

News Briefs

Wall and Ceiling Alliance Holds CEA Show In Pleasanton

The Wall And Ceiling Alliance (WACA) association's annual Construction Excellence Awards (CEA) dinner was proved to be



a successful event. Held June 4 at the Castlewood Country Club in Pleasanton, the night was a celebration to highlight contractors' skills and to showcase the industry's top wall and ceiling projects.

The process for determining award recipients was not easy. Three judges participated in the process, including Perry A. Haviland, FAIA and Malvin Whang, AIA, LEED AP from the American Institute of Architects (AIA); and drywall expert Jason Fell, who has over 27 years of experience in the wall and ceiling industry. To ensure a comprehensive review, the judges examined projects in person and evaluated them for quality and craftsmanship. From this extensive process the 2015 CEA winners were selected.

Seventeen crystal awards including five awards for Project of the Year were given out.

This year the Project of the Year – Interior Over \$500,000 award - went to two companies. They were Bayside Interiors, Inc. and California Drywall Co., for Levi's Stadium. This venture was especially significant in the Bay Area for its pioneering collaborate approach, in particular the collective delivery model of integrated bridging design-build. The nine-story, 1.85 million sq-ft stadium is also the first pro-football stadium in the United States to receive LEED Gold Certification for new construction.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award to Jim Johnson, who was in attendance celebrating the evening with his wife Patty. Jim was unaware he was recipient of the award. Jim started his career when he was 19 years old, culminating in over 60 years of experience in the wall and ceiling industry.

"We were proud to recognize Jim for his industry contributions and his professional achievements at our 2015 CEA Show," says Frank Nunes, Executive Director of WACA.

Presentation videos of the award-winning projects were displayed at the dinner event via large screens.

(continued on page 2)

Construction Spending Reaches 7-Year High

Construction spending climbed in May to the highest level since October 2008, according to an analysis released July 1 by the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of America. Association officials caution, however, that those spending gains could be at risk unless all levels of government strengthen programs to develop the construction workforce.

"There were solid monthly and year-over-year gains in May for all major construction categories—private nonresidential, residential and public," says Ken Simonson, the association's chief economist. "The private segments appear poised to maintain growth throughout the year. But contractors increasingly report difficulty in finding workers with the right skills to construct large and complex projects."

Construction spending in May totaled \$1.036 trillion at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, 0.8 % higher than the April total despite a steep upward revision in that figure and 8.2 % higher than in May 2014, Simonson says. He notes that the year-over-year growth rate was the strongest since March 2014, indicating a faster pace of construction spending overall.

Private nonresidential spending in May increased 0.9 % from April and 10.3 % from a year earlier, while private residential spending increased 0.3 % for the month and 7.8 % over 12 months. Public construction spending rose 0.7 % from a month before and 2.8 % from 12 months earlier.

"Several components of the private categories posted especially large year-over-year increases," Simonson says. "Whether they can continue to grow depends in part on companies being able to find enough skilled workers."

Simonson cites certain areas for which worker shortages could be problematic. These areas are the one-year increases of 70 % in manufacturing construction spending, 46 % in amusement and recreation construction, 30 % in lodging construction, 26% in private office construction and 21% in multifamily construction.

Association officials urge federal, state and local officials to enact the



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measures outlined in the association's Workforce Development Plan. Those measures, which include expanding career and technical education opportunities, making it easier for firms to establish regional training programs, are designed to make it easier to recruit and prepare new construction workers.

"We need to rebuild what was once a robust pipeline for attracting and training younger people into high-paying construction careers," said Stephen E. Sandherr, the association's chief executive officer. "It would be a sad irony if firms can't take advantage of growing demand for work because there aren't enough workers."

The AGC also this week released an analysis that found that construction employment holding steady in June at the highest level in six years, while the number of unemployed workers with construction experience falling to the lowest total since 2001. Association officials say that the new data indicates contractors are having a hard time finding enough qualified workers

to meet growing demand in many parts of the country.

"Expanding job opportunities throughout the economy make it increasingly difficult for contractors to find experienced construction workers," says Simonson. "This scarcity shows up in record workweeks for craft workers and flattening of employment totals despite higher construction spending."

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- **Construction News** 2
- **Bidders Column** 8
- **Request For Bids** 37

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News Briefs

(continued from page 1)

In the videos, company representatives provided inside information about the detailed work, challenges involved, and the degree of extraordinary skills needed to perform the jobs.

If you're a union wall and ceiling contractor and have performed a job in Northern California, we encourage you to submit your project for a CEA award. It's not too soon to consider submissions for the 2016 Construction Excellence Awards. For more information, visit: walland-ceilingalliance.org

News Briefs **Capitol Connection** **Tools of the Trade** **People in the News**

(continued from page 1)