AWCI just named DISCA-NJ its outstanding chartered chapter for 1988-89—and for good reason, too... if quality programming counts.

For New Jersey’s wall and ceiling contractors it spelled recognition... not something they’d deliberately sought but rather a special moment to savor.

In October at the annual Committee Week meeting of the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries-International, the Drywall and Interior Systems Contractors Association, Inc. of New Jersey was named the “Chartered Chapter of the Year.” The award will formally be presented at the 72nd Wall and Ceiling Convention and Exposition, April 14-19, 1989, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

This award represents an accelerated effort by everyone connected with the local chapter to expand the professional as well as the social activities of the chapter over the past several years.

For a chapter that has been serving its members only since the 1970s, DISCA-NJ maintains a rather splendid array of services. In addition to providing the industry with union and government relations, the chapter annually offers five major social events, three general membership dinner meetings, two all-day seminars (a new addition to its 1989 agenda), four board of directors meetings, and special board and committee meetings.

In addition, DISCA-NJ publishes an annual directory, a Contractor’s Handbook and Buyers Guide and a quarterly newsletter SPEX—“Eyes on Your Industry.” The newsletter, of course, offers reports from the president, profiles on individual members, a legal column, updating legislative information and announcements of industry importance.

DISCA-NJ was formed in 1971 when John Jacobson, of Jacobson & Co., Inc., Elizabeth, NJ, then secretary of the New Jersey Acoustical Contractors Association, obtained a charter to merge with the Drywall Contractors Association. This new organization was renamed under the DISCA title, and later became a chartered chapter of AWCI when the old international association of Wall and Ceiling Contractors (iAWCC) and the Gypsum Drywall Contractors Association (GDCI) consolidated.
Over the years, AWCI and DISCA-NJ have worked closely together and AWCI, in addition to providing labor, legislative and information services to its chapters, plans this year to coordinate with DISCA-NJ officials to present two comprehensive seminars in 1989. DISCA-NJ chapter members have been influential in AWCI affairs and have a long history of serving on and contributing to the success of numerous national programs and committee activities.

Currently, officers of DISCA-NJ—all of whom will be completing their first year of office this month—are: President, Louis Germinario, of P. Germinario & Sons, Inc., Palisades Park, NJ; Vice President, Nicholas Verhagen, of Ver-Gon Builders, Inc., Clifton, NJ; Secretary, Edwin J. Biglin, of King Scaffold Erectors, Inc., Hackensack, NJ, and Treasurer, William Grablauskas, of Interior Systems Construction, Inc., Beachwood, NJ. The executive board was recently elected to a second term at DISCA-NJ’s annual membership meeting in September, 1988. To maintain continuity, in 1990 the officers already “in the chairs” will, if DISCA-NJ continues its custom of electing officers, move through the chairs upon advice from the nominating committee.

The chief staff executive officer for DISCA-NJ is Donald E. Morrice, who functions not only as Executive Director but also as general counsel. A 1961 graduate of Fordham Law School, he was appointed to the position five years ago. Since assuming the job and recruiting his wife, Phyllis, as administrator, the range and extent of DISCA-NJ services have expanded greatly.

While Don concentrates on labor, legal and legislative concerns of the membership, Phyllis coordinates social and administrative functions. Going into the new year, DISCA-NJ boasts 50 company members, of which 22 are contractors and 28 are suppliers and manufacturers.

DIMENSIONS: Obviously, labor relations play a vital role in DISCA-NJ and as a lawyer you personally are in a position to help DISCA-NJ members with many of their worst problems. Is labor relations indeed central to the association?

DON: I have become involved with a whole series of labor matters such as negotiations, grievance resolution, preparation of labor contracts, preparation of trust fund agreements, litigation and administrative proceedings on labor. The list could go on and on but labor relations is definitely an important element of DISCA-NJ membership. I work with our members as long as the problem pertains to the industry; when it becomes an individual legal matter, the member may become a private legal client.

DIMENSIONS: I take it then that DISCA-NJ is mostly comprised of union contractors?

