

# Connections

## Continues to Raise the Bar

By Jeffrey Stouffer  
editor



There comes a time in the life of every trade show, convention, exhibition, educational conference and distributor meeting when expectations carried forward from the prior year run head-on into the brick wall of unrealized potential and unfulfilled promise.

That wasn't the case at this year's Connections Convention and Trade Show.

"Ten years ago, we had 13 or more different trade associations around the country having their own meetings, having their own schools, having their own conventions. They were sparsely attended. Vendors hated it. Speakers were talking to 20, 30, 40 people. The largest conventions had 100 or so," Connections Master of Ceremony Joe Farrell said. "In 1999

four Western trade associations got together and said 'Hey, let's have a regional convention in Las Vegas.' It was a huge success, and it was just a handful of associations. Vendors were coming back to us saying 'We've got big numbers, let's do this again, and again.' Well, that was seven years ago, and now we have close to 3,000 people participating in this event. We have 13 regional trade associations, and this is the biggest event of its kind for our industry in the world."

Recognizing that the position of industry standard is only as solid as the platform it's built on, the organizers of the 2006 Connections Convention and Trade Show at the Las Vegas Hilton, Sept. 21-23, opened the playbook and drew up a program tapping

a new level of opportunity and potential. Never ones to rest on their laurels, Connections Events executives went out and secured one of the country's leading speakers and small-business experts, Michael E. Gerber, author of "The E-Myth Contractor," "The E-Myth Manager" and more as a keynote speaker. A packed house took delight in the entertaining, in-your-face style of the charismatic business guru.

"I'm going to suggest to you a new way of thinking about transformation and truly creating a company that works for you, and not because of you," Gerber said. "You believe that your experience has taught you how to know about your industry. You believe you know your business. I'm going to tell you you don't know your



Photos courtesy of Cliff Grost



business. In fact, I'm going to tell you that you're the biggest single problem in your business," Gerber said.

"How many of you own your own business?" Gerber asked. A great many hands went up. He pounced. "You're the biggest problem in your business! There is no problem in your business: people aren't the problem, money isn't the problem, time isn't the problem, can't-find-good-people isn't the problem, the customer isn't the problem. Nothing you believe to be true about your business is true. Everything you believe to be true is in fact based on your experience, and experience is the worst teacher in the world. So shut up and listen!"

From the ballroom to the showroom attendees went. More than 175

companies filled the exhibit hall aisles this year, displaying the latest truck-mounts, portable extractors, chemicals, tools and accessories, marketing programs, estimating software, dehumidifiers, air movers; you name it, you could find it. Live demonstrations and interactive booth displays allowed attendees to literally get their hands on the equipment of their choosing, maneuvering and manipulating a variety of machines and accessories.

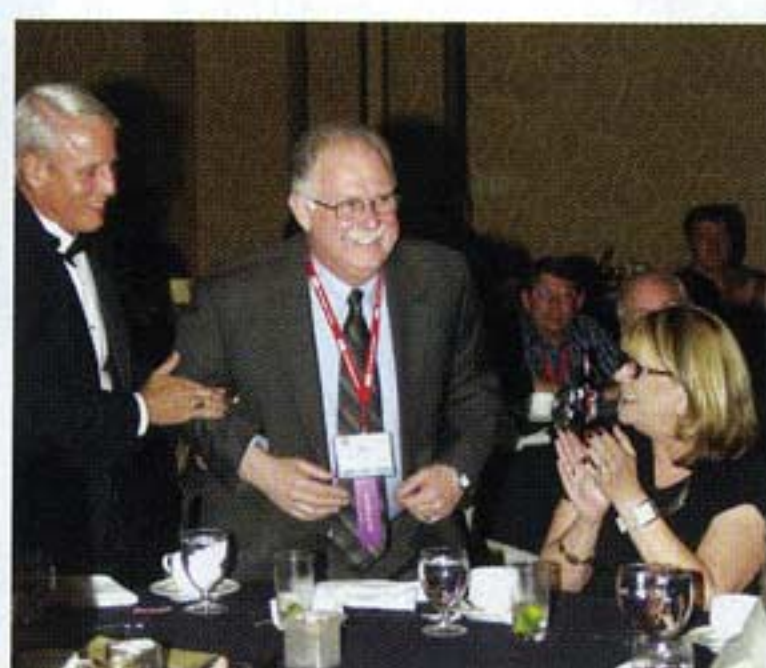
Special care was taken to devise a seminar schedule with something for everyone, from "Stain Removal and Odor Control" and "Emerging Technologies in the Cleaning Industry" to "Big Marketing for Small Businesses" and "Area Rug Cleaning: Problems and Solutions." Speakers were brought

in from a wide array of backgrounds, experts like Werner Braun, Barry Costa, Dane Gregory, Carey Mitchell, John Mosher, Michael Bowdoin and Brandon Burton. There were lawyers, insurance experts, company presidents, CEOs, MDs and more offering the benefit of their experience to appreciative audiences.

The Connections Industry Awards Dinner allows the opportunity to recognize members of the industry for their service and commitment. The IICRC presented awards to Howard Wolf and Larry Cooper for their commitment and contributions, and presented the Keith Williams Award, given to individuals "who donate time, skills and knowledge to advance the technical aspects of the IICRC and the



ICS Publisher Evan Kessler (left) and Al Bradham



Jim Holland



Jeff Bishop and Larry Cooper



Jeff Bishop



industry as a whole” to Jim Holland.

The Industry Connections Award, given to an individual, company or group that has forged connections between the cleaning and restoration industry and other industries, was presented to well-known industry figure Dr. Michael Berry. The Connections Kenway Mead Leadership Award, presented to an individual, company or group that has displayed vision, leadership and tireless energy on behalf of the cleaning and restoration industry on a regional, national or international level, went to IICRC Technical Advisor Jeff Bishop.

The last award of the evening, the *ICS Cleaning Specialist* Ralph Bloss Humanitarian Award, an award that honors members of the floor care in-

dustry whose compassion, self-sacrifice, leadership and creativity produce significant and outstanding benefits for mankind, was awarded to Al Bradham of Carpet Care Services in Summerville, SC.

The Connections Events would not be possible without the cooperation and innovation of 13 regional trade associations: the AWCC; the CCINW; the CFI; the FIO; the CRCII; the LMCCA; the MSPCA; the PCRA; the NEIRC; the SCRT; the NYRCI; the TRSCA; and the PCUCA. Just as large a piece to the Connections puzzle is the contributions of sponsors including Bridgepoint Systems; Prochem; the IICRC; DuPont Teflon; Pro's Choice; Water Out Drying Corp.; Sunbelt Rentals; Jon-Don; Air &

Water Center; Phenomenal Products; the CRI; Beneficial Capital Leasing; Dri-Eaz Products; Chemspec; Dry Air Technology; FLIR Systems; U.S. Products; and Code Blue Restoration, as well as *ICS Cleaning Specialist*.

The 2006 Connections Convention and Trade Show demonstrates that it is indeed possible to continually raise the bar and, even more important, to meet and exceed those raised expectations.

The 2007 Connections Convention and Trade Show is scheduled to be held at the Las Vegas Hilton in September. The 2007 Connections Conference and Exhibition will take place at the Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort in Clearwater, Fla., May 3-5. ***If you liked this article, circle 163 on the Reader Inquiry Card. ICS***

