By Tyler Cerny, AWI President

On Jan. 1, Doug Hague took the helm of AWI and began his new journey as our Executive Vice President. I’m so glad Doug knew exactly what he signed up for, right?

The last time we all gathered together was at the Spring Leadership Conference, March 8-10. We had some great education sessions as well as networking in the beautiful town of Asheville. We then watched the president of our country on TV tell us that he was shutting down the border for this new virus called COVID. I think we all had mixed feelings.

We didn’t really know what was in store for us. On a personal note, I then entered the time in my life called “living with three teenage women.”

AWI President Tyler Cerny with his wife Jen and three daughters made a “live” appearance in Texas for the transition of AWI leadership during the virtual AWI Convention.

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At least three AWI members have had frightening cybersecurity experiences that shut their systems down. None paid the ransom requested, and each improved what they thought was good security to even higher protection levels.

Discover the lessons learned by M. Bohlke Veneer Corporation, Giffin Interior & Fixture, Inc., and Architectural Arts. Your backups may be vulnerable. **Learn the IT rule about backing up: 3,2,1.** Make THREE copies of your data on TWO different kinds of media and store ONE offsite.

During the **Friday Family Gathering on Nov. 6,** representatives from these companies shared their experiences and cautioned members about the need for daily attention to cybersecurity. **It can happen to you!** Learn what they learned. To hear their harrowing stories, you should watch the recording on the “Family Gatherings” page in the Members Only section of the AWI website, www.awinet.org.
Virtual Webinars Engage Members

AWI EVENTS

For the first time, AWI’s core seminars were delivered virtually in October. While the networking aspect of these traditional education programs changed dramatically with online delivery, the altered format didn’t affect the quality of the presentations and the learning experiences of the attendees.

Attendance ranged from 18 to 61, and the highest NPS score was 90% for Financial Management.

The impressive lineup of presenters commented on the impact of the pivot from face-to-face gatherings to virtual assemblies.

With a record number of attendees, we were able to reach a larger audience from across the nation.

Presenters’ Perspectives

Advanced Estimating Team Lead Luke Remmert said, “Like most program planners in 2020, the Advanced Estimating team had to pivot. For the first time, the Advanced Estimating seminar was delivered virtually. The team made modifications to the presentation to fit this virtual delivery, and we couldn’t have been more pleased. With a record number of attendees, we were able to reach a larger audience from across the nation. By using the Breakout Rooms feature and a virtual whiteboard of the Zoom platform, we were able to recreate the classroom experience. The attendees continued to be engaged and the seminar continued to deliver great value to the AWI members.”

Financial Management Team Lead Sebastien DesMarais said, “The virtual AWI Financial Management seminar in October was a first but was a definite success. Our Team modified the content to fit the 3-day webinar format into three sections: Day 1: Introduction to the Numbers – Knowledge; Day 2: Operational Finance – Action; and Day 3: Advanced Finance & Accounting. The participant involvement was great and we received excellent feedback that will allow us to continue improving the program.”

Attendee Feedback

Here’s what some attendees had to say in answer to a survey question about what they liked most about the webinar.

Contracts

- Structure was great and loved doing it online.
- I liked that I am able to immediately put into practice a lot of the advice.

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AN UNEXPECTED YEAR!
(cont. from page 1)

2020 HIGHLIGHTS
Since then our AWI staff shifted and delivered so many great virtual meetings and family gatherings that hundreds have attended. Our deliveries included:
• Attorneys helped clarify the federal Payroll Protection Plan.
• Economists told us how deep and wide this recession is going to be and helped us navigate these uncertain waters in our crazy changing economy.
• An in-person convention was shifted to a virtual convention.
• All of our education training sessions were delivered virtually this fall.
• The networking aspect of AWI—my favorite part—changed this year and happens when our AWI family comes together for our Friday Family Gatherings.
• Our local chapters definitely experienced a challenging year with COVID rules in place that limited networking and gatherings. We expect the activity within chapters to get back to past levels next year.
• We are carrying out the last year of our 2018-2020 Strategic Plan.
• Earlier this year, we put together a cross-functional Strategic Plan Team made up of our board, QCC staff, members of the design community, and key suppliers.
• During our summer board meeting our board approved a new Strategic Plan that will carry us into 2024. (Watch for details in the January edition of NewsBriefs.)
• Substantial investments in three major projects over the last several years were guided by our Strategic Plan developed three years ago:
  1. Writing the new AWI Standards in an entirely new way using the ANSI process.
  2. Putting the science behind the construction methods that had never been done and testing an enormous number of cabinets, drawer boxes, and shelves at our National Testing Center.
  3. Redeveloping and enhancing our website that now houses everything from our standards, education content, the communities and more.

AWI STANDARDS
Development of the new suite of AWI Standards is moving along with tremendous efforts of Staff as well as volunteer time and energy.

