Starting with a firm ‘foundation’

AWCI is building its services with your help

By Bill Altman, Capitol Counselors, Inc.

The Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries—International has announced the kick-off of a special fund-raising campaign for two major projects. The campaign which began in February is seeking financial support from its members for two unique programs which will bring new and improved services to the industry and the public.

The first program is an annual maintenance fund for the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry and the subsequent formation of its new resource and reference library. At least $50,000 in annual contributions will be needed each year to pay for the operation of the library and to fund other programs which the foundation will sponsor later.

The second project will raise money to finance the renovation of one floor of the association’s recently purchased headquarters building in Washington, D.C. When it is completed, the renovation of the building’s top floor will create additional office and conference space for the association’s use. About $75,000 is being sought through one-time contributions to pay for the remodeling needed to make the space acceptable. Both projects are the result of the association’s continued efforts to meet the demands for service from a growing membership.

Robert F. Watkins, president of the association, believes that both projects will benefit the AWCI membership in slightly different ways. During a January meeting of the Board of Directors of the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry he said: “The Foundation’s new resource and reference library and the other programs it will sponsor in the future is an investment which will result in long-term improvements to our industry and will benefit the public. The renovation Project for the association relocation will bring us more efficient and effective service by our headquarters staff.”

The Foundation

Although the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry was officially organized in 1977, there has never been a continuing and formal program to finance its activities. The basic long-range goal is for the public sector to be the ultimate benefactor of research programs and projects initiated by the foundation’s technical branch.

Last year the board settled upon the sponsorship of an active, working resource center as the most useful initial project which could be accomplished promptly. The resource and reference library will provide the crucial starting point for the highly beneficial research and technical services of the foundation. The broad dissemination of information outside the membership to the industry and public will create an increased awareness of the industry’s products and construction methods. The more people learn about these things, the more apt they are to choose wall and ceiling materials and contractors for future construction. Special programs aimed specifically at architects, specifiers and related professions are being considered for action once the material is organized and the library is operational.

John Thomson, Jr. of John Thomson & Son, Inc., Miami, Florida, is the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry. He recently explained the value of the foundation’s library when he said, “It is an important service which can strengthen our industry and benefit the general public as well. The library’s most immediate value will be the improved quality of information available to our association members and others about labor contracts, building codes, federal regulations, products and building systems. It will not be just a place for dead storage of regulations and codes, instead it will be an active working library, organized for quick access that is as close as a telephone call when we have a question.”

The library will also provide a conference room for meetings and seminars. Since it will be located in the association’s new headquarters, members of the staff will be able to share its use.

Bill Marek of Marek Bros. Company in Houston, Texas, a former Chairman of the Foundation Board of Directors, agrees that the new library and other Foundation programs will prove vital to the industry and the public. In a recent interview Marek said, “The Foundation and its new library are a good idea. Our contractors and manufacturers as well as the public need a central source of information. The library will make
Fund raising theme— “Expanding our Services . . . with your help.”

this kind of material as close as the nearest telephone. Our association people in Washington have tried to do this in the past but they just haven’t had the personnel or the resources to do a thorough job.”

Frank Morsilli, President of Dryvit System, Inc., Warwick, Rhode Island, feels that the manufacturers of wall and ceiling materials and equipment will reap special rewards by supporting the foundation and its research and resource library: “Through research and study projects, the foundation’s library will provide important research concerning the energy conservation properties and safety of building materials and techniques. This kind of information will be extremely useful to manufacturers and the public. Related professionals such as architects and engineers will also directly benefit from this knowledge which can help this nation save millions of dollars in energy costs and construct safer buildings.”

A wide variety of information and data is already being gathered at AWCI headquarters for use by the Foundation when the association moves to its new location later this year.

When the association moves to its new location, this material will be selected and catalogued so that it can be retrieved quickly and easily. Gene Erwin, the association’s new Technical Director, is responsible for this task. He believes the library will bring unexpected improvements in the services which will be provided for the benefit of the industry and the public. He explained his duties this way: “One of my goals is to improve the services we currently provide and to look for new ways to help the industry and the public use the information we have available. AWCI members, the industry, and individuals outside the industry will be able to request resource information and we will provide it as quickly and completely as possible. I hesitate to place a specific time limit on our response because it depends upon the questions we are asked to research and how much information is currently available on the subject, but the main idea is that we are going to work very hard to give these people as much material as we can . . . as quickly as we can.

