Greetings everyone! It is such an honor to be this year’s National President. I am looking forward to all that the coming year has in store for the organization!

As I am sure everyone is aware, we are in a very different and trying time amidst a global pandemic. Construction has such a unique situation in that it has not stopped growing during these strange times. On a National level, we are being very diligent about adapting to the changes and abiding by local, state and federal laws and regulations. I am proud to represent all of you as you continue to participate in your local chapters through Zoom meetings and socially distant gatherings.

As they say though, this too shall pass. Our organization must begin to look ahead to our new post-COVID normal. We have received a small number of Membership Engagement Surveys so far from across the association. The board and I challenge each of you to participate in this survey which will help us ensure we leave no stone unturned as we navigate through the uncertainties that lie ahead.

It is of utmost importance we look at our membership retention, and as the months progress I encourage each and everyone of you to think on the reasons why you joined PCEA and why you are still in PCEA. Once those reasons have been established, share it with others around you and encourage others to attend meetings or join at your local chapters. The only way we as an organization will continue to grow is through the help of individual chapter members just like you.

The board and I would also like to encourage all members to come forward with individual thoughts and feedback on how we can improve and grow through the coming years. Remember, this is OUR organization, so it is only as good as its members.

As I mentioned before, I am looking forward to all that this year has in store. The board and I are making steps to adapt and improve over the course of the next few months. I encourage each of you to be as involved as you safely feel comfortable. The best is yet to come!

Please stay safe and if you need anything, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me. My contact information can be found through the member directory on the National website.
The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has published frequently asked questions and answers to help protect workers from exposure to the coronavirus.

"OSHA developed these FAQs based on inquiries received from the public," said Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Loren Sweatt. "OSHA is committed to giving employers and workers the information they need to work safely in this rapidly changing situation."

The FAQs provide guidance to employers and employees about topics such as the best practices to prevent the spread of infection during the coronavirus pandemic, workers' rights to express concerns about workplace conditions, testing for the coronavirus, worker training and returning to work.

These FAQs are the latest effort by OSHA to educate and protect America's workers and employers during the coronavirus pandemic. OSHA has also published Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19, and more recently, Guidance on Returning to Work to assist employers reopening non-essential businesses and their employees resuming operations and reopening workplaces during the evolving coronavirus pandemic.

For further information and resources about the coronavirus disease, please visit OSHA's coronavirus webpage. Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to help ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

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Member Highlight

Steve Munn
Central Savannah River Area Chapter

“There’s no straight forward way I got in to this”

Like many a good story, Steve’s is not a linear one. Born and raised in Maymont, Saskatchewan, a small farming town in western Canada, Steve came to the states to play Division 1 hockey with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, earning a degree in management along the way. Yet this was only the beginning of nine years spent playing minor league hockey around the world. His sports’ contracts took him to the United Kingdom, where he earned his MBA, and Japan.

After returning to the states, he moved to Augusta and began working in Industrial Sales. For seven years he worked with construction companies, fleet shops, factories, and other industrial service providers. This experience made him a natural fit when MAI Risk Advisors contacted him in 2018. He was quickly drawn to Workers’ Compensation and trained with the Institute of Work Comp Professionals in Asheville, NC to become a Master Work Comp Advisor (MWCA). He now is leading the charge in the newly launched Work Comp division at MAI; MAI Comp Mastery (www.maicompmastery.com). As an MWCA, Steve works with companies, and their employees, to manage all aspects of their Workers’ Compensation programs. His team helps companies with injury claim management, risk mitigation, Recovery At Work Programs, workplace safety and OSHA compliance, company classification, and finding and fixing audit errors and overcharges. MAI Comp Mastery puts companies in control of their Workers’ Compensation to get them the most effective program at the lowest possible cost. MAI is located in Augusta, GA and deals with companies regionally in all manners of insurance and surety. MAI enjoys incentivizing its employees to participate in their community outreach initiatives. Utilizing smaller, in-house employee programs, as well as larger social events, they have raised funds for Lydia Project, Lynndale, Ronald McDonald House, Golden Harvest Food Bank, Young Life, Forces United, Presbyterian Homes, Augusta Exchange Club, Rotary CART Fund and Shriners.

