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HPBA – Come for the Member Experience, Stay for the Community

By Jamie Beaulieu, CAE

The members of HPBA represent all facets of our trade, from sales rep to business owner; from assembly lineman to in-home installation technician; from inventor to engineer. What they have in common is a shared passion for our industries, and the gumption to be part of a network of like-minded people.

HPBA offers its members many opportunities which broaden horizons and help companies thrive in the marketplace. Members: read on to learn about how we work on your behalf. Non-members: learn what you are missing out on as a bystander.

Here are some things that you probably know about HPBA:

- The Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA) is an international not-for-profit trade association first established in 1980 to represent and promote the interests of the hearth products industry in North America. In 2002, the Hearth Products Association (HPA) merged with the Barbecue Industry Association (BIA) to form HPBA. The association includes manufacturers, retailers, distributors, manufacturers' representatives, service and installation firms, and other companies and individuals - all having business interests in and related to the hearth, patio, and barbecue products industries.
- HPBA puts on the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Expo (HPBExpo) annually and it is North America's marketplace and showcase for the hearth, barbecue and outdoor living industries. It is a venue to see new products (and watch them burn), educate yourself, and get business done, all under one roof. Plus, members get an allotment of free badges. The next event will be held in Orlando, Florida from March 13-16, 2013. Check out www.hpbexpo.com for information about attending and/or exhibiting.

Here are some things that you may not be aware of:

Beyond HPBExpo, which is without a doubt, one of the best services we provide as an organization, HPBA is working hard to make our members' investments worthwhile. We focus our efforts in five additional areas: government affairs, statistics, communications, education and the member experience.

Eyes & Ears in Washington, D.C.

The HPBA staff is well-trained and motivated to protect the interest of all of our members. At the current time, we are working on three major initiatives to ensure the viability of hearth products in the marketplace.

The first deals with decorative gas fireplaces, gas log sets, and the Department of Energy's (DOE) attempt to regulate these products as "direct heating equipment." Our staff and member volunteers have worked tirelessly to fight the DOE and make certain that these popular consumer products remain in production.

Another initiative HPBA is tackling is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) New Source Performance Standards (NSPS). These are emissions standards placed on new wood-burning appliances. HPBA experts and members are working with the EPA to reach a reasonable outcome for manufacturers of these fireplaces and stoves.

Lastly, HPBA has begun work with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) on educating consumers about gas fireplace and stove glass safety. We have a comprehensive campaign to educate homeowners who already own – or are thinking of buying a glass-fronted gas fireplace, insert or stove – that a screen or barrier should be used to prevent burns, especially if children are in the home. Member manufacturers collectively worked together to create a new industry safety standard, while our communications department developed online educational materials for our member retailers who can, in turn, educate their customers.

HPBA's member manufacturers are the experts in the field. They are working with HPBA to develop appropriate standards, testify before Congress, and influence agencies to develop regulations for the industry that will work.

We also work with our affiliates: HPBA Canada, which promotes and protects the interests of our Canadian mem-

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bers, as well as 12 additional U.S. regional affiliates which champion state legislation.

Data Collection… Check

Through surveying, the collection of industry statistics, and consumer research, HPBA is able to measure industry performance, identify trends, and produce industry benchmarks. Many firms within the hearth, patio, and barbecue industries use the information produced by HPBA to identify market trends, determine market share, and track industry growth. Companies that participate in HPBA's various data gathering efforts have access to accurate up-to-date industry statistics not available anywhere else – information that they can use to make positive tactical and strategic management decisions.

Communication is the key to success

Through the use of social media and other web and print-based media, HPBA promotes the industries. The *HPBA Barbecue* Facebook page alone has more than 20,000 followers. Our website also informs consumers on how to select appropriate hearth and barbecue appliances for any lifestyle, and then points them to member manufacturers, retailers and technicians through a sophisticated geographic locator. Metrics tell us that this is one of the most visited areas of the site.

Members also receive up-to-date news on the industry and association happenings on a weekly and monthly basis, respectively.

Knowledge is power

HPBA promotes education through the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Education Foundation (HPBEF), and the National Fireplace Institute (NFI), its certifying body. Members receive deep discounts on classes and testing fees. Classes can be taken online with HE@RTH Online Training, or at various affiliate, manufacturer, and distributor events, as well as at HPBExpo.

The communication department also works to increase consumer awareness of NFI certification and the government affairs department is working toward influencing local jurisdictions to recognize NFI certified technicians.

Building the network

Beyond the national headquarters, there are 13 affiliate organizations in the United States and Canada. Unlike many trade associations, on becoming a member of either national or an affiliate, the company is automatically a member of both – with no extra fee. Our affiliates offer annual programming, education opportunities, and allow for a local network of colleagues with whom members can collaborate to learn new strategies and best practices of business.

We also have a network of preferred business partners who bring their services to our membership at discounted rates. Services such as shipping and freight, credit card processing, insurance products, and even employee background screening. Check out the full list of offerings on the HPBA website – www.hpba.org.

One member commented on our partner programs as a whole: "HPBA is providing options for people to save money. It's a good service for those who can take advantage of it." Another member gave high praise to our business liability insurance program provided by Veracity: "They offer good coverage that fits our specific needs. General business policies don't cover our needs as contractors. The people who run the program know the industry and ask good questions. (It is) definitely worth the return on my investment."

While our memberships are company-based, there is plenty of room for the individual to thrive within the association. Volunteer positions are readily available, on both national and affiliate committees and boards of directors.

Also available are HPBA's internal professional societies: HearthMasters and Young Guns. HearthMasters is a network of seasoned industry professionals who have been in the game for more than 20 years.

On the flip side, the Young Guns are professionals who are under 40 and/or who have been in the industry for less than five years. This group provides educational opportunities, both online and regionally, puts out a monthly newsletter, and is in the process of launching several new programs, such as mentoring.

HPBExpo 2013 will include the first-ever Young Guns educational track through HPBEF. While these classes won't be exclusive to the group, they will contain content that is relevant to the younger professional. You can find the Young Guns online on the HPBA website, on Facebook, and on LinkedIn.

Are you hooked?

HPBA puts the power in your hands to participate as little or as much as your schedule allows. We do hope to see you at HPBExpo, an affiliate event, or online. If you are a member, thank you for your commitment. If you aren't, well, what are you waiting for? Contact HPBA or your local affiliate and join today!

Editor's Note: Jamie Beaulieu is HPBA's Director of Membership and Affiliate Relations.

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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