It’s a Great Time to be in the Metal Building Industry

By Brad Curtis, Chairman, Metal Building Manufacturers Association

When I accepted the nomination to be chair of the Metal Building Manufacturers Association (MBMA), I could not imagine the opportunities this role would bring—or the amount of work that could be done when dedicated people put their heads together for a good cause.

MBMA has had an amazing year. We’ve made changes to improve the association for the members, including a new meeting format, streamlined leadership structure, and even more opportunities to get involved and make a difference in the industry. These changes have generated energy and a get-it-done culture that is making change happen fast. What hasn’t changed is the continued research efforts of MBMA, which are spearheaded by the Technical Committee and Dr. Lee Shoemaker. The research keeps us at the forefront in the development of codes and standards.

In addition to the highly technical work, we’re also involved in very practical projects to make sure architects have fire-rated details, sound transmission ratings, thermal performance values and documentation of the sustainable attributes of metal buildings. This work provides tools for builders, owners and designers to be able to use metal buildings in more occupancy types. The bottom line? MBMA is keeping our industry competitive in a changing construction marketplace.

Sixty years ago, MBMA was formed by insightful leaders who recognized that individual companies could not accomplish this level of research and education on their own. These forward-thinking business executives put down their competitive differences and united on issues where they had common ground. They soon found that they had more in common than they realized. Through their collaboration, MBMA has been able to tackle the biggest issues facing our industry and solve challenges together.

I’m not touting MBMA because I led the association this year; but having been in this leadership role, I have been privy to the amazing volume and quality of work that MBMA is performing. Performing including manuals, webinars, research, outreach and education. It’s amazing how much output is derived from an association with a small staff and a membership that dedicates itself to a common cause.

We are very proud that three leaders of the MBMA community and true leaders of the industry have been inducted into the Metal Construction Hall of Fame in the new Founders category. This category was created to recognize individuals who played an important role in the formation of our industry in its early days. We nominated Wilbur Larkin, Jack Hatcher and Johnnie Schulte, who were all instrumental in making our industry the success it is today.

To get you up to date, let me highlight some of the great things that recently have happened. MBMA has become more engaged with Metal Building Contractors & Erectors Association (MBCEA) so that together, we can enhance the reputation of our industry. Just as a rising tide lifts all ships, MBMA members are AC472 accredited and now MBCEA members are achieving AC478 accreditation. This commitment to quality says one thing to all potential owners, architects and developers: We don’t just talk about quality; we prove it through our commitment to third-party accreditation by the International Accreditation Service.

Last year’s MBMA’s collegiate capstone project grants allowed six engineering and architecture professors to introduce their students to metal building systems. The students were guided by MBMA member advisors. This effort not only opened the eyes of students to the value and potential of metal building systems, it also had a tremendous impact on their professors. As Dr. Ron Ziemian of Bucknell University has said, “By having the opportunity to try to design this facility, the students and I gained a true understanding and appreciation of the complexity, efficiency and workmanship of a metal building system.” The work of the six grant recipients led to the development of a model college capstone course on metal building systems that has the potential to reach three dozen university classes in 2017 and expand across the nation after that. Imagine the impact of so many young minds learning to appreciate the value and importance of metal buildings!

Also be aware that MBMA is still growing. We’re adding new members each year and see the enthusiasm toward the work we’re accomplishing. There are countless leaders in this industry who have likely risen to the top because of their involvement and leadership on MBMA committees. We offer many stimulating opportunities to not only help the industry grow, but also to help you achieve your leadership goals. If your firm is not a member, now is the time to join. Come get involved and experience working shoulder to shoulder with the top names in our industry.

There is so much more to tell you about including our new Environmental Product Declarations, our successful work with Athena Sustainable Materials Institute to bring metal buildings into its Environmental Impact Estimator, our partnering activities with MBCEA, new Building Information Modeling (BIM) tools, new fire and energy designs, and promotional videos to share with your customers. Come be a part of our team. Let’s make the next 60 years as successful as the first!}

Capstone project grant recipients presented their results to MBMA leaders. Their work led to the development of a capstone college course curriculum that will go nationwide next year. (L-R, Dr. Ron Ziemian, Bucknell University; Dr. Michael Seek, Old Dominion University; Dr. John Cleary, University of South Alabama; Dr. Justin Marshall, Auburn University; and Dr. Mehdi Jalalpour, Cleveland State University.)