

## WHERE QUALITY GATHERS HPBExpo 2009 Hosts Top Buyers

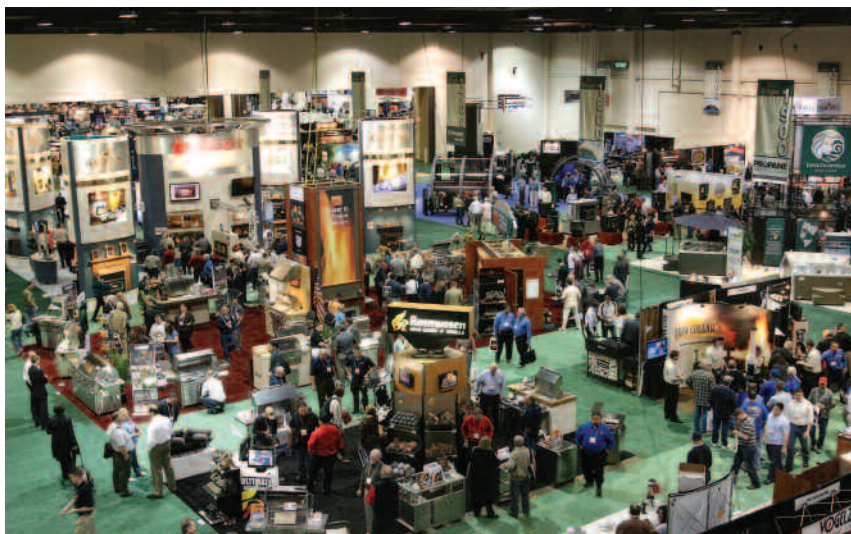
By Deidra Darsa

Creative design, cutting edge technology and savvy business-wise retailers were the driving force behind the success of HPBExpo 2009 in Reno.

While the world outside struggled with an uncertain economy, inside and outside the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, over 300 hearth, patio and barbecue industry manufacturers and distributors from the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia and Australia presented forward-thinking dealers with products that are sure to enhance the homes and lifestyles of consumers everywhere.



HPBExpo Opening Ceremony dignitaries (left to right): HPBA President Jack Goldman, Reno Mayor Robert Cashell, HPBA 2008 Chairman Dennis Smith, Expo Committee Chairman Stephen Magnotti, HPBA 2009 Chairman Steve Hall and Sparks Mayor Geno Martini.



Birds-eye view of the indoor exhibit floor.

“If you’re in this business, HPB-Expo is where it all happens,” said Dan Gannon, account executive with Regency Fireplace Products.

And, what’s happening this year is a contemporary look across the board, whether home heating, backyard grilling or outdoor living. According to Gannon, young homeowner tastes are trending to a stylistic look. “They don’t want what their parents have,” he noted.

The shift to sleek lines was evident with the Vesta Award winning gas fireplace and Best-in-Show Hearth & Home Technologies, Inc.’s Heat & Glo sun-inspired Solaris fireplace that fits within a standard 2 ft. x 6 ft. wall and Summer Classics’ Vesta Award winner for Outdoor Room Furnishing, the Yacht Recliner.



Team Grill earned a Vesta finalist award.

“The move to contemporary is legitimate,” says Dave Miller, Heat & Glo (HHT) brand manager. “Our dealers are reconfiguring their showrooms to showcase these products.”

And, he added, consumers are using contemporary means to find contemporary products. “They’re Google-ing,” he said.

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This year, Napoleon Fireplaces added a bit of sparkle to its line of contemporary fireplaces. “We have an exclusive deal with Swarovski Crystal,” said Greg Thomas, director of sales. The manufacturer displayed a horizontal linear fireplace featuring



HearthStone's stoves impressed attendees.



Tuscan Imports' pizza oven.

1,000 Swarovski crystals in a dazzling diamond-like necklace shape design that reflects its gas flames.

Contemporary design moves outdoors, too. At Summer Classics, the Yacht Recliner is one outdoor winner geared toward a younger consumer. “The 2009-2010 season is stronger for contemporary than traditional,” noted Harold Hudson, adding, “We’re optimistic about the coming outdoor season.”

As for the HPBExpo, Hudson and other outdoor and grilling product exhibitors found the same success as the hearth folks. “The show exceeded my expectations given the fact the economy is where it is,” said Hudson. “I also noticed that the buyers we saw were quality buyers. Plus, since there were fewer people to shuffle, we knew the person we talked



New biomass furnace in the New Product Pavilion.

to was the decision maker.”

For Robert H. Peterson, the show was very positive, according to Jerry Scott. “For the most part, we, like other exhibitors I’ve talked with, found that the folks that visited our booth were quality dealers. And, the lower attendance afforded us more time to spend with those folks.”

For Michael Tostowaryk, sales manager for Bradley Smoker Inc., a meeting with one 400-store dealer may well pay for the entire show. And, first-time exhibitor Le Egg Crate was thrilled with dealer response. “This Expo far exceeded our expectations,” said Scott Altfillish.

In addition to the hundreds of new products on display, inside the Expo classrooms dealers were learning how to do business during tough times. Over 600 attendees purchased Expo Education Passports and attended over 40 classes over the three-day period. Also offered in Reno were National Fireplace Institute® (NFI) certification classes and exams.

HPBA’s Government Affairs staff hosted a standing-room-only briefing on legislative and regulatory issues, including an update on the 30% consumer tax credit for the purchase of a biomass-burning stove. A four-hour meeting of the HPBA Technical Committee was also a full-house where up-to-date information on codes and standards was reviewed and evaluated.

Whether exhibiting or buying, whether indoors or outdoors, manufacturers and dealers alike shared an overwhelmingly positive attitude. Perhaps, Daryl Smoak of Buck Stove says it best, “We’re tickled to be here.”



HPBA Education Foundation's Rick Vlahos.



Travis Industries held its 30th anniversary at Expo.



Business was busy for outdoor exhibitor Jotul.

The HPBA Journal is intended to provide in-depth information to the hearth and outdoor products industry. Statements of fact and opinion are the responsibility of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the officers, board, staff or members of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association.

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