Steve was introduced to PCEA last year when he was invited to attend a CSRA Chapter meeting as their guest speaker. He really enjoyed their group and decided to join our association. Since then he’s become actively involved in speaker engagement on a chapter level, as well as helping chapter member’s navigate the unprecedented territory that is workman’s compensation, surety, industry trends, and COVID-19. He’s excited to roll out his agency’s scholarship of OSHA compliance software to the CSRA Chapter members that will help them stay in compliance with OSHA’s current injury reporting requirements. Beyond the professional and social networking benefits of the association, Steve has praised CSRA’s fundraising initiatives. Their 2019 Annual Fall Golf Tournament allowed for the disbursement of $5500 in scholarship money to 5 local students!

Outside of his involvement with PCEA, Steve participates in Augusta Sports Council’s Advisory Committee, Industrial Networking Group’s Augusta Chapter, and the Rotary Club of Augusta. In between all of this, as well as shuffling his children’s extracurricular sport’s calendars with his wife Sarah, he’s still able to enjoy playing hockey with the local men’s league.
COVID-19 presents new challenges for minority-owned construction firms

June 30, 2020

In the best of economic times, minority-owned construction firms struggle to access the capital they need to operate and grow their businesses.

Many minority-owned businesses, for example, pay higher loan interest rates than their non-minority-owned counterparts, according to a report from the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC). When they are able to secure loans, many times the amounts are lower than those given to non-minority-owned businesses.

Lenders also tend to require a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan guarantee for minority-owned businesses, at least more often than they do for non-minority-owned firms.

These factors are behind some minority-owned businesses’ decisions to not even apply.

This lack of financing — from banks and other investors — leaves many minority-owned businesses without the money to grow.

The set-aside programs that most government agencies have in place for minority, disadvantaged, veteran and women-owned enterprises were initiated to help level the playing field.

Factor in the COVID-19 pandemic, though, and the situation that many minority-owned construction companies find themselves in could get grimmer in the short term, and perhaps even the long term.

It is safe to say that government-mandated job site shutdown orders, most of which have been lifted, and a decrease in demand given the uncertain economic environment have stressed construction contractors all over the U.S. An Associated General Contractors of America survey of its membership in early May revealed that 67% of respondents had at least one project canceled or delayed and that 30% had to stop work because of a government shelter-in-place order.

Worse for minority-owned firms

So, has it been as bad for minority-owned construction businesses? “No, it’s been worse,” said Kenneth Thomas, co-founder of the Minority & Women Contractors & Developers Association (MWCDA).

Based in New York City, the MWCDA was encouraged at first when, as part of the city’s construction shutdown, affordable housing projects, on which many of the association’s member companies worked, were allowed to continue.

“We were naively encouraged that there could be some opportunities in that space,” he said, “but there have been not nearly as many as we thought.”

The retrenching of the city’s real estate industry, Thomas said, trickled down to many general contractors which, in turn, scaled back operations. Those that did so tended to keep on the subcontractors with whom they had the closest relationships, leaving minority and smaller subcontractors with little work.

Even with coronavirus-related construction, like hospital retrofits that the federal and state governments took on, minority-owned businesses found themselves cut out, said Wendell Stemley, emeritus board member of the National Association of Minority Contractors.

Article continued on page 8 ...
The liens, all filed since April, come after theme park shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The total amount that SeaWorld will have to come up with to clear the liens could be lower if the general contractors’ claims include what they owe the subcontractors that have also filed liens.

Dive Insight:

Theme parks in Florida were dealt an economic blow when the spread of the novel coronavirus forced them to close their doors temporarily. A SeaWorld Orlando spokesperson told the Orlando Sentinel that they expect to be able to make payment arrangements with their vendors as the parks re-open.

The Sentinel also reported that SeaWorld Parks had a $400 million cash reserve at the end of April after securing recent loans, giving it an 18-month cushion to weather the pandemic.

General contractor Balfour Beatty Construction LLC submitted the largest total claim, $6.1 million for work at Aquatica and SeaWorld. Premier Rides Inc., which designed SeaWorld's first launch coaster, the Ice Breaker, says the amusement company owes it $2.7 million. The largest claim against the Busch Gardens park — $3.5 million — is from Rocky Mountain Amusements Inc., which built the Iron Gwazi roller coaster.

Other large contractor liens against the Busch Gardens/Adventure Island properties include:

- $1.1 million - Whitewater West Industries LTD
- $934,824 - T & G Corp. dba T& G Constructors
- $979,311 - Friedrich Watkins of Tampa LLC

Those making claims against the Orlando parks also include:

- $1.8 million - United Electrical Contractors
- $578,446 - Maddox Electric Co.
- $489,524 - Mack Contracting LLC

A valid mechanics lien puts an encumbrance on a property so that the owner cannot sell it or refinance until the outstanding debt is settled. And, according to a report last month from notice and lien service provider Levelset, more contractors are availing themselves of the lien process in the wake of the uncertainty generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of lien filings increased by 40% from January through March.