Casework
We published the largest and most challenging of the new AWI Standards—the 0641 Casework Standard. This was the most difficult undertaking because of the amount of new data that had to be developed from comprehensive testing of cabinets, drawer boxes and shelves.

Our new approach to AWI Standards is based upon two fundamental criteria: Product Performance and Aesthetics. Both criteria are important factors and provide specifiers with the ability to balance the product manufacturing cost to its intended use and expected life cycle.

AWI'S VISION IS:
To be the global leader in architectural woodwork standards, related interior finishes, industry-specific education and networking opportunities. The three initiatives above directly tie in to our Mission and Strategic Plan.
AWI is Financially Strong!

How are we financially doing after a significant investment over the last few years?

I am pleased to report that AWI continues to remain financially strong, which has been verified by our Annual Audit conducted by our CPA firm.

PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

The great news is that $1 Million+ dollars was invested into three substantive programs (see page 4) and we still have not touched our investment funds that are over $2 Million!

We did operate in the red for a couple years while we were funding the three initiatives mentioned earlier with the cash we had on hand as well as operating reserves. In 2020, we have had a year any AC/DC music fan would like: ‘Back in Black’ to the tune of six figures!

This year’s success has been possible with some difficult staff changes and some very careful budget oversight.

STRONG ASSETS

Our assets remain strong at $6 million.

In December 2019, the AWI board approved the 2020 annual operating budget which did forecast a probable break-even year for the association, and as I mentioned we now anticipate this year to finish with a six-figure positive net income. This will allow us to continue to invest in adding member value and supporting our industry in tremendous ways.

Countertops

In support of the new Casework Standard, our Technical Committee has developed the new draft AWI 1236–Countertop Standard and it is currently in canvass, which allows anyone to comment and change this standard.

Stairs & Solid Surfaces

In related industry association partnerships, AWI has collaborated with the Stairbuilders and Manufacturers Association (SMA) to develop the AWI/SMA 0643–Wood-Stair, Handrail, and Guard Systems Standard, which is nearing completion and will be heading through the ANSI process.

On the horizon is a proposal to partner with the International Solid Surface Fabricators Association (ISFA) for development of a new solid surface material standard that is also planned for accreditation through the ANSI process.

Finishing

The AWI Technical Committee and Staff continue their work on the new AWI 400–Finishing Standard that is slated to soon undergo the ANSI accreditation process. To this end, the National Testing Center has been developing finish technology performance measures from data obtained from tests related to abrasion resistance, adhesion, and chemical and stain-resistance properties of finishing systems utilized in the architectural woodwork manufacturing process.

AWI Enhanced Website

Launching at the end of last year, our updated website is driven by a very powerful search tool that will become your “Woodworking Google Search Bar.” It can search through educational content, standards content, our AWI Communities forums and the AWI membership database. I highly encourage you and your staff to explore what this new amazing Digital Learning Portal can deliver.

WIRC Initiative Partnership

The future of our industry’s workforce is not just something that AWI members struggle with…without exception, every industry faces the same challenges of cultivating a skilled workforce.
AWI partnered with eleven (11) related woodwork industry associations as the WIRC initiative in order to have a larger impact together than what just one association can hope to accomplish on their own. The primary objective of this collaborative initiative is to raise public awareness about the challenging careers and exciting opportunities in our high-tech woodwork manufacturing industry.

In 2020, WIRC’s new marketing campaign launched and targets youth, military members coming back to civilian careers, and second career individuals who possess skill sets from previous employment that are applicable to architectural woodwork manufacturing. WOOD YOU?

AWIEF Scholarships
The AWI Education Foundation continues to provide financial aid scholarships to students who have demonstrated an interest in a career in our architectural woodworking industry.

If you were not at the 2019 AWI Convention last year for Phil Duvic’s retirement party, you missed a very special moment when our own Doug Hague (an aspiring auctioneer) conducted a giving challenge for scholarships for the Education Foundation. This challenge raised over $25,000! That $25K along with $10K of other donations brought us to the largest giving year that we can remember and allowed the foundation to award more scholarships than ever.

Your dollars are a direct investment in our future and the next generation workforce. I encourage each of you to get involved and if you can, support the AWI Education Foundation with a financial donation. If not, then share your insights and experiences with a college or high school student about the exciting opportunities in our industry...that doesn’t cost you a thing, except a few minutes of your time.

Thank You
Finally, my thanks go to our dedicated Board of Directors, talented Committee, Council and Team of volunteers, and committed Staff for their perseverance during an exceptionally challenging and surprising year. It has been my privilege to serve as AWI’s 65th President this year. As Sebastien DesMarais of Hollywood Woodwork takes the reigns of AWI as your 2021 President, I assure you that AWI will be in good hands.

