

electricITY

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2022 Gold Medal Award Winner
Mike Wall

Hall of Fame Inductee
Kendra Dinkins



Hall of Fame Inductee
Eric Nixon



Hall of Fame Inductee
Brad Selby





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A publication of the Electric Association

Our Mission:

To provide members of the electrical industry of Chicagoland and their employees with formal educational opportunities, professional development, information exchange, and member services.

— and —

To serve as the interface between various organizations serving the same industry, and foster the interchange of ideas, product knowledge, and programs in order to create the best external environment possible for conducting business in the electrical industry.

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Moving forward and growing stronger

Letting your involvement in the association be passive can quite literally mean leaving money on the table. Show your employees you support them by encouraging them to take part in EA groups. Show your customers and competitors that you support the industry by supporting the Electric Association.

Electric Association Dues were emailed at the end of November with an opportunity to participate in the sustaining dues program and prepay for your booth at the EA conference, foursome at the EA golf outing, and table at the EA Awards Dinner.

Your support of the Electric Association events along with membership dues and sustaining memberships, allow the E.A. to not only resume but **expand** the events and groups that we host in the industry. If you are new to the Electric Association, or a seasoned member in need of a refresher, please review some of the groups we encourage you to join on page 6.

As we continue to strengthen and improve the Electric Association events and programs, we want to remind you to get involved, attend events, and give your feedback to shape YOUR association. You are the reason the Electric Association is here.

Submit your press releases and company news to be featured in *ElectriCITY* magazine, e-newsletters, and social media posts. There are a variety of sponsorship options at the Electric Association Golf Outing, Electric Association Conference, and a variety of division events. Both the Consulting Electrical Engineers and the Chicagoland Electrical Estimators Association hold monthly meetings September through May. Each group's

meetings have an exclusive sponsorship opportunity to meet their members and make a presentation.

As I near the end of my term as Electric Association President, I would like to thank my fellow Electric Association Officers and Board Members for their dedication. I would also like to thank the Electric Association members and especially sustaining members who contribute above their annual dues payments to advance the efforts of the association.



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Executive Director's Report

Ali Novinger

It is Time to Get More Involved

The Electric Association leadership, divisions, and affiliated groups offer limitless opportunities for you to promote your company and yourself. Unless this is your first week in the industry, you already know that we have something very special here in Chicagoland. Don't let these opportunities pass you by. Review the groups below and contact me to get more involved.

Chicago Electrical Estimators Association

The Chicago Electrical Estimators Association (CEEA), an industry related affiliate of the Electric Association, is a non-profit Association of Electrical Estimators and Project Managers involved in the Electrical Construction Industry. Some of the objectives of the CEEA are to:

- Raise the standard of estimates for electrical installations to establish an accurate and satisfactory cost for each and every job.
- Keep members informed of new products and services available to them by having presentations by guest speakers and/or product manufacturer's representatives.
- Instruct members in proper methods to analyze and interpret plans and specifications, and proper and orderly procedures of taking off material quantities therefrom.
- Inform membership of new methods, procedures, tools and products relative to electrical estimating and construction.
- Discuss other subjects which may be found from time to time to be of interest to the electrical construction business.

The CEEA meets on the third Monday of every month, September through May. Estimators gain knowledge and contacts and these meetings. **Contact me if you are interested in joining this group or sponsoring a meeting to provide an exclusive presentation to the estimators.**

Chicagoland Communication Technologies Forum

The Communication Technologies Forum was created to bring together all disciplines within the low voltage fields in a venue where they can network, be informed and have quality education.

As a member of the CTF, you will benefit from leading edge information at conferences and seminars. There are several opportunities throughout the year to network with your colleagues in social and meeting environments, to share experiences and learn from each other. In April, CTF held a collaborative panel event, *Converging Technologies: Representatives from ASIS, AVIXA, BICSI, and EMCOR shared insight on the future of our industry.* The annual CTF Golf Outing was held at Cog Hill Golf & Country Club. The group returned to a Chicago Dogs game in June and added a happy hour event at Puttshack in Oak Brook. The CTF Board is planning to increase these opportunities in 2023.

CTF members include anyone who manufactures, sells, installs, works with, or plans to work with Voice and Data products, including manufacturers, agents, distributors, engineers, contractors, service providers, and others.

CEE: Consulting Electrical Engineers Division

The objectives of the Consulting Electrical Engineers Division are:

- to improve the professional status of consulting electrical engineers,
- to develop better engineering standards and practices, and
- to disseminate the resulting knowledge.

These goals are pursued through seminars, meetings, educational courses, and publication of reference materials.

Persons employed as engineers, designers or draftsmen involved in the preparation of plans and/or specifications for the electrical construction industry at private consulting firms, architectural firms or government agencies in and near Chicago are invited to apply for membership of the CEE.

In addition to virtual and in-person meetings, the CEE members had a tour of Chicago Switchboard, a tech forum and tradeshow at the Union League Club, a tour and event at IN-Tech, and event at Levition Live. If you are an electrical engineer, your company and your career will benefit from participating in CEE. If you sell to engineer, the CEE has monthly sponsored presenter opportunities.

Electric Golf Club of Chicago

The Electric Golf Club of Chicago was organized in 1923 and holds six outings per year. The purpose of the Electric Golf Club is to promote friendly and cooperative relations throughout the electrical industry. Any person working in or involved with the electrical industry is eligible to become a member of the Electric Golf Club. Learn more about EGC on pg. 8.

Women's Division:

The objectives of the Women's Division are to bring together women in all branches of the electrical industry in and near Chicago for the advancement of the industry through a better understanding of the services rendered

by electricity, to disseminate that knowledge through regular dinner meetings, to advance and promote fellowship through participation in a common cause, and to further the aims and purposes of the Electric Association.

