

Los Angeles Section

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mark Norton, P.E.
Section President



Attracting Civil Engineers for the Future

As we approach the Engineers Week Feb. 17-23, what more can we, as civil engineers, do to share our profession with the generation of tomorrow? For many branches throughout the LA Section, Engineers Week is often used as a springboard to make presentations to students of all ages to discuss the growing need for civil engineers and the benefits of becoming involved with a profession that can make a profound difference in our society and our planet.

Projections of the number of civil engineers for the future show that there will be a huge deficit in our profession unless more is done to attract the next generation to this profession. What better spokespeople are there than we, who practice engineering each day. I feel strongly that we can help our profession grow even more by introducing K-12 students, friends and acquaintances to civil engineering and using effective media tools to share this exciting career.

Over the past 10 years usually during Engineers Week, I have been involved in an annual student outreach program through my local ASCE branch where visits are made to student classrooms at over 20 high schools, middle schools and elementary schools in the area. Over the years, most of those involved have found that using a PowerPoint presentation and a question and answer period works well. A few years ago I decided that closing with a music video about civil engineering really helps keep the interest level up for this next generation of students so familiar with video games and YouTube videos. Further, updating the PowerPoint presentation and music video from time to time as appropriate in attempt to cater to what students might be interested in is also effective. For those who may be interested, our ASCE LA Section has posted a few civil engineering career presentations and instructions on obtaining videos that you can download from the Section website if you find these helpful in your outreach efforts (www.ascelasection.org).

It is a challenge at times trying to compete with the excitement and glamour of other career paths our children see more often in the media such as teachers, nurses, fire fighters, rock stars, models, and even, dare I say it, politicians. With this new generation of kids, if we can tie hot button issues of the day to values and benefits of the civil engineering profession, perhaps we can become even more effective. Here are a few facts which might be helpful this year in our messaging:

- In late December 2007, Gov. Schwarzenegger announced a plan to bring 20,000 new engineers, especially civil engineers, to California's workforce to address necessary improvements to our roads, schools and other infrastructure in our State.
- The California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) projects that, unless California takes action now, we face a shortfall of almost 40,000 engineers by 2014. LWDA forecasts that California will need approximately 20,000 to 24,000 additional engineers educated in California to begin meeting the growing engineering needs of both the private and public sectors over the next decade.

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Reminder:

Copy deadline for the March 2008 issue is Feb. 1, 2008; copy deadline for April 2008 issue is March 1, 2008.



EDITORIAL

Engineering As A Profession

February is the traditional month of a number of different "holidays", one of which is Engineers Week. This year's Engineers Week comes at a time when there is a realization of the need to build, upgrade, or restore infrastructures throughout the United States. It comes at time when we finally realize that there is a shortage of practitioners in engineering. It comes at a time when we realize that our natural and built environments are changing for the worse and "doers" are gravely needed to avert the course of these unacceptable changes.

We discuss about the future. We discuss about our children. However, the more fundamental question we should ask ourselves is: "What have we done to ensure that these discussions are simply not limited to that: discussions?" As members of one of the largest, if not the largest, engineering organizations in the world, we exert significant influence in shaping how we can attract and encourage the new generation of engineers to follow our steps. We need more of such an effort in the grassroots level of ASCE.

In this issue, our Los Angeles Section President Mark Norton, P.E. addresses this issue in depth. His article outlines the need for civil engineers, the call for more of our younger generation to join the ranks of engineers, and the means that we as engineers can help in this effort.

I have been through Engineers Week for at least 17 years. Throughout that time, I have seen engineers quite active in talking about engineering, engaging celebrities to talk about the importance of engineering, or celebrities themselves (not a whole lot of them out there) who take pride in having studied engineering in college.

In our own little way, we may already be doing what we should be doing to promote our profession. Probably, we need to toot our horn a little bit louder. As an engineer, I try to. In some respects, it may take more than that. Becoming a politician, perhaps? Becoming a rock star engineer? It is really up to us as individuals to think about the specifics of how this could be done. Only then can we assure ourselves that our efforts and ideas are known and those who hear our message take action and seriously consider engineering as a profession.

Enjoy this issue of the newsletter. And by the way, Happy Engineers Week!

- Dr. Cris B. Liban, P.E.



DISASTER TRAINING

Classes are being organized for volunteers under the auspices of the State of California, Office of Emergency Services (OES) to help in the event of a major disaster. Classes will be held in alternate ASCE Branch areas when there are sufficient requests. Qualified individuals are California Registered Civil, Structural, Geotechnical, Certified Engineering Geologists, or Architects. If you are interested in attending a class please contact the ASCE Disaster Preparedness Committee Chairman. The class lasts 5-6 hours and the cost is \$15. Classes are midweek and start at 9 or 10 AM.

To register for the class, submit your name along with your telephone number, fax number, e-mail address, and zip code. You will be contacted when 10 or more individuals request a class. The maximum number in a class should not exceed 20.

If your Branch or Firm would like to offer the use of its facilities for a class, please register and provide the contact person, phone, fax, and e-mail. You will be contacted to make arrangements. All of our classes have been held at a private firm or governmental office. The class should have at least 10 and not more than about 20.

Thank you for your support of the American Society of Civil Engineers

Jack W. Rolston

Chair, Disaster Preparedness Committee, ASCE L.A. Section
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A Great Idea From the Life Members

The ASCE Life Members' Public Image Committee request that members take their (to be discarded) Civil Engineering magazines to their doctor's office or barber shop and merge them with the stack of magazines. We feel that this will be an effective way to make the general public more aware of what civil engineers do.

ASCE's 2007

Member-Get-A-Member Drive Depends on You!



The Los Angeles Section

Cordially Invites You and Your Spouse to

Life Member Brunch

March 1, 2008

In Honor of those members who have advanced to
Life Member status in the society and in recognition of their career achievements.

Keynote Speaker:

ASCE National Executive Director, Patrick Natale, P.E.

Members & Guests: \$25.00 per person

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No Later than 2/22/07

- We are learning more and more that global climate change is posing a serious impact on worldwide water resources, energy production and use, agriculture, forestry, coastal development and resources, flood control and public infrastructure. More civil engineers will be needed to deal with this growing crisis and its impacts in order to assure that we protect human health, welfare and the environment.

In addition to presentations, sometimes sharing our profession just through our own interaction with friends and acquaintances, we can be the lynchpin that starts another person on the road to consider civil engineering as a profession. I am reminded of a story that our current Society President, David G. Mongan, P.E., F.ASCE shared in the November 3, 2007 issue of the ASCE News. In his inaugural speech, Mongan attributed his decision to become a civil engineer to a high school friend—Edgar Sutton, now a professional engineer and an ASCE member. Sutton encouraged Mongan to attend the University of Maryland with him and major in civil engineering. "Since I did not have anything better to do, I took him up on that suggestion, and as they say, the rest is history," Mongan said. A simple suggestion of a career path by someone we know may be all that is needed to steer one on a rewarding and fulfilling path of the civil engineering profession.

Perhaps one of the biggest draws of our profession is the sheer diversity within civil engineering profession. Career paths can range from evaluating water quality impacts of wetlands to working with contractors on a new LEED certified "green building" design, from evaluating water resources to deal with droughts to measuring soil stability for a new freeway overpass or from designing earthquake proof structural members of a 40 story high rise to being part of a design team for next spaceship to the moon. You see, even the sky's not the limit in our profession. The profession's width and breadth of skills and abilities that can be applied to benefit our society and world are exciting and should be celebrated. Let's make Engineers Week this month a great time for sharing with students and friends what got us interested in this exciting profession of civil engineering in the first place.

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