“In the future we will be looking at a number of additional services which could be sponsored through the foundation. Home study courses, consumer assistance sessions, and research and technical conferences involving federal agencies are just a few of the possibilities that will be considered by the foundation’s board of directors. Also, we will look to federal agencies for grants which will aid the Foundation in its research as to energy conservation and product and building safety.”

Regular annual contributions are the real keys to the success of the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry, its library, and its future programs. Such programs are long range in their goals and require long range and continuing support to be effective. Without this kind of financial help, the true benefits of the foundation and its library may never be realized. The choice of a theme for the fund-raising campaign reflects this need. “Expanding our services . . . with your help” was chosen to remind the members that these improvements in their industry and association cannot occur without the financial support of the AWCI membership. Both contractor and manufacturer members are being asked to contribute directly to the foundation each year. Individual recognition will be provided for the contributors who help raise the $50,000 in annual contributions and they will receive the opportunity to participate in the selection of an advisory council which will help the foundation’s board of directors choose future projects.
The Renovation

During the past four years, the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries—International has grown steadily. In 1976, the International Association of Wall and Ceiling Contractors and the Gypsum Drywall Contractors International represented a total of 475 members. Today, the association is 775 strong. Attendance at the annual convention has risen from 400 to 1200 people and the exposition has also tripled in size to a record 132 booths in Phoenix. But as the membership has grown so has the workload for the association staff. Today, the nine-member headquarters staff is more than twice its 1976 size. The current headquarters has inadequate storage space for technical materials and lacks the meeting and conference facilities necessary to conduct its work with federal agencies and to host members of the association committees who frequently come to Washington to decide important matters in behalf of the membership.

In addition to the new space requirements, the rental fees for office space in Washington have climbed astronomically. So a special committee, formed to examine the various alternatives open to AWCI in this situation, recommended that the association purchase its own building.

As a result, in August of 1978, AWCI purchased a building in Washington, D.C., which is located within five blocks of Capitol Hill and near many of the Federal regulatory agencies and national union headquarters offices.

The building has four levels, each with 8,000 square feet of floor space. The lower three levels have been leased to other businesses to help finance the mortgage. The association headquarters will occupy only the top floor of the building which must be completely renovated before the move-in. The building purchase prevents future rent increases from being passed along to members in the form of increased annual dues. It also creates additional conference and administrative space, and it provides a facility with an appropriate and reputable appearance . . . something the industry may be proud of.

Bill Carroll of Bill Carroll Co., Inc., Albuquerque, New Mexico, is a past president of AWCC and remains active on many of AWCI’s major committees. He recently explained: “The purchase of a building for our new association headquarters site is a step in the right direction for AWCI. The renovation of one floor of the building is a modest project. For too long, the association has been without adequate conference or meeting facilities. Remodeling will give us a larger, more efficient work area and will enable the association to conduct business on behalf of our industry.

“Additional space is needed to accommodate a head-
quarters staff which must grow along with our membership and the renovation will make this possible. The new facility will mean that the services we receive from the association can continue to grow and improve. The renovation and the technical library are both projects which deserve our financial support.”

Bill Marek agrees: “It’s time the association had its own building. The permanent site will bring us some stability and the location will mean that our work with the Congress, the unions and the federal agencies can be conducted more effectively.”

Several contractors have already given long term, low interest loans and outright contributions to help complete the renovation. A permanent plaque located near the building’s entrance will prominently display the names of the contributors who provide one-time contributions to help the association raise the $75,000 needed to complete the project.

The combined fund-raising request for annual and one-time contributions will continue during the next several months. Teams of contractors will visit many of the manufacturers personally to explain the need for these two different contributions and other members of the association will be contacted later. Construction Dimensions and the annual convention will keep you posted on the campaign’s progress and the growing tally of funds.

Contributions are urgently needed today as vital investments in the future strength of the wall and ceiling industry and the AWCI.

ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION CHECKS to the foundation and its research and reference library should be made payable to:

The Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry
1711 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

ONE-TIME CONTRIBUTION CHECKS to the renovation project should be made payable to:

AWCI Building Fund
1711 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

Both contributions are tax deductible!