Women employed by firms or institutions engaged in producing, distributing, studying, or publicizing any aspect of the electrical industry are invited to join. Our members come from all segments of the electrical construction industry: electrical contractors, engineering firms, manufacturers, distributors, manufacturer's representatives, and others.

This year, the group enjoyed a Prohibition Tour, happy hour at Fox & Turtle, and holiday party at McCormick & Schmick's. Don't miss the any of the events in 2023. **If you are a woman in the electrical industry, let this be your reminder that women supporting each other and sharing a community is a form of self-care.**

Young Electrical Professionals

The Young Electrical Professionals of Chicago are comprised of young professionals from all sectors of the electrical industry with the common goal of networking, creating camaraderie amongst peers, and promoting the industry as a whole. This division of the Electric Association is geared towards individuals under the age of 40, or with less than 10 years in the electrical industry. The YEP group has seen immense growth in the past year.

The young professionals played darts at Flight Club, golf at Big Mini Putt Club, bags at Pollyanna Brewery in Roselle, and shuffleboard a Royal Palms. In addition to more happy hours next year, the group is planning a panel event in February. This unique event asks some of the current industry leaders to share their experiences learned with the future industry leaders.

There is no fee to join this group, simply contact anovinger@eachicago.org to join.

Visit www.eachicago.org or contact Ali Novinger at anovinger@eachicago.org to learn more about how you and your colleagues can benefit from membership in these groups. ●



2022 Electric Golf Club President
Steve Zitkovic
 CED

Electric Golf Club of Chicago

The Electric Golf Club of Chicago closed the 2022 season on October 13 at St. Andrews Golf Club in West Chicago. Congratulations to Bob Fife for winning the President's Cup. The club enjoyed a full season with some new courses and new members.

EGC will return to the traditional Dinner Dance at the Westin in Itasca on February 18, 2023. Hundreds of EGC members, industry professionals, and their guests attend this event. Save the date and watch your email for registration information.

2022 EGC Officers:

President: Steve Zitkovic, CED

1st Vice President: Eric Lovingfoss, A & M, Inc.

2nd Vice President: David Alonzo, Callas/Kingsley

3rd Vice President: Frank Curkov, Advance Electrical Supply

Treasurer: Derek Wall, Louvers International

2022 EGC Outings:

- Saturday, February 12, 2022: Westin Itasca
- Thursday, May 12, 2022: Cog Hill Golf & Country Club
- Thursday, June 9, 2022: Schaumburg Golf Club
- Thursday, July 14, 2022: Arrowhead Golf Club
- Thursday, August 11, 2022: The Preserve at Oak Meadows
- Wednesday, September 8, 2022: Bolingbrook Golf Club
- Thursday, October 13, 2022: St. Andrews Golf & Country Club ●



Electric Association Awards

Electric Association members attended the EA Awards Dinner on October 20, 2022 at the Carlisle in Lombard. Attendees not only came to support the year's honorees, but were also able to connect with old friends and new contacts at this event.

Please join us in once again congratulating these Electric Association Award Recipients:

Hall of Fame Induction Presentations:

The Hall of Fame program was inaugurated in 1984 to pay tribute to outstanding individuals whose dedication and efforts contributed to the development and growth of the electrical industry in the Chicagoland area. The recipients are innovators whose hard work and broad vision turned ideas into reality, and fostered industrial growth and social progress.

Gold Medal Award:

The Gold Medal is awarded by the Electric Association in recognition of unselfish devotion, imagination, and leadership in the electrical industry; and to recognize efforts to further the Association's goals of promotion and education.

2022 Gold Medal Award Winner:

Mike Wall, WESCO

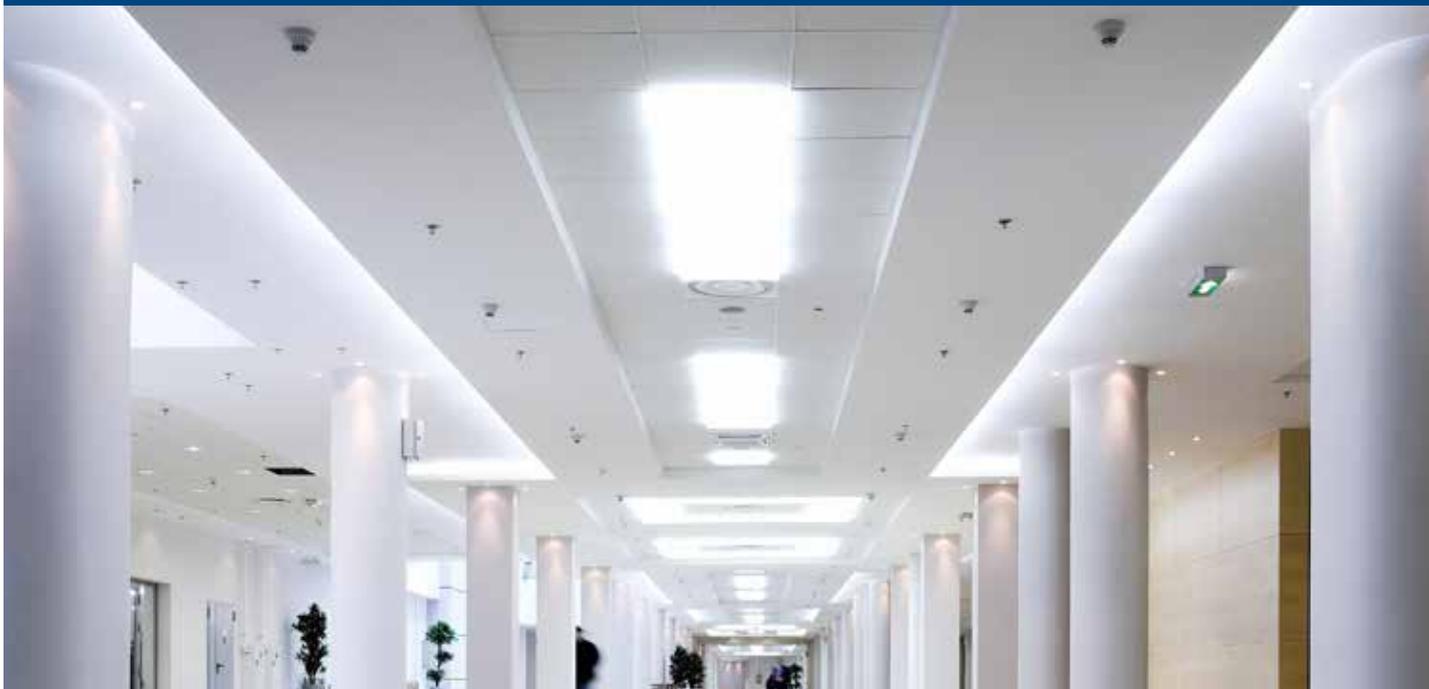
Hall of Fame Inductions:

Kendra Dinkins, Taylor Electric Company

Eric Nixon, Maron Electric Company

Brad Selby, CED





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2022 Gold Medal Award Winner:

Mike Wall

Mike Wall, the 2022 EA Gold Medal Award winner, has had an impressive career in the electrical industry, spanning 41 years with impactful positions at major companies, including Graybar, WESCO Distribution and the Will Group.

In 2021, he was working for the Will Group as VP of Industrial Electric Supply (IES) when he received a call from Jeff Daun, his former boss at WESCO. WESCO had recently acquired Anixter International Inc., a leading global distributor of wire and cable, and Daun had an important question for Wall: Should we discuss working together again at WESCO to integrate the new acquisition into the company?

Wall's initial reaction was to say no. He had been gone from WESCO for five years and had a good situation at the Will Group. He wasn't looking to make a change—but then he did the math.

"WESCO and Anixter at the time were both approximately \$8.5 billion companies," Wall recalls. "So I looked at this as an enormous opportunity to meld these two companies together to become a major force in the Chicago market, and I just couldn't pass it up."

The decision turned out to be a good one because WESCO/Anixter will be in the \$20 billion range in overall sales by the end of this year. With the acquisition, the company's warehouse space in Chicago now exceeds 1 million square feet.

"The acquisition has changed everything," Wall reports. "We're now the biggest U.S.-owned electrical distributor and are trying to use all the resources of the company to grow market share in my region. We had our best sales achievement ever in the second quarter of this

year, which is attributable to the acquisition. There's also been a wave of infrastructure projects, data center projects and utility projects that have lined up very well with WESCO's product offering and sales focus. On a corporate-wide basis, we continue to outpace the competition."

Daun, WESCO's VP for construction for the western U.S., couldn't be more pleased to have Wall back on his team. "I have known Mike for almost 15 years, and he has been a great coach, mentor and co-worker to me and many others in the electrical industry. I have found him to be honest, hard-working, humble, and a person that drove to create the right culture in the

workplace."

With his return to WESCO, Wall became regional sales director for construction, with responsibilities Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois and northern Indiana. His efforts have centered around ensuring that the newly integrated WESCO/Anixter works at peak efficiency. "There are many of strengths between the companies, which is why the acquisition was made," Wall says, "but at the same time, there are challenges at my level to get the two companies to think and act as one."

The integration of WESCO and Anixter was made more challenging over the past couple years by market changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the major challenges has been dealing with the evolving expectations of a hybrid workforce.

"Every company is dealing with this issue because many employees enjoy working from home," Wall observes. "They like the flexibility, and in a metro area like Chicago, they don't miss the traffic of the daily commute. But it's become much more difficult to onboard new employees



because you don't have the same social interaction and learning environment you have when everybody is in the office together."

WESCO has made changes to address these issues—for instance, bringing new hires into Chicago for an employee training conference, which allows them to meet other employees and establish networking opportunities. "We're also working toward implementing a steady schedule, so even if employees are on a hybrid schedule, we know they are going to be in the office on specific days of the week," Wall says.

The pandemic also has been challenging for industry organizations like the Electric Association, which thrive on networking and collaboration. "It was a rough period when we weren't able to have our functions and had to have remote meetings," says Wall, who currently serves on the EA board and is also a member of the advisory board for the Lake Michigan Club. "Now that we're able to get together again, I believe it's actually helped our attendance and participation levels with most of the events and meetings we've had."

The impact of COVID-19 became personal for Wall when he tragically lost his sister, Eileen Mayes, during the first year of the pandemic. "She was five years younger than me, and it's had a great impact on my work-life balance in the last two years," he says.

Now more than ever, Mike enjoys spending time with his wife, Marlene, their two children and two granddaughters. Their daughter, Allison, and her husband, Ryan Fowler, have a 4½-year-old daughter, Reese. Their son, Michael, and his wife, Traci, have a brand-new baby, Madilyn, who was born in August.

As part of adjusting their work-life balance, Mike and Marlene built a home in Fontana-on-Geneva-Lake, Wisconsin, where they spend much of their spare

time boating. Wall continues to commute WESCO's distribution center in Carol Stream, which is about a two-hour drive from Fontana, as well as maintaining an office near his home in New Berlin, Wisconsin.

