

## “Now More Than Ever”—LMCI Finishing Industries Forum

In 2009, businesses across the United States and Canada made it a top priority to eliminate unnecessary expenses so they could survive. No matter the size of the company, the dollar (both U.S. and Canadian) held new value for company owners, just as it did for rank-and-file union members going over their own finances at the dinner table. If money was to be spent, it had to be for a worthwhile expenditure.

It was that harsh reality that gave Painters and Allied Trades Labor Management Cooperation Institute (LMCI) Administrator Bill McDevitt an anxious feeling about the success of the Fifth Annual LMCI Finishing Industries Forum (FIF) in November. “Work-hours were down and projects were on hold or cancelled in both countries,” said McDevitt. “We weren’t entirely convinced that contractors and union leaders would, or even could, travel to attend this year. So, we made it a point to remind everyone that ‘now more than ever,’ we needed to come together to make certain we had every tool at our disposal to survive, and perhaps even thrive, in this down economy.”

The LMCI launched the FIF in 2005 as a venue for IUPAT labor leaders and their signatory contractors to meet and discuss some of the issues facing them as they do business in their particular industries. Workshops at the event, led by renowned experts in business, provided attendees with valuable information, ideas, and concepts to aid IUPAT industry partners in remaining competitive and successful in their crafts.

It was an enormous and immediate success. The event grew from just under 300 attendees in 2005 to a record-breaking crowd of more than 500 in 2009—despite the economy. Not only

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did attendees at this year’s event agree that it was important now more than ever before to meet as they did in the past; they brought colleagues who had never attended previously as well. “We actually had to turn people away from some of the workshops because we filled up so quickly,” said McDevitt, who was, needless to say, very happy to see so many people register for the event.

On opening day, IUPAT General President James Williams praised the attendees for taking the time away from their jobs to be at this Las Vegas event. “It’s fitting that ‘Now More Than Ever’ is the unofficial theme of this event,” said Williams. “Right now, many of you have troubled times back home and you could have easily decided not to come. To your credit, all of you realized that now is the time we need to pull together, share ideas, and learn from each other. If our work here this week was instrumental in landing even only one project or job for one of our contractors, then the work here this week was well worth it.”

The featured guest speakers at the event were, no doubt, a major draw for attendees. The week began with a presentation from Dr. James Canton, a futurist and author who talked about how a series of radical trends and disruptions are reshaping health care and their effects on business models, standards of care, management of disease, and redefining health care. “Clearly, this is a hot-button topic that affects all manners of doing business here in the United States, so we invited Dr. Canton to provide some in-depth perspective on how the health care system drives the way we do business and what’s ahead for us when it comes to possible health-care reform,” said McDevitt.

Ever looking forward, the week began with a futurist and ended with a forecast—from Cliff Brewis, senior director of Editorial Operations for McGraw-Hill Construction/Dodge, who is responsible for the organization’s newsgathering operations and a frequent speaker on the construction forecast. On the last day of the event,

## Proves its Value

he gave attendees a glimpse at what the construction trends hold for us next year. Although the overall numbers indicated that 2010 would prove to be another challenging year for the construction industry, Brewis was quick to point out that there were some projected high points as well.

"Everyone wishes they had a crystal ball to see what lies ahead for us in the coming years. That might be impossible, but this information from McGraw-Hill is the next best thing," said McDevitt. "The FIF attendees got some hard data and a report on trends that will do nothing but help our industry partners run better businesses in 2010."

Speeches were not the only order of business for the event. Workshops featured subjects such as "Advancing Apprenticeship into the 21st Century," "New LEED AP Standards in Green/Sustainability Construction," "The FTI Year in Review," and Reed Construction Data's "Building Information Modeling."

While the presentations have been appreciated, year after year, attendees maintain that one of the best resources offered by FIF is the opportunity to network with fellow employers and union leaders from across the two countries. "All too often, many of the problems our people have in their day-to-day businesses have already

been solved somewhere else," said McDevitt. "So, when we get together at FIF and share some stories or problems over an informal dinner, we're giving LMCI members the chance to learn from their colleagues' successes and mistakes. That's when you really get the sense that everyone believes we're in this together, and we'll make it through this down economy because of that."

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## LEADERSHIP CHANGE AT LMCI

Effective January 1, 2010, LMCI Administrator Bill McDevitt is retiring from the organization and moving back to Boston to be with his friends and family as he undertakes new duties with District Council 35 (Massachusetts).

"It has been a true privilege to lead LMCI over the last eight years," said McDevitt. "I had the good fortune of working with a team that is completely dedicated to growing the industries of the IUPAT and its partner the Finishing Contractors Association, (FCA). We found a lot of success because of that commitment by so many good people. My job gave me the rare opportunity to work closely with both labor and management on an almost daily basis, and I'm thankful for it."

Bill McDevitt has 29 years as a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades. Most of that time has been in leadership positions. It was just eight years ago that Bill became the administrator of the LMCI. Under his direction, the organization has grown from a program with staff of three and a few brochures into one that is now the gold standard for high-impact, highly effective labor/management entities. The LMCI staff has tripled in size during his tenure, and the materials and resources produced under his direction have proven to be invaluable to members of the IUPAT and their employers.

Kevin LaRue, former recruitment manager for the IUPAT Finishing Trades Institute (FTI), was unanimously approved by the LMCI Board of Trustees to be the next administrator of the LMCI. LaRue and McDevitt have been working side by side since October 1 to ensure a smooth and beneficial transition for the LMCI.

A native of Buffalo, New York, LaRue began his career in the painting industry in 1987. In the following years, LaRue split time working as both an employer and employee

in District Council 4 (New York). He was a project manager/foreman for R.W. Painting, Inc. in Buffalo, and a trade instructor in painting and safety at the IUPAT Job Corps Program. In 2008, he was hired to be one of two full time recruitment managers for the IUPAT Finishing Trades Institute.

"I am honored that the LMCI co-chairs have the confidence in me to entrust me with such an important position within our industry," said LaRue at the LMCI

Finishing Industries Forum in Las Vegas this past November. "The opportunity to work with them is a true privilege, and I am excited to work together to carry forth the agenda of the LMCI into 2010 and beyond."

Of his predecessor, LaRue said, "Bill has built the LMCI into an internationally recognized

and respected organization. The labor and management relationships and programs developed under Bill's administration have helped move our industry forward, thanks to his unique vision, drive, and determination."

"Bill McDevitt has been a consistent champion of the LMCI," said Ed Smith, co-chair of the LMCI and chairman of the FCA. "His vision and efforts have paid huge dividends for union labor and management within the finishing industries. Bill took his responsibilities very seriously and his personal efforts have gone a long way in assuring the constant growth and success of the LMCI. Thank you, Bill, for a job well-done."

"The tireless efforts of Bill McDevitt over the last decade have put LMCI on a course for success for many, many years to come," said LMCI Co-chair and IUPAT General President James Williams. "Countless IUPAT members and contractors have gained from the growth of the LMCI and Bill's vision for an effective labor and management partnership. We're looking forward to working with Kevin in continuing that success and wish Bill nothing but the best in his return to Boston."



Bill McDevitt



Kevin LaRue