Tyler Cerny is President of Strata Design in Traverse City, MI, which was founded in 1988, and changed ownership in 2008 when Tyler and his wife Jen purchased the firm. Strata Design has been an AWI Manufacturing Member since 1990, is a QCP Licensee and holds FSC Chain of Custody Certification. Tyler has been active in the architectural woodworking industry for eight years, and in AWI from 2015-2016 as a board member, in 2016 as Director Delegate of the Strategic Implementation Group, and in 2014 as a member of the Nominating Committee. He has been a presenter at the AWI Spring Leadership Conference and the AWI Annual Convention, and has served as AWI National VP and President-elect prior to his succession to the presidency of AWI this year. Tyler is also a member of AWI Best Practice Group No. 3. A Founding Director of the NW Michigan Manufacturing Council, Tyler is a trainer in the disciplines of Lean Manufacturing and Lean Process Implementation. The AWI Great Lakes Chapter won the AWI Chapter of the Year honors in 2015 when Tyler served as its president.

Our own Doug Hague (an aspiring auctioneer) conducted a giving challenge for scholarships for the Education Foundation. This challenge raised over $25,000!
MEMBERSHIP: TRENDING UPWARD

Overall, AWI’s membership numbers have increased this year over last year. We welcomed both new members and rejoiners, including: 77 Manufacturing Members; 12 Supplier Members; and 5 Industry Members. “We are pleased to report that we had a robust number of 10+ new members and rejoin members four months in a row this year,” AWI Director of Marking & Membership Katie Allen advised.

AWI’s membership retention rate is stellar — 91% for both Manufacturing & Supplier Member companies—above the norm of 88% for associations in general.

“Members can expect high value from our Staff who are focused on continuing to bring and elevate member value to our members,” AWI President Tyler Cerny said. “Thank you for your support and involvement in AWI.”

NEW AND REJOIN MEMBERS

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Watch for news of AWI Education Outreach events in upcoming AWI communications and check the website, www.awinet.org, for details in the coming months.

Virtual Webinars Engage Members... (cont. from page 3)

**AWI EVENTS**

- The information and knowledge and relatability to the information and presenter.
- I appreciated the input of real-life situational examples.

**Financial Management**

- How well the focus is on the industry and relating the industry to financials.
- Basics being explained properly, which makes it applicable for a small company with limited personnel resources.
- Seeing the relevance to my industry.
- The information on planning future growth.

**Advanced Estimating**

- I liked listening and learning about how others deal with their estimating challenges.
- Each day had a particular “take-away” or something that I felt could or should be implemented in my processes.
- I loved the format, the flow of the class, and the competitive real-life examples.
- Learning from professionals with many years of experience.

**Project Management**

- I liked how relevant all the information was. There were a lot of “take-aways” that I will actually be able to use in my everyday work life.
- The speakers were very engaging and very down to earth. They care about what they do for work and are genuinely interested in helping us understand the topics.
- Getting to meet others even if it was virtual.
- Being among people with similar professional challenges.
USE OF AWI LOGO

Over the years, AWI has built an internationally-recognized image of quality architectural woodwork produced by its members who manufacture according to AWI Standards. AWI is known for its Standards development efforts since its founding in 1954, its long-standing education programs, and its networking opportunities for members to share expertise and comradery, to name a few.

Manufacturer, Supplier, and Industry Members in good standing are privileged to use the AWI logo in their advertising, marketing, and other communication materials to show their affiliation with the association.

Official AWI logos can be found in the Members Area of www.awinet.org. If you haven’t incorporated the AWI logo into your high-profile promotional materials, particularly for customers, do it today.

The Power of the Portal

Sample Search Results: Aesthetic Grades

Make AWI’s powerful Digital Learning Portal (DLP), www.awinet.org, your “go to” resource for education resources, AWI Standards, AWI member woodwork specializations, AWI publications and other resources, as well as shared industry and technical information from AWI Communities.

Enter the Members Area of the website by signing in with your user login at the top right corner of the home page. Then use the powerful SEARCH feature in the middle of the screen for entry to a wealth of information.

Enter “Aesthetic Grades” in the SEARCH window. The sample reveals 63 results (everything) comprised of AWI Community discussions, Standards, Education, General and Glossary. The results include:

- 3.1.1 Grades
- 3.1.5 Default Grade Requirements
- Flame Spread Rating of Decorative Laminates
- 3.3.3.2 Surfaces, Veneer Material Requirements
- Slight Color Variation – Opinion
- Standards
- 3.4.1.14 Exposed Interior Surfaces, Transparent Finish
- And more!

You can narrow your search by selecting “Content Type” on the left of the screen.

Get the facts from the DLP and make it your “go to” resource for a wealth of information never before available—or possible—from AWI.

AWI SPRING LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

April 11 – 13, 2021
Hyatt Regency Milwaukee • Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Details to be announced.