Looking back at his four-decade career, Wall feels fortunate to have so many strong connections with the people in the industry. "That's something I was blessed with at the various companies I worked for—that I had some really good bosses and mentors," he says. "My hope is that I can somehow make a similarly positive impact on the people who work on my team."

Wall also values the connections he has made through his many years of involvement in the EA and other industry organizations. He started his career working in Michigan before a transfer with Graybar took him to the Chicago market in 1995, so he knows just how close-knit the electrical market is here compared to other places.

"I think if you've worked in other markets before coming to Chicago, you have a better appreciation for these associations and what you get from them," he says. "You meet lifelong friends, even though they may work for a competitor or a supplier that you don't have a relationship with. You see the human side of every company, which gives you a better overall understanding for the industry."

Those in the industry who have known Wall as a boss, colleague, friend or even a competitor have nothing but good things to say about him. David Alonzo, principal at Callas/Kingsley Electric Sales Inc., had the opportunity to work for Wall when they were together at Graybar. "Mike hired me as a sales trainee with no experience," Alonzo recalls. "He's a great leader—the type of person you really want to rally behind."

Not that long ago, Wall told Alonzo that he always knew he would own his agency one day. Alonzo believes that



prediction came true in part because Wall was such a great mentor to him. "When you're lucky enough to be in the presence of a rising star like Mike, you watch what he does to be successful, and then you try to do the same things," Alonzo says. "I know without question that I wouldn't be where I am today without his guidance and his belief in me."

Tim Cornell, construction sales manager, west Michigan, for WESCO/Anixter, has known Wall for 30-plus years as both a colleague and a competitor. "When he came to work for us at WESCO, he was a real advocate for me," Cornell says. "Being on Mike's team was always a good thing because he backed you 100%, and you never had to worry about having support on the back side if anything went wrong. Or, if it went right, he had no problem giving you the credit. He always made sure that everybody who contributed was mentioned on the big wins. He's a high-

integrity guy. You never had to worry about his integrity or his fairness."

His current boss, Daun, likewise praises Wall for how he conducts himself at WESCO. "Mike is that rare individual that just 'gets it,' and he has the ability to help others 'get it' also. What makes Mike stick out in this industry is that he is an even better person, husband and family man, and I am grateful to call him a peer and friend."

Receiving the Gold Medal is confirmation of a job well done. Wall admits to being stunned when his industry friend Chuck Currie called to give him the good news about the award. "I couldn't have been more surprised when I got the phone call," Wall says. "It just seemed so surreal. I am extremely humbled to be in the company of the people who have won this award before me. It's an unbelievable honor."

Hall of Fame Inductee

Kendra Dinkins

Kendra Dinkins never expected to make her career in the electric industry. Many of her family members had opted to work at Taylor Electric Co., the business founded by her great-grandfather Sam Taylor in 1922, but Dinkins started on a different path. Her college education put her on a pre-med track, and after graduation, she took a job in the education field. But a request by her father, Kenny Dinkins, to fill a bookkeeping slot "temporarily" culminated in her becoming president/CEO of the company she had never intended to join.

"I consider myself to be the accidental president because this definitely was not in the cards for me," Dinkins admits. But fate dealt a different hand, and in 2015, she took on the presidency and has since become

a force for women and minorities in the industry. In this, the 100th-anniversary year of Taylor Electric, she has been named to the EA Hall of Fame.



Dinkins credits her father with instilling within her a desire to succeed. Kenny spent his life working as an electrician, not only for Taylor but for other contractors as well. "He worked his butt off in the field so that his three daughters could achieve something better," she says.

Wanting to make her dad proud, Dinkins headed to college in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she earned her biology degree from Shaw University, the first historically Black college in the southern United States. She stayed in Raleigh to take a job as a student program assistant and dorm mom at St.

Mary's School. She moved back to Chicago in 2006 with the idea of finding a similar job.

"I was getting ready to hop back into boarding-school life when my dad asked me to join the company, just temporarily, because they needed help in the accounting office," Dinkins recalls. "That was in 2007, and I've been here ever since."

Dinkins started as a bookkeeper and transitioned to the role of controller. By this time, her dad was chief of operations. Her cousin, Martha Taylor, daughter of second-generation owner Rufus Taylor, was president/CEO. Also working in the business were Bryan Taylor, Martha's brother, and Kendra's sister, Karen Michele Dinkins (who uses her middle name Michele).

"There came a point when Martha was ready to retire, so since Michele and I had been taking on more and more tasks, it was a natural transition for me to take over Martha's role," Dinkins says. "In 2013, I took over day-to-day operations, and then in 2015, Michele and I finished a buyout agreement where we bought Martha's share of the company."

Bryan retains his share of ownership, so the three of them own the company together. Michele is executive vice president/chief operations officer, while Bryan is a company VP who spends his time working in the field as a foreman.

Kenny Dinkins retired several years ago and has since passed away. Though he didn't see his daughters' rise at the company, Dinkins knows he would be proud. "It's not something he originally imagined, but it is definitely something he talked about in his later years that he really wanted to see me and Michele take over the company."

Over its 100-year history, Taylor Electric has become well-known in Chicago. The company originally focused on residential single-family homes and small commercial projects but grew to encompass larger projects, such as multi-unit residential, mid-rises and high-rises. Taylor is also known for maintenance contracts with major commercial accounts, including Guaranteed Rate Field, Soldier Field, Navy Pier, O'Hare International Airport and Huntington Bank Pavilion at Northerly Island.

