Matt Kennell, President and CEO of City Center Partnership. Matt spoke to us about the current and future projects planned for the downtown district.

Plans are in the making for our Christmas Party in December. A new venue is being considered.

As always, if you're in the Columbia area on the second Thursday of the month come join us.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Barton
National Director, Columbia Chapter
ABI December 2019: Year ends on a stronger note for architecture firms

The year 2019 ended with architecture firms reporting modest growth in their firm billings. The ABI score rose to 52.5, as business conditions continued to rebound from a period of softness throughout much of the spring and summer. Inquiries into new work remained strong as well, and the value of new design contracts also showed solid growth for the fourth consecutive month. Although the period of declining and flat billings earlier in the year was one of the most protracted since the end of the Great Recession, firms remain cautiously optimistic about business in the coming months. In addition, backlogs at architecture firms remained strong in December, with firms reporting an average backlog of 6.3 months. Backlogs have extended beyond six months since the spring of 2018.

For more information, visit: AIA.org

- “Strong finish after a shaky first three quarters. Optimistic about 2020.” - 52-person firm in the South, mixed specialization
- “There continues to be interest in new projects, but many clients are not familiar with the current cost of construction, so a fair amount of orientation is needed on many projects.” - 8-person firm in the Midwest, commercial/industrial specialization
- “At this point, 2020 could go either way: there is a lot of work that may move forward, but until that happens, we will work the pipeline.” - 5-person firm in the Northeast, institutional specialization
- “Wildfires in northern California are affecting workload. Less interest due to the expense of building in the area.” - 2-person firm in the West, residential specialization
Diversity goals could also be new to a contractor that hasn’t done much work in the public arena, Fischer said. Rather than being able to automatically tap into a stable of suppliers and subcontractors, a general contractor could be forced to source companies from a limited pool of woman-, minority- and disabled veteran-owned businesses.

Learning curve

No matter the niche, Fischer said, there is a learning curve as it relates to the nuances of that sector, particularly when it comes to technical proficiency — acquiring the skills and accumulating the necessary expertise in order to provide a quality product. It’s easier, he said, to build a building for a college than it is to build one for a hospital network, for instance, because you have a lot of special construction requirements, like the installation of hospital equipment, compliance with health codes and building standards unique to medical facilities.

When contractors are trying to make such a leap, Miller said, a numbers review sometimes convinces them to stick to their strengths.

“[When you do a post mortem, benchmark your clients, do… an historical review and (compare that to) an industry average, you can see some trends as to what a company’s true sweet spot is based on what their current operations support,” he said, and the common discussion point is, “Do what you do well, and keep doing that.”

Miller said some of his contractor clients are willing to take some hits upfront in order to build up the necessary experience in a new niche, but others roll back when faced with negative information about their ability to carry the new work financially and otherwise.

If a contractor is intent on making a change, Fischer said, “You do it at a slow, controlled pace.”

Niche within a niche

To build up expertise, Fischer said, try to partner with a company in the field but that needs some additional capacity or team up with young company trying to break in (although they might be hesitant to help a future competitor build its business).

Another way of expanding that doesn’t make the transition so hard is to take enter new markets within an existing niche. Kentucky-based Gray Construction is a leader in the manufacturing and production facility niche but contracts for different types of projects under that umbrella.

Gray’s expertise has grown to include food and beverage, automotive and distribution facilities as well, including fulfillment centers for Amazon. Recently the company marked the opening of new kitchens and production facility for Champion Pet Foods — a niche within a niche — in Acheson, Alberta, Canada.

“Economic matters may impact a certain market at any given time,” said Marcus Taylor, director of business development at Gray, “but having a diverse market approach, as well as service offerings, helps mitigate this risk.”

Again, caution, Fischer said, is the watchword so that contractors don’t end up dealing with overwhelming compliance, operational or financial problems that can infect the successful business with which they started.

“The last thing you want to do is tarnish your reputation of being a good, honest builder,” he said.

Author: Kim Slowey
Construction Dive
February 4, 2020

Member Highlight

… continued from page 4

Bill Barton

I presented my wife, Phyllis, with the Order of Isosceles pin at last year’s convention in Orlando; a small token of my appreciation for all she did while I was off PCEA-ing. Too choked up to get it all out, I wanted to thank this dedicated and tireless educator of thirty one years for her steadfast love, guidance, and support over the past 37 years. I couldn’t have done it without her. We celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary later this year.

Author: Bill Barton
Member Highlight
February 4, 2020