

Michigan Construction News

February 3, 2009

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AGC Of Michigan Honors Its Very Best



Incoming AGC of Michigan Chairman Andrew Shmina (left) congratulates the outgoing chairman, Stan Buel for a job well done.

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During a gathering that stressed calm and collected leadership during troubling times, last week the Associated General Contractors of Michigan changed its guard, with Andrew Shmina, president of A.Z. Shmina Inc., Brighton, elected as its chairman for 2009.

The group conducted its annual meeting at the recently opened J.W. Marriott Hotel in downtown Grand Rapids. Joining Shmina on the leadership roster are Gary Benjamin, president and chief operating officer of Champion Inc., Iron Mountain, as vice chairman, and Todd Doenitz, vice president of Fastdecks, Walled Lake, as treasurer.

Shmina has been in construction all his life. He started as a laborer in his family owned business and worked his way up the ranks as a field engineer, superintendent, vice president, and finally president and chief executive officer. He holds a civil engineering degree from the University of Michigan and is a past president of the Washtenaw Contractors Association. He's also a member of the Ann Arbor Chapter of Legatus, a Catholic business leaders organization.

Serving as the annual meeting's keynote speaker was former newspaper publisher Phil Power, currently the president of the Center for Michigan. He described it as a nonpartisan citizen effort to develop a common ground vision, agenda, strategy, and action plan to solve the problems and meet the challenges that are crucial for Michigan's success.



"Michigan is in a terrible jam," he told the AGC of Michigan. "This is known to everyone in this room. Our situation is not only bad, but it is aggravated by the fact in Michigan, at least, our policy and political systems are broken."

To much bickering between Republicans and Democrats in Lansing is contributing to stalemates over important decisions. What the state truly needs, Power said, is not another political party but a strong citizens reform movement that calls for reforms that are practical and realistic.

Phil Power, president of the Center For Michigan, describes its mission.

"The Center for Michigan is a think and a do-tank," he explained, "to reduce partisan finger-pointing and bickering

that's going around, and to get something done."

The history of third party movements in America is a bleak one. But in the past Michigan has achieved some success for period of time when strong citizen movements have put pressure for bipartisan solutions from the two major political parties.

Power produced a report from his center, entitled "Michigan's Defining Moment," on its work conducting citizen meetings across the state, developing a "common ground agenda for Michigan's transformation." More than 175 community meetings have been conducted since the spring of 2007, involving more than 1,800 citizens, working on a strategy that stresses:

- Developing a talented and globally competitive workforce.
- Building a vibrant economy and a great quality of life.
- Making state government effective, efficient, and accountable.

Some of the action steps the center has been working on include rewarding school districts for using best practices, developing consistent permitting policies among communities, simplifying the state business tax, the elimination of term limits in the state legislature, and redirecting excessive corrections spending to education and infrastructure investment.

Like many, the Center for Michigan is concerned about the impact the election of 2010 will have on the state. Due to existing term limits, Michigan's governor, senate majority leader, speaker of the house, attorney general and secretary of state will be replaced. Thirty of 38 state senators will also be removed as well as 70% of Michigan's House of Representatives.

Power said the 2010 election will be a "watershed" for the state. He said it will put it at a cross roads. "Taken one way, we can end up looking like the state of Alabama with colder weather. Taken another way, and we can end up looking at a great version of the future."

Annual awards are normally presented at the AGC of Michigan's annual meeting and this year's version did not disappoint. Leading off was the announcement of three young men as the AGC Apprentices of the Year.

The honors were bestowed to:

- Howard D. Morrow II, apprentice carpenter of the year. He works for Brinker Team Construction Co. of Detroit.
- Keith Leaym, apprentice bricklayer of the year, with Baker Construction of Whitmore Lake.
- Michael Volpe, apprentice cement mason of the year, with Kelcris Corporation, Williamson.



The 2009 Apprentices of the Year are, from left: Keith Leaym, bricklayer, Baker Construction, Whitmore Lake; Michael Volpe, cement mason, Kelcris Corporation, Williamston; and Howard D. Marrow III, carpentry, with Brinker Team Construction Co., Detroit.

To win the award the three demonstrated superior achievement in punctuality and attendance, craft mastery and productivity, leadership skills and teamwork, safety awareness, competitiveness, and commitment to their craft, their employer, and the construction community.



The winner of the 2009 Cornerstone Award for Training Excellence was Spence Brothers of Saginaw, with Herb Spence III accepting the honor. Flanking him on the left is Vikki Gotts and on the right is Barbara Strachan, both of the AGC of Michigan.

The winner of the 2009 Cornerstone Award for Training Excellence was Spence Brothers of Saginaw. The award celebrates companies that demonstrate outstanding records for advancing the quality of their workers through training.