While Taylor Electric is unique in the market for many reasons, Dinkins believes the company stands out as a successful minority-owned business. "Being a Black-owned company, we've always had to make sure we

focus on quality and consistency and let our work speak for itself. I think what has led to our success is that customers know we're reliable, we're honest, and we always make sure they're taken care of."

During her time as the company, Dinkins has been grateful for the support she has received from the Chicago electrical industry. "The industry has been so accommodating and helpful to the whole family in every transition we've had. When I became president, so many people reached out to offer their help and take us under their wing."

One such individual was Colleen Kramer, president of Evergreen Electric Supply in Itasca. "It was so exciting to see Taylor Electric reach its 100th anniversary, and I am so thankful that Kendra was there to lead the company to that milestone," Kramer says. "She has the talent, the intelligence and the ability to work with people, whether it's her internal team or the company's clients. Whether you've been in business for five years, 10 years or 100 years, running a company is not easy, but she has the tenacity to climb that mountain."

Kramer and Dinkins have the mutually shared experience of being women presidents of Chicago electrical companies. Kramer's advice to Dinkins was to get involved in industry organizations—not just by being a member but to actively serve. Dinkins took that advice to heart. She is active in many associations, currently serving on the executive committee for the Electrical Contractors Association and on the board for the EA. As a member of a multi-generation family business, she also has participated in Little Wheels.

Dinkins has been instrumental in organizations that further the causes of women and minorities. She is the current president of the Federation of Women Contractors, which represents women-owned businesses in the construction and design industries. She also was one of the founding members and currently serves on the board of Black Contractors, Owners and Executives, whose mission is to support Black contractors and industry professionals through education, mentoring, advocacy and legislation.

Kramer applauds Dinkins' participation in such groups, noting that their work is making a difference on behalf of women and minorities. "These organizations are breaking down barriers and moving the needle. It's easier to do this

collectively, as part of an organization, than trying to do it on your own.”

One way that Kramer feels women can move the needle is through golf. “I used to tell my colleagues at the Federation for Women Contractors you have to play golf because the guys golf, and that’s where a lot of business happens,” Kramer observes. “So, Kendra took that to heart, and now we’re golfing kindred spirits.”

Fortunately, Dinkins discovered that she likes to golf. She regularly hits the links at Olympia Fields Country Club, where she is a member.

Beyond industry associations, the leadership of Taylor Electric supports a favorite cause of their second-generation owner, Rufus Taylor, who was active in the March of Dimes. “We as a family are still involved with the March of Dimes, and I currently sit on the board,” Dinkins says.

Also in honor of her uncle, Dinkins sits on a committee that chooses the recipient of the Rufus Taylor Award, presented annually since his death in 1995. “This is an award for someone who has blazed a trail for themselves

or others, and that’s exactly what Rufus did—blazed a trail for Taylor Electric and the industry,” she says. “He did what I continue to do by working with advocacy agencies to help ensure that minority- and women-owned contractors are getting a fair shake and getting the information they need to succeed.”

Family and business are mixed in Dinkins’ life, and she is devoted to both in equal measure. She is close with her mom, who lives with her, and another sister, Kristi Dinkins, who owns a beauty supply store. In addition to entertaining and cooking for family, Kendra enjoys spending time with her dog, Dobie, whom she describes as a “pit mixed with lab and mixed with chaos.”

In her “accidental” career as president, Dinkins feels fortunate to be in a position where she can advocate for women and minorities in the industry. “The work has been very fulfilling. A lot of people may feel that Taylor Electric is the exception to the rule in what we’ve achieved, but I don’t agree. There are many other minority- and women-owned companies that, if given the opportunity to shine and with the right tools under their belt, have the same potential for success.”

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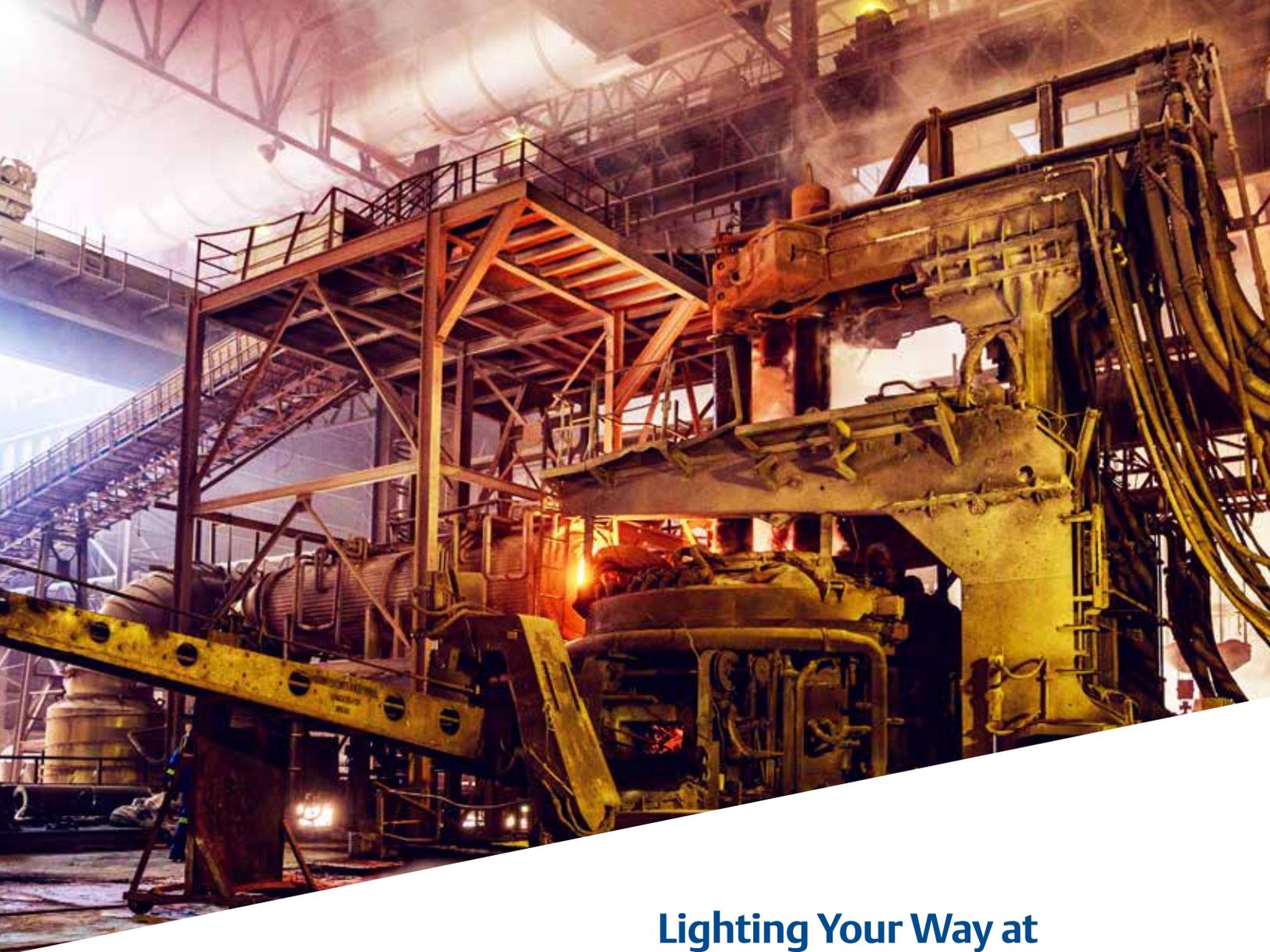
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Hall of Fame Inductee