DON: That is correct. For that reason it is vital that we maintain a good rapport with the unions. If we get into a dispute, I can be effective in helping to resolve it. While my principle negotiations responsibility lies with the tapers and carpenters, I help members with the other unions when the need arises. Thus, what we can offer to our members without extra cost is advice concerning their labor relations for virtually any situation up to litigation.

DIMENSIONS: And at that point they become a private client at their option?

DON: That’s right. The DISCA-NJ staff cannot become involved in resolving members individual legal problems once they become individual cases. However, as DISCA-NJ counsel I assist in the understanding of contracts—a critical area, write an article in our quarterly newsletter and offer a legal segment at each of our general membership meetings. This year I lectured on construction contracts at our convention in Atlantic City which I believe helped a lot of our members gain a better perspective regarding contracts.

DIMENSIONS: That’s such a wide area. What could you cover adequately in half-aday?

DON: A great deal. I reviewed the revised AIA-A401 Subcontract Form and discussed the obvious as well as the subtle changes in text that affect a specialty contractor. A contractor may not pick up some of these
Phyllis Morrice, wife of the executive director, came into the office to help out and wound up as a fulltime administrative for the New Jersey chapter. She helps implement all the non-labor relations activities.

changes and suddenly he has to live with a clause that filters down some additional liability, a change in payment or a host of other dilemas.

DIMENSIONS: Does DISCA-NJ get deeply involved in legislation at the state level?

DON: To some extent but not as a primary association service. Most of the state legislation activity is carried out, with our support and often co-sponsorship, with the New Jersey Chapter of the American Subcontractors Association. They represent all subcontractors so they can exert greater influence.

DIMENSIONS: Let’s look at some other DISCA-NJ membership benefits please; that would take in the social and communications programs. What kind of personal or social activities does DISCA-NJ carry out?

PHYLLIS: We have five major social events. These include the annual dinner dance every March at the Manor in West Orange at which we honor outstanding performance in the industry and give recognition to the individuals in our association who have truly made a significant contribution; the golf outing in the spring—held at one of our local country clubs; our dinner cruise around Manhattan; our annual convention each fall and a holiday gala in December. Our convention includes a contractors’ workshop seminar, a golf outing, the President’s reception and dinner and an annual membership meeting; this year we included a Chinese auction, a bowling party and miniature golf tournament in our social activities.

DIMENSIONS: Then there are also the necessary programs that one would expect of an association?

DON: Our general membership meetings have experienced great success with the format of educational panels... group forum discussions... to tap into the experience and
knowledge of our own members and key industry-related guest speakers. An expanded question and answer period offers our members the opportunity to participate after each topic has been presented and discussed by the panelists.

DIMENSIONS: I believe you also mentioned something about all-day seminars in 1989?

PHYLLIS: DISCA-NJ’s President Lou Geminario feels greater emphasis should be put on educational programs; consequently, we are currently working closely with the AWCI staff to set up at least two all-day educational seminars in 1989.

DIMENSIONS: You’ve mentioned labor, legal and legislative services. On top of that DISCA-NJ sponsors five social events, three general membership meetings, four board of directors meetings, a host of special and committee meetings, plans two additional all-day seminars for 1989 and publishes a directory, handbook and newsletter. Where do you get the time?

PHYLLIS: Fortunately, we work closely with our board of directors and committee chairmen who know and appreciate our efforts and are always accessible for advice and decisions concerning programs, activities and publications. When I first began working for DISCA-NJ, three years ago, Dan McGlone of T. J. McGlone & Sons, Inc., was president. He guided me through each activity having had the experience and responsibility of many events in the past of obtaining speakers and planning general membership agendas. Dan has also worked extensively with me in developing our quarterly newsletter, SPEX as newsletter chairman. This year, as convention chairman, he coordinated our most successful convention to date. My contribution to the level that our association has reached is due to the cooperation of industry leaders such as Dan McGlone and Lou Germinario, who make themselves and their expertise available to me regarding all aspects of DISCA-NJ. Dan Andersen, of Andersen Interior Contracting, Inc., counselled me in developing our Contractors Handbook & Buying Guide. DISCA-NJ Vice President Nick Verhagen turned a
defunct annual fishing excursion into
an extremely successful dinner cruise
around Manhattan in 1988. Ed Biglin
is DISCA-NJ’s present Secretary and
Membership chairman who follows all
prospective membership mailings with
a personal phone call or meeting. Leo
Radionoff, Van Rad Contracting Co.,
Inc., is a past president of DISCA-NJ
but there’s nothing past about him; he
currently serves as a trustee to the
Tapers Fund, is a member of AWCI’s
Board of Directors, represents DISCA-
NJ on the Carpenters’ Negotiating
Committee and is a staunch supporter
of all DISCA-NJ activities. Treasurer
Bill Grablauskas, serves on AWCI’s
Northeast Regional Conference and
works very closely with me on keeping
track of our members dues, expenses
of our association and annual budget.
Jack Guerin, of Strober-NJ, our
associate membership chairman and
board member, ran our annual golf
outing in 1988 and planned and ex-
cuted an exquisite associate-member
sponsored champagne breakfast at
DISCA-NJ’s convention. I look for-
ward to the exceptional year that Presi-
dent Lou Germinario is planning for
1989 knowing all will be accomplished
“with a lot of help from my
friends”—the directors, committee
chairmen and active members of
DISCA-NJ.

