

NTA Continues Growth, Educational Mission



While efforts to establish viable local or regional organizations to support the underground construction and trenchless industries

have been largely unsuccessful, the young Northeast Trenchless Association (NTA) continues to grow in membership, extend services to its members and expand acceptance of trenchless construction in New England.

Established in 2004, NTA experienced its busiest, most productive year in 2006, said Tod Cote, whose one-year term as president ended at NTA's third annual meeting held in January. Cote is vice president of ECI Directional Drilling, South Burlington, VT.

NTA's basic goals are to advance the professionalism of its members and increase awareness of the benefits of trenchless construction among the owners and operators of area utility providers, general contractors, engineers and the general public through regularly scheduled meetings, industry-specific presentations, broader educational programs and sharing information through networking opportunities.

For example, at January's annual meeting in Framingham, MA, there were educational sessions covering underground safety training, job-hazard analysis, trenchless rehabilitation of sanitary and storm sewer systems, testing recycled drilling fluids and transporting equipment safely and legally. In addition, attendees heard a motivational speaker, enjoyed entertainment during the annual business meeting and dinner, and had time to network with other members.

New board members taking office were Jim Hargraves, Ditch Witch of New England, Shrewsbury, MA, treasurer; and Matt Timberlake, Ted Berry Co., Livermore, ME, secretary. Succeeding Cote as association president is Danielle Martin, general manager, Henniker Directional Drilling, Henniker, NH.

"A major accomplishment in 2006 was continued growth of the association," said Martin. "Tod Cote is a very enthusiastic and effective recruiter, and overall membership increased 30 percent, which included our first consulting engineering member."

New location

Meetings were moved from facilities of members to a conference center in Bedford,



New NTA officers are (left to right): Treasurer – Jim Hargraves, Ditch Witch; Second Vice President – Ralph Edwards, Vermeer; Secretary – Matt Timberlake, Ted Berry Co.; 2007 President – Danielle Martin, Henniker Directional Drilling; 2006 President – Tod Cote, ECI; and Vice President – Bruce Hubbard, ETTI.

NH, centrally located in New England. The organization's first demo day was termed a success, despite heavy rains which required outdoor events to be moved inside. A summer recreational outing was also well attended.

"Tod created more opportunities for our associate members by adding a news page on our Web site for them to promote industry and company news," said Martin. "He also gave them their own time slot at the annual meeting to present new products to our members and updates regarding their industry."

In October, board members voted to incorporate NTA, establish a budget, revise bylaws, reduce member fees and recruit new board members. It was determined the recipient of the association's Founder's Award will be designated by a vote of board members and past presidents. The award recognizes the member who has contributed most to NTA and supports and promotes the association.

Looking ahead, Martin said NTA will continue efforts to recruit more engineering firms.

"Our industry," she said, "struggles with plans and specs that frequently lack geotechnical information and a solid understanding of trenchless applications. NTA members have begun discussions and research to develop a set of guidelines to assist in the design of directional drilling projects. Having more engineers involved in the association would round out our membership and strengthen our efforts."

Martin said regular meetings will continue to offer educational programs on a wide range of subjects, including leadership, business, risk assessment, safety and technical advice.

"One thing we are doing new this year is inviting one of our members to present a case study at each meeting about one of their projects," she said. "The emphasis is

to share a learning experience and provide information about applied resources or an innovative approach that might have been taken to make the project successful."

More info

The Web site will be expanded to include information on trenchless industries such as pipebursting, sliplining and "soft" excavation techniques with vacuum excavation equipment.

NTA became a sponsor of the 2007 UCT show held in January in Houston and is supporting efforts of the NASTT cross-bore committee.

Martin says the NTA's impact on the New England trenchless construction industry has been greater than any of the founding members anticipated.

"We have seen membership in the NTA actually written into project specifications," she said. "The NTA has created a more balanced market, the NTA is training as a group and the members; are all operating on the same standards. The camaraderie among the members has, in my mind, helped the success of some projects. This is an amazing group of people who are as dedicated to this young industry as they come. What is unique is that most of our members are direct competitors who have dared to open themselves to shared experiences, improving their businesses and gaining great friendships. When a fellow member needs advice, parts, supplies or manpower, there are many NTA resources available to draw on."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Northeast Trenchless Association,
northeasttrenchless.com