Eric Nixon

Eric Nixon is a man of many talents. A successful businessman. An accomplished nature photographer. An avid downhill skier and sportsman. A devotee to philanthropic causes. An entertaining master of ceremonies. Plus an innovative thinker who has made an indelible mark in the Chicago electrical industry, resulting in his selection to the EA Hall of Fame.

Nixon is third-generation president of Maron Electric. With offices in Skokie and downtown Chicago, Maron provides advanced products and systems for such settings as high-rise office buildings, retail spaces, banks, universities, hospitals and airports.

Maron was named for the original owner's wife (Mary) and son (Aaron). Nixon's grandfather, Maurice Nixon, and great-uncle, Barney Nixon, purchased the company in 1926. His father, Jerrold Nixon, became the second generation of the family to run the company. During his tenure, Jerry held many positions with the Electric Contractors Association of the City of Chicago and the National Electrical Contractors Association. He also was an EA Gold Medal recipient.

Young Eric had his first experience working for Maron at age 14. Each year until he graduated from college, he worked in the warehouse and as part of the union summer helper program. However, his initial ambition was not to follow his grandfather's and father's footsteps into the family business. Instead, he had hopes of being an actor or a stand-up comedian. With that in mind, he earned his degree in theater and communications from Western State University in Colorado.

After graduating in 1985, Nixon moved back to Chicago and continued taking courses in theater. He did Chicago-

area stand-up at night while working at Maron during the day. "I initially began working as an estimator and then

shifted into the field to become a journeyman electrician," he reports.

Eventually he set aside his stand-up ambitions to work full-time in the family business. He became a project manager and eventually launched a satellite telecommunications business and a network engineering company. He became president of the company in 2002.

Throughout his 38-year career at Maron Electric, Nixon has been a strong supporter of the Chicago

electric industry and has particularly devoted himself to ECA Chicago.

"Eric is extremely involved in ECA and the Chicagoland electrical industry, and he does it for the good of the industry," says Mark Thomas, executive vice president for ECA Chicago. "He has been part of our executive committee for over 20 years. He has served in all of our office positions. He has been vice president of the chapter, president of the chapter, and is currently serving as governor of the chapter."

Nixon's involvement also includes serving on the joint arbitration committee; the apprentice board and trust; and at one time, the legislative committee. He also represents ECA on the Chicago Electrical Commission. "He started our Young Professionals group here at ECA a number of years ago, which has been extremely successful," Thomas adds.

In addition, Nixon has been the driving force behind Powering Chicago, ECA's joint LMCC promotional effort with IBEW Local 134. "He's helped us get to the point where we're setting up a YouTube channel, which Eric



has been extremely involved in moving forward,” Thomas says.

All of these activities have had a positive impact on ECA and the industry it serves. “I can’t say enough about Eric’s involvement and passion to build the electrical industry in Chicago and Cook County,” Thomas reports. “His selflessness is beyond compare.”

Nixon is held in similar high regard among those at Local 134 who have worked with him in his various capacities at ECA. “I’ve worked with Eric when he was president of the ECA and now that he is the director of the LMCC,” says Don Finn, business manager and financial secretary of Local 134. “He’s not only a great leader but a guy who thinks outside the box and tries to perpetuate the best for our industry.”

Finn praises Nixon for his innovative thinking, noting how well he adapted to new ways of doing business during the pandemic. But as much as Finn appreciates Nixon for his business skills, he respects him even more for how much he cares about the people around him. “Eric is a successful businessman, but he’s even a better person,” Finn says.