DON: We break it down to the
areas that each of us is strongest in;
I handle the labor and legal work;
Phyllis and Kim Scholz work on the
special, social and administrative pro-
grams. We keep busy, no doubt about
that, but I believe we’ve got a
membership package that is second
to none in the construction industry.

DIMENSIONS: There’s always the
question, “What’s in it for me?”
How would you answer the inquiry?

DON: The formula is quite simple.

DISCA-NJ tries to help resolve the
labor relations and legal problems
that contractors encounter while at
the same time providing those
services which promote their
businesses—"
Jersey listing our membership.

**DON:** The theme line we run in DISCA-NJ’s Blue Book advertisement best describes our approach: “One call reaches them all.” If a general contractor is looking for a specialty contractor, supplier or manufacturer, he can put in one call to DISCA-NJ and be provided with all of the information necessary. One call to DISCA-NJ allows him—without hassle and expended time—to find out who does the work and who manufactures and supplies in this specialized field.

**DIMENSIONS:** How long have the DISCA-NJ publications been available?

**PHYLLIS:** The Contractors Handbook and Buying Guide is the newest publication; the first issue was distributed last January—we are currently going into our second printing with updates on members, specialties and supplies. The Directory has been published every year since the organization has been established. I started our quarterly newsletter, S P E X, three years ago.

**DIMENSIONS:** But an association membership—local or national—doesn’t end with paying your dues. There’s more involved in getting value from a membership, isn’t there?

**PHYLLIS:** DISCA-NJ offers a substantial return on the investment of membership dues: problem resolution and access to specialists in union negotiating, legislative, educational seminars, active promotion of your business to potential and existing customers and an attractive schedule of social programs. However, as all active members will testify—“You get back what you put in.” The goal of DISCA-NJ’s board of directors and staff is to involve all contractor and associate members as active contributors in the association by serving on committees, attending general membership meetings and all functions. Those who have seen the greatest benefit to belonging to DISCA-NJ are those that have been and continue to be actively involved. A member should never miss a chance to increase his networking. Becoming a member of DISCA-NJ affords the opportunity to share expertise with a group of “friendly competitors.”

**DON:** These are important aspects of membership that don’t always appear in our promotional literature.

**DIMENSIONS:** So as DISCA-NJ membership is somewhat like the tip of the iceberg. Much of the substance is not immediately evident?

**DON:** I believe that’s true. There is so much to be gained by being a part of your own industry rather than continuing to view things from the outside. Get on the inside and help influence and change things, make them the way you think they should be. When you join any organization and don’t share in its activities you can’t very well blame the organization for not giving you value. We make it possible; you have to make it happen. Paying dues gives our members the chance and affords the opportunities. Our entire association encourages total involvement of our membership. Members accomplishments are reported in the quarterly newsletter; committees are open to volunteers; activities and programs are promoted well in advance to urge attendance of all members and guests that are interested in membership. Our expanded educational programs in 1989 will allow attendees to rekindle their knowledge and learn more about our industry while perhaps solving some problems at the same time. Our chapter is continually growing in number and substance with more and more of our members involving themselves on the local and national level. We predict an expanding and successful future.