

Community



builders

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A Publication of the
Home Builders Association of
St. Louis and Eastern Missouri

HBA Mission Statement:

To help create a region in which the association promotes and protects the viability of the building industry by serving its members, who strive to meet the housing needs of all Americans.

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HBA Contributes \$10,000 to Rebuilding Day Blitz



The Home Builders Association, through its charitable subsidiary, the Home Builders Charitable Foundation, donated \$10,000 to Rebuilding Together - St. Louis for the organization's Rebuilding Day on April 19, 2008.

Rebuilding Together - St. Louis is an affiliate of a national volunteer organization. It revitalizes neighborhoods in partnership with the community by rehabilitating the houses of low-income homeowners, particularly the elderly and the disabled,

so that they may continue to live independently in comfort and safety.

Rebuilding Together - St. Louis was incorporated in March 1992 with the first Rebuilding Day held in May of 1993 when 105 volunteers worked on five homes. Ten years later, Rebuilding Together - St. Louis completed its 500th home project. By the end of 2007, Rebuilding Together - St. Louis worked on more than 1,200 homes and 29 community projects in 50 communities on annual Rebuilding Days.

Rebuilding Day is the organization's annual one-day blitz where volunteers make home repairs to the homes of low-income elderly and disabled homeowners in St. Louis City and County. It also renews neighborhoods by rebuilding community centers, playgrounds and other community projects.

Go to www.rebuildingtogether-stl.org for more information. ■





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The Home Builders Association Donates \$20,000 to Local Shelter Programs



The Home Builders Charitable Foundation, the HBA's charitable arm, is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing housing assistance to people or organizations with special shelter needs. ■

Boys & Girls Town of Missouri Receives \$10,000 from HBCF



Home Builders Charitable Foundation (HBCF) President **Harold Burkemper** of **First Construction of St. Charles** (left) and 2008 HBA President **Tom Hughes** of **T.R. Hughes** (right) presented a \$10,000 donation to **Kathy O'Brien**, vice president of Boys & Girls Town of Missouri, on behalf of the HBCF. The funds will be used to repair and replace drywall and paint the residential center that is home to 12 young men ages 12 to 18. The mission of Boys & Girls Town of Missouri is to improve the lives of children with emotional and behavioral problems through superior, family-focused services. Within the safe, stable environment of residential care, the children receive support, encouragement and guidance as they strive to make positive changes in their lives.

HBCF Donates \$10,000 to Fisherhouse in St. Louis



HBCF President **Harold Burkemper** of **First Construction of St. Charles** (left) and 2008 HBA President **Tom Hughes** of **T.R. Hughes** (right) presented a \$10,000 donation to **Susanne Franza Valdez**, Fisherhouse in St. Louis board member, on behalf of the HBCF. The funds will be used to help construct a Fisherhouse facility at the Veterans Administration Hospital at Jefferson Barracks. Fisherhouse provides temporary lodging to the families of military personnel or veterans undergoing treatment in military or VA hospitals. The lodging is provided free of charge. The St. Louis facility will have 21 bedrooms providing space for 42 individuals, with a common living room and kitchen area.



Fire Sprinklers In Single Family Homes?

A proposal to mandate fire sprinklers in most or all residential structures in the national model building code is one of the biggest single regulatory costs ever proposed on housing. This would have a particularly devastating impact on affordable, workforce housing.

There are five mandatory sprinkler proposals being considered in late September at the International Residential Code (IRC) conference.

Those who will decide the issue are those who go to the meeting in late September in Minneapolis and vote. Voters are typically representatives of cities, counties and fire districts. A city's number of votes depends upon its population.

This whole process is essentially "under the radar" of public scrutiny. This is a private meeting of only those with a vote.

There likely will be no big news coverage leading up to, during, or after this meeting and outcome.

The IRC's internal committee of experts has recommended against requiring fire sprinklers in most low-rise, low density housing. Because of that negative recommendation, the pro-sprinkler proponent's effort to over-ride that recommendation needs a two-thirds supportive vote in September rather than just a simple majority to be approved. An effort was also made to over-ride the committee recommendation last September. At that time, it obtained a 57% vote in support of sprinklers. Proponents of sprinklers are pushing for a big turnout of pro-sprinkler voters in September's meeting to reach the two-thirds total needed.