Nixon’s humanitarianism is apparent in the charitable events he has developed to raise money through his professional contacts in the real estate and construction industries. One of these events was Broker Boxing, which entailed commercial real estate brokers and construction professionals duking it out in the ring for charity. After hosting that event annually for 10 years, he followed it up with Dancing with the Brokers for five years. Patterned after TV’s “Dancing with the Stars,” the event consisted real estate and construction professionals who were paired up with professional dancers. Participants received 50 dancing lessons so that they would be ready to compete for their charities on show night.

“These events were highly attended by people in the real estate/construction industry,” Nixon reports. “We would usually have 1,100 to 1,200 people, I would be the M.C. because I’ve always been comfortable holding a microphone and making people laugh at occasions like that.”

All totaled, these events raised over \$4 million for worthwhile organizations through ticket sales and sponsorships. While COVID-19 forced Nixon to take a

break from large-scale gatherings, he hopes to resume Dancing with the Brokers in the coming year.

Donald J. Schwartz, who worked at Maron as CFO before his retirement, applauds Nixon for his devotion to these charitable efforts. “Eric has a very big heart,” says Schwartz, who worked at Maron for over 47 years and has known Nixon since he was 10 years old. “He’s a champion of many causes and has raised significant amounts of money through the years, through both his personal efforts and resources as well as devoting company resources to those events.”

Schwartz also praises Nixon for his dedication to the industry. “He’s been passionate about it for decades and has devoted much of his personal time to serve on numerous boards and organizations, selflessly giving his knowledge and efforts to advance the interests of the industry.”

Beyond his devotion to the electric industry, Nixon has several intriguing hobbies. He was a ski racer in high school and college and still looks forward to skiing every year. He is also an avid road bike rider, hunter and fisherman. Over the last 12 years, he has spent most of his free time doing something truly unique—photographing and filming wildlife during expeditions in the Arctic, Antarctica, Africa, India and Alaska. He also has done underwater photography in many exotic places, such as Asia and the Caribbean. One of his specialties has been photographing and filming humpback whales and sperm whales.

The quality of the photography is exceptional, with several of Nixon’s photographs being published in books. “It’s a huge passion for me,” he says.

Nixon spends most of his free time in Montana, where he has a home and enjoys his recreational pursuits. He has two children. His daughter, Lianna Nixon, works on documentaries related to climate, conservation and wildlife; she also guides photography trips to the Arctic. His son, Dylan, is newer to the workforce, currently working for a start-up company in Colorado.

As he prepares to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, Nixon reflects on the many advantages that being part of the Electric Association provides. “Maron has benefited from EA’s ongoing education program, which many of our team members have participated in,” he says. “Some

of my colleagues participate and find value in other subcommittees of the EA as well.”

However, Nixon observes that the greatest value of the EA comes from the networking opportunities that allows him to interact with people from various parts of the industry—i.e., engineers, suppliers, manufacturers and competitors.

“As a younger man, I never saw the full value of participating in associations, but I eventually learned that no one makes it on their own in this business,” he says. “It takes relationships with people from all disciplines of the electrical construction industry, even our competitors. It’s very rewarding to work with them in collaboration to improve the industry.”

Hall of Fame Inductee

Brad Selby

If you recite all the places that Brad Selby has worked during his 27-year career with Consolidated Electric Distributors (CED), it starts to sound like the lyrics from that Johnny Cash classic, “I’ve Been Everywhere.” In his first decade with the company, he had positions in: Little Rock; Memphis; Tupelo, Mississippi; Nashville; Gainesville, Georgia; and back to Memphis again.

Selby concluded that eventful decade by transferring to Chicago, where he has spent the last 18 years. Based on firsthand experience, he can attest to how special the Chicago electrical industry is. “Having worked in other markets, I can say that the relationships that you develop in Chicago with peers, suppliers, customers and even competitors are unique. Thank goodness for entities like the Electric Association and Lake Michigan Club that provide those opportunities to develop these relationships, which have become so important over the years.”

Selby has been heavily involved in both organizations for many years, currently serving on the board of EA and as chair of the Lake Michigan Club. His commitment to industry organizations as well as his achievements at CED have earned him a spot in the EA Hall of Fame.



Selby started his career with CED shortly after earning an accounting degree at the University of Alabama. A few days after graduation, he reported to CED’s management training program in Little Rock. He took on progressively greater responsibilities with the company, eventually landing in Chicago as district manager. He was promoted to division manager and then to his current position as Midwest region manager, responsible for Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Michigan and Indiana. He also is responsible for a unique business that focuses on elevator construction and maintenance, based in Long Beach, California.

Selby’s time at CED has been marked by several achievements, most notably the revitalization of Efengee Electric Supply, a company that CED acquired in 1988. Efengee was a long-time force in the Chicago marketplace, but by the early 2000s, the division was struggling.

Bob Pell, the current Chicago district manager, credits Selby for doing stellar work in rebuilding the Efengee brand. “By the time Brad arrived in Chicago in November 2003, he was left with a depleted version of the company

we had acquired,” Pell recounts. “The brand had lost its way, but Brad was influential in rebuilding Efengee and regaining confidence from the customer base.”

Selby focused on innovation as a means of rebuilding the brand. “Under Brad’s leadership, we brought real changes to the marketplace, like the multi-compartment wire reel and, even more importantly, the service we created that is known as customer storage,” Pell says. “We were first in the market with that, which has forever changed how contractors procure their materials from electrical distributors.”

These changes have restored Efengee’s reputation and made it a model in the industry. “Over the last 10 or 12 years, we were able to build out a best-in-class logistics and warehousing operation, and a first-rate sales organization,” Selby reports. “I’m proud that a lot of the success we had in Chicago was carried over to some of CED’s other bigger markets throughout the country. People paid attention to what we were doing, and I think that has had a positive impact on the company.”