Authored by:
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Chapter Reports

CSRA Chapter
Greetings from Augusta!

The CSRA chapter held a live meeting in June, but had to relocate to That Flippin Egg as Logan's was unable to accommodate us. The smaller group in attendance had a round-table discussion about the effects of Covid on our businesses. Our insurance member stressed the importance of documenting all safety measures in case of workers comp complaints.

We are hoping to have a low-country boil in August. Also, our golf tournament and 50/50 raffle are scheduled for October.

Hopefully we will be able to meet in person in August. Until then, stay safe.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Gaskin
National Director, CSRA Chapter

Orlando Chapter

Here in Central Florida things seem to be slowly getting back to normal, we hope. Disney has opened a few construction sites just this week or late last. Universal Studios has carefully resumed construction for over a month. The parks at Universal Studios and City Walk have opened with restrictions. Disney has announced parks to open in mid-July. It's unusual to watch Disney follow Universal's lead in my opinion.

We have sold out our Summer Golf event for Friday June 26! We have 27 foursomes participating. We kept it at 27 so we can keep it around four hours, nobody likes a 6 hour round of hot golf. We have a nice bbq wagon coming for brisket & gravy in the morning. Donated beer and beverages will be on the course. A buffet and awards will follow afterwards. The staff will be plating our buffet and we are exercising the suggested social distancing. Raffle prizes include two ½ day guided bass fishing trips and 5 $200 gift cards, and foursomes of golf. I didn't feel like going TV and electronics shopping with a mask, I'm selfish like that. The Visa gift cards allow you to buy what you like.

We are scheduled to conduct our first in person monthly meeting at the Citrus Club on the 29th of June. As of today it's a go, things seem to change day by day but we are hopeful. We do not have any other social events on the books currently.

Our membership renewal has gone far better than we expected. I will get those numbers over to you, I don't have them now and I'm scrambling to get loose ends tightened up for golf tomorrow. During our last board meeting we discussed a plan for a membership drive, I will report back on the success of that.

All the best from your Central Florida chapter,

Chris Rudd
National Director, Orlando Chapter

Triangle Chapter
Greetings from the Triangle Chapter.

With the new contracts signed, the first steps for the 2020 - 2021 National Convention have been taken. We will continue to plan for the convention over the next year.

We have not had a monthly meeting since January due to snow and Covid-19. We are hoping to have our fist monthly meeting in July if North Carolina enters Phase 3 of re-opening. We are also hoping to have a social for the membership since we haven’t been able to meet over the last couple months.

Our board has voted to increase our endowment at East Carolina University and Vance-Granville Community College by $10,000, with the majority going to ECU. This may allow for an additional scholarship next year if the markets continue to increase.

Our golf tournament scheduled in March will now be held sometime in September. A date has not been finalized yet. Registration forms will be sent out once a date has been set.

We will also have a sporting clays event in October at Drake’s Landing in Fuquay-Varina, NC. Rick Embrey will set a date with Drake’s Landing and send out registrations forms.

Chapter reports continued on page 9 ...
The Department of Labor on March 17, for example, waived equal opportunity and affirmative action requirements for federal coronavirus relief contracts for 90 days, including those for construction. This meant that there was no obligation for federal agencies like the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that minority contractors participated in multimillion-dollar conversion of existing facilities around the U.S. into field hospitals.

“That is very hurtful to us in an already hurtful economy,” Stemley said, adding that the waiver of diversity requirements is commonplace after a public emergency or natural disaster.

During the Phase 2 reopening in New York City, Thomas said, there has been a “gradual thawing of opportunities,” but there are now the added complexities and reality of operating in a post-COVID workplace.

Construction companies in New York City and around the country are required to provide extra personal protective equipment (PPE) and implement operational procedures that increase costs, Thomas said, but small business loans, even those geared toward helping companies survive the novel coronavirus are still hard to come by for minority-owned businesses.

In fact, the SBA Inspector General (IG) found that the agency did not, as the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act requires, advise Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) lenders to prioritize underserved demographics, including companies owned by minorities, when processing PPP applications. The IG concluded that these businesses may not have received their share of loans as lawmakers intended.

“So, now we're in a space where there are, one, fewer opportunities, and two, a more desperate and dire need for access to working capital,” Thomas said. “And now it is no longer just so that they can expand their operations, fund their payrolls and pay their suppliers. Now it is so they can stay in business.”