Who is pushing sprinklers? On the surface, advocates try to make themselves sound like they are concerned about avoiding fire fatalities. We are sure that many of them are sincere in their efforts. But in reality, behind the scenes are those who stand to make billions of dollars if sprinklers are mandated in all housing. Because of the pro-sprinkler lobby's efforts, it appears that many in fire service feel that it is a life safety issue. It appears most likely that a large block of pro-sprinkler votes will be cast from among fire service voters attending in Minneapolis, if last year's vote in Rochester is any indication.

Pro-sprinkler advocates say sprinklers save lives. Yet, the reality is that most fatal fires occur in old homes built before modern building safety codes requirements. Between 1977 and 2006 the nation's population grew 36% while at the same time the rate of fires per 1,000 population fell 63%. Further, the U.S. Fire

Administration finds that 57% of reported fires were too small to activate fire sprinklers in residential properties. Data shows that fire service response rate to residential fires is only 3% of the time. Far more frequent are responses to emergencies, especially auto accidents accounting for 60% of responses. With annual auto deaths at nearly 45,000 and fire deaths at only 2,600, a better way to save lives would be to concentrate on auto crashes. But there's one problem with that – there is no money to be made by pro-sprinkler advocates!

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According to the Bureau of the Census, every \$1,000 increase in housing prices means 217,000 households are unable to purchase a home. So, the impact of the model building codes requiring sprinklers is huge. It will shut out more than a million families from even having the prospect of a new home with modern safety features not found in many older homes in which they currently live. For many years, new home construction codes have required battery-backed-up, hard-wired, inter-connected smoke detectors located in every bedroom and on every level of a home. When one sounds, they all sound. Data shows that fatal fires are mostly in older homes built before the requirement of safety features already mandated in new homes.

Let's hope that area mayors and county executives will instruct their delegates to attend this September in Minneapolis and vote against the mandatory code proposals. Otherwise, this will wind up in the 2009 model IRC code which will then be adopted by most local governments. That will mean thousands of local families will be forced to live in older and often substandard housing that is less safe. The requirement will also have a major negative impact on the employment of those in the construction trades and all the related businesses and industries that supply products and services to the home building industry and new home buyers. ■

Builder Highlights

Benton Homebuilders' Community Partnership Donates \$25,000 to Children's Hospital



Doctor **Aaron Hamvas** and nurse **Heather Haerberle** of St. Louis Children's Hospital received a \$25,000 check from The Community Partnership at **Benton Homebuilders**, the charitable arm of the company. HBA builder members **Stuart Imber** (right) and **John Bennett** (center) presented the check on behalf of The Community Partnership. The contribution was made to support the Benton E. Taylor Family Fund which provides financial support for care of newborn babies at the hospital.

St. Louis in Top 25 "2007 Most Eventful Cities"

Eventful.com revealed which cities have the most going on, providing a valuable insight into the character and vitality of each area. The 2007 "Most Eventful Cities" rankings are based on the total number of events listed on *Eventful.com* that took place in each U.S. city from August 2006 to August 2007. St. Louis ranked number 24.

Union Electricians and Electrical Contractors Donate More Than \$90,000 in Goods and Services

Approximately 175 **St. Louis Electrical Connection** members volunteered to make homes safer for disadvantaged St. Louisans on April 19, 2008 during Rebuilding Together St. Louis's Rebuilding Day. The volunteers performed electrical upgrades to 44 homes and also checked for damage that may have been caused by the April 18 earthquake. This is the fifth consecutive year the members have volunteered for Rebuilding Day.

50 Over Fifty Community Shaper Awards

St. Charles Business Magazine announced its second bi-annual 50 Over Fifty Community Shaper Awards. The award recognizes the achievements, dedication and hard work of devoted individuals who make St. Charles County the best possible place to live. HBA members on the list include: associate member **Charlie Bennett** (C. Bennett Building Supply), associate member **David Monahan** (SealMaxx of Greater St. Louis) and builder member **Sue Schaeffer** (Schaeffer Homes).

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