The success in the Chicago division is even more impressive because it was accomplished with a homegrown team. “I think what I’m most proud of is that we’ve done it by developing our own talent,” Selby says. “In Chicago, we have 100-plus employees, almost all of whom started their career with CED. So, when I think about our impact on the market to become a substantial player and develop our market share, it’s even more impressive that we’ve done it organically with our own people.”

Pell likewise credits the homegrown team as being a great attribute for the company. “We take a lot of pride in being a good distributor for our customer base, a good customer for our vendor/manufacture partners, and a good competitor,” he says. “Those are all attributes that Brad has set forth. Because he recruited so many people out of college, we are widely regarded as a young team, but we’re also very experienced because the tenure and loyalty to him is unmatched.”

Pell contends that Selby has earned this loyalty because of his exceptional skills as a leader. “He’s an incredible thinker, very strategic, and he’s also unbelievably positive—definitely seeing the glass as half full,” Pell says. “He’s the type of person who gets handed an opportunity

and can’t wait to see what he can turn it into as opposed to seeing its blemishes. He’s very determined, extremely tough-minded, but also very genuine. He has the ability to connect with people on many different levels.”

While CED is a large nationwide company, Selby attributes its success to its ability to act like a local business. “CED’s core philosophy is local decision-making, which makes us a cross between a national chain and a local independent,” Selby says. “That’s important in an independent-driven market like Chicago, where there are a lot of local companies owned by families or individuals who have been in business a long time. Our model gives us the flexibility of a local independent while being able to leverage the resources of a national company, which makes us one of the more unique distributors in the market.”

Selby credits a stalwart of the Chicago electrical industry for introducing him to the many networking opportunities in the local market. “A lot of my involvement in the industry starts with one person—and that person is Leo Magrini,” he says.

Magrini was a longtime outside salesperson for Efengee Electric, the company that CED acquired. He is a fellow inductee in the EA Hall of Fame as well as a Gold Medal Award winner. “Leo was adamant about getting me involved in the industry,” Selby recalls. “Early on, he would tell me, ‘Hey, we’re going to this dinner’ or ‘You need to be at this breakfast.’ He understood the market better than anybody and how one generation passes the torch to the next. He passed away two years ago, but I know he would have been blown away that I got this award. He was a great mentor and a great person.”

Selby has used Magrini’s example in mentoring new talent. “I followed his lead,” he says. “As I built out the organization, hiring and developing people, I made sure they understood how important it is to be part of the market. It started with him, and he passed that on to me.”

Selby is married his high school sweetheart, Kiersten, and sees her as a partner in all aspects of his life. “She made this commitment to move with me throughout all of my career development,” he says. “She’s been a great supporter, and though she’s not a part of the business, she’s heavily involved in the industry. She goes to many of the Lake Michigan Club functions, and together

we have a lot of industry friends. She's the center of everything for me."

The center of the Selbys' universe, meanwhile, are their two sons—Trent, 16, and Wes, 15. "They both are football and lacrosse players, so we spend a lot of time supporting their sports activities," Selby says. "I also play a lot of golf, which is true of almost everybody in the industry. And we love to travel."

In the increasingly digital environment that we find ourselves in, Selby sees involvement in the industry organizations as more important than ever. "It's really about facilitating relationship development," he says. "The world is more virtual these days, but I

think that places a premium on in-person networking opportunities."

The COVID-19 pandemic shut down many opportunities for in-person networking, but Selby has seen those opportunities gearing back up. "It's actually gone 100% the other way from what it was two years ago," he says. "The Lake Michigan Club had a great conference in June, and I've noticed a lot of the Electric Association events have been much better attended as well. I think we're seeing a need among people to connect again. There are so many tools that allow us to communicate remotely, but the most meaningful interactions still happen in person."

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Richard Jamerson | ECA President,
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NECA 2022 Convention & Trade Show

The Electrical Contractors' Association of City of Chicago (ECA) is a construction trade association that provides business and labor relations services to nearly 600 electrical contractors in Cook County, Illinois. The Association works with its industry partner, Local Union #134, IBEW to negotiate and administer labor agreements, coordinate apprentice and journeyman level training, as well as promotion of the industry on behalf of these employers. The ECA is also known as the Chicago and Cook County Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA). Currently, 70 signatory firms are members of the Electrical Contractors' Association of City of Chicago (ECA) / Chicago and Cook County Chapter, NECA.

The 2022 NECA National Convention was held October 15 – 18 in Austin, TX. Nearly 60 registrants from the Chicago & Cook County Chapter were able to participate. Highlights of the Convention included several Chapter activities, numerous National NECA events, premier educational programs, top notch guest speakers, a fun town to explore, networking opportunities, among so much more. Listed below are some of those highlights.

Chicago Chapter events:

Friday, October 14th - Outdoor Reception at the Four Seasons Hotel Austin (Chapter hotel).

Monday, October 17th - Chapter Outdoor Reception / Dinner at the Steiner Ranch Steakhouse

Tuesday, October 18th - Pre-Closing Outdoor Reception at the Four Seasons Hotel Austin.

Overall Convention Events:

The Trade Show was held at the Austin Convention Center; the main Convention events were held on-site and at off-site venues.

Saturday, October 15th - The Opening Reception - The Moody Theater - the famed Austin City Limits Live Concert venue - the host for America's longest running music television series, "Austin City Limits." It hosts around 100 concerts a year, and NECA took it over for a night of music, food, drink, and entertainment around every corner.

Sunday, October 16th - The Opening General Session featured inspirational speaker - Travis