Thomas said that, according to a survey of MWCDA's membership, up to 50% could close their doors by the end of the year if things don't turn around quickly for them. If those figures can be extrapolated to minority contractors around the country, this could impact how successfully general contractors and government agencies will be able to meet diversity goals in the future. During the construction boom leading up to the pandemic, it was already common to hear general contractors talk about shortages of qualified minority contractors.

“I don't think we have a shortage” of minority-owned firms. "We have a utilization problem.”

Kenneth Thomas
Co-founder of the Minority & Women Contractors & Developers Association

In the meantime, Thomas is trying to facilitate relationships with lenders and general contractors on behalf of MWCDA members in order to create the opportunities that will keep them afloat.

MinORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES STILL REQUIRED

It remains to be seen whether there will be fewer certified minority firms in business after the pandemic has run its course, said Erik Ortmann, vice chairman of the construction practice at Kaufman Dolowich Voluck LLP, or if some firms will withdraw their bids or simply not bid on jobs that pose too great a risk, financial or otherwise. “Time will tell,” he said. “Right now, it’s hard to fully evaluate that.”

However, Ortmann said, don’t expect waivers or lowering of goal standards to become the new normal. Contractors will still have to present to the agencies that imposed the goals that there were no certified minority
Chapter Reports
... continued from page 7

Triangle Chapter cont...
We have been holding our monthly meeting every third Thursday of the month at Casa Carbone at 6019 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, NC. Social starts at 6:30 pm. Come visit with us if you are in town.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin Sherron
National Director, Triangle Chapter

Upstate Chapter
NWO, life as we know it has changed forever.

Upstate had our first member’s meeting since February this month and it was great. J Davis graciously hosted and presented at their new facility in Anderson, SC. We had a packed house with social distancing practiced, having members, new members, students, and guests, all glad to get back together and networking.

We discussed how the Upstate has been impacted by the growth of Charlotte and Atlanta, and what we could possibly expect in the future. With these two mega-cities sucking up resources like gravity, our market pricing is essentially hyper inflated more than anticipated.

The Upstate is trying to get back to a new normal as construction presses on. We had some setbacks in the industry, but constructions seems to be an essential business. Offices are starting to be occupied again, but slowly as everyone is getting used to Zoom meetings and online collaboration, like never before.

Greenville Tech, the major source of our younger/student membership is starting to come back to life. They are about 50/50 with online/in-person classes. The out-of-state students have not really started migrating back yet and we are moving slower than hoped in getting our student members involved with the chapter and would like to have the program in full force by the end of the year.

Our fund-raising golf tournament is on schedule for September as planned with some contingencies in place. We are pleased to present four scholarships this year from last year’s tournament and hope to present these in August.

The Grayson project was postponed, and we re-kicked off the event at our members meeting last week. We encourage you to visit our website and appreciate the good that we are working towards. We would encourage you to support our efforts in making this a reality.

Our meeting location looks like it will change again, as Barley’s is closed and one of our members has started a new venue. If you are in the Upstate area on the third Thursday of the month, feel free to stop in and have dinner with our group at “The Venue at Falls Park”. We meet at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Heath
National Director, Upstate Chapter

PCEA Upstate’s Annual Golf Tournament @ Willow Creek Golf Club
Sept 18th
Registration Information

PCEA Charlotte’s Annual Fall Golf Classic @ Highland Creek Golf Club
Sept 28th
Registration Information

PCEA Upstate’s Round Robin Corn Hole Tournament
Oct 15th
Registration Information

Fall Fundraisers
firms available to do the work for each project. This includes articulating the “good faith efforts” that they used in trying to locate qualified minority-owned firms to do the work.

The agency could accept that argument and seek approval for a waiver from the funding source or demand that the general contractor search for qualified firms again.

However, Stemley doesn’t think that there ever has been a significant shortage of minority firms and said that the construction industry can do better when it comes to putting them to work, regardless of the economic climate.

“When you start talking about vendors and suppliers and subcontractors, even when the market is booming, you have minority-, women- and disabled-owned businesses going out of business,” he said.

“So, I don't think we have a shortage,” he said. “We have a utilization problem.”

Therefore, Stemley said, there must be an assurance that minority-owned firms are not locked out of coronavirus relief, infrastructure programs or any other government initiative in the name of expediency.

“We have to … understand that it is in the best interest of us all if we utilize these opportunities,” he said. “It is for the good of everyone.”

Authored by:
Kim Slowey

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