

## *Achieving Excellence*

By Deidra Darsa

Federal and state funding for wood stove changeouts, tax credits for consumers, and an enhanced education program delivered online and in the field are some of the great successes that HPBA would not have achieved without the support of its affiliate members. Yet, there is more to be done. In his role as HPBA Chairman, Steve Hall, a longtime Southeast affiliate member, has created the Affiliate Excellence Program (AEP).

The HPBA Affiliate Excellence Program was created to strengthen the association and its affiliates by maintaining an open line of communication while also sharing ideas that the national office and other affiliates have found successful. The process begins with face-to-face meetings of HPBA and affiliate staff who then identify and discuss areas needing improvement in a collaborative and constructive manner. Then, HPBA and the affiliate design a plan

“I thought it was a very fruitful meeting,” said Litchfield. “I found that talking one-on-one with them was very helpful.”

Prior to their meetings, affiliates are asked to list what they perceive are their strengths and weaknesses. “We listed communication with members as both a weakness and strength,” said Litchfield. “Our problem is more with the delivery. It’s getting information to our members and getting them to act on it, open it and read it.”

Discussions went so well that HPBA Canada is considering applying the same program to their chapters across the country. “I think it’s a good program,” she said, adding, “I hope this is something they’ll do on an annual basis.”

According to Don Kaiser, HPBA director of affiliate relations, HPBA national staff is a resource that all affiliate staffs should utilize. “There is a deep reservoir of knowledge and experience at the national office that is available to assist the affiliates,” he said. “After all, our common goal is to improve member services.”

Additionally, HPBA has the resources and tools including a Best Practices Manual that is a virtual encyclopedia of knowledge on structuring the affiliate office and its day-to-day management. “We are in the midst of updating that, and we will be looking at providing online board orientation and training for affiliate volunteers who want to be board members,” said Kaiser.

Overall, it is the goal of the AEP to improve the quality and expand the scope of what HPBA’s affiliates offer

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— Steve Hall,  
HPBA Chairman

The program is designed to insure that every affiliate receives HPBA assistance as it pursues excellence.

“I’m trying to bring about a better understanding of affiliate need while also helping the affiliates have a more comprehensive view of our industry needs,” said Hall of the AEP. “Quite frankly, the leadership welcomes this type of interest in their particular affiliates. They do many things really well, but they also realize that everyone can do something better. They want to do their best and they want to serve their affiliate members in the best possible way.”

and the affiliate, with assistance from HPBA, implements the changes and improvements it deemed necessary.

The meetings with affiliate staff and volunteer leaders began in May and were held during their annual meetings or at HPBA’s Board meeting in Orlando, Florida. Early on, Hall and HPBA President, Jack Goldman, met with HPBA Canada manager, Tony Gottschalk, and administrator Laura Litchfield, to discuss their affiliate’s strengths and weaknesses. During the meeting they explored ways in which HPBA and HPBA Canada could work together to improve its performance.

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## Chairman's MESSAGE

Steve Hall, *Chairman,  
Hearth, Patio & Barbecue  
Association*



I am pleased to say that the new Affiliate Excellence Program is underway. It was created to foster a better understanding of affiliate needs while aligning the goals and objectives of both the North American affiliates and the national organization.

Coming from an affiliate background, it has always been my personal belief that HPBA is/should be a bottom up, affiliate-driven organization. Consequently, it is critical that we help each affiliate build the strongest, most effective organization possible.

When attending each affiliate's annual meeting, HPBA staff and I schedule time to meet with the affiliate leadership to gain a more complete understanding of the goals and needs of that particular affiliate. We also share how HPBA might be able to assist them in accomplishing their goals. As both the affiliates and national share many common objectives, this is a natural and important conversation.

We have a great affiliate network with dedicated staff and volunteers. Simply stated, in the years ahead, it will become more important that all parties understand the issues that face our industry and work in a unified way to meet these challenges.

The affiliates are the backbone of our organization and must be prepared to fulfill their roles in meeting the needs of our association. Our common interests are great and it will not only be needed but required that we work together to ensure the prosperity of our industries.

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to their members. Once accomplished, HPBA believes that the improved services should improve recruitment and retention of members. Plus, increased membership rolls will improve revenues and make more money available for new programs, such as in government affairs, education, and affinity programs.

"What affiliate excellence means to me," says Robert Huta, president of MidStates HPBA, "is for the affiliate

iate Excellence Program, and the feedback has been positive, with many folks asking for the program to continue on an annual basis.

"I've been very encouraged," said Steve Hall, HPBA chairman. "Each affiliate has welcomed this type of communication. Now, after these meetings, we will work to produce a joint action plan with the affiliates and HPBA national so that we're working from the same page to

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*MidStates HPBA President*

to fulfill its role within the greater HPBA structure. Not only should we be on the front line of government affairs work - especially if it involves local legislators and regulators - but we should also be the entity to build a community within our regional membership. That is not something that can be easily done at the national level."

As HPBA members across the country know, each affiliate region faces challenges specific to its area, making it critically important for every affiliate to be prepared to provide services and support to meet those needs. For instance, educational sessions needed for NFI certification in the western regions may be far different than those needed in the eastern or southern regions, and the annual affiliate meetings are the perfect venue to carry those necessary classes as well as other coursework that can't be taken over the Internet or during HPBExpo.

But overall, says Huta, "We're all partners. And great communication and goal sharing between partners are key to the success of the entire system."

This is the debut year for the Affil-

accomplish their most important objectives for the coming year."

And, the final goal, he says: "The annual process is to identify weaknesses and strengths, understand what each affiliate needs in order to succeed, and work together to take the affiliate performance and the national understanding to a new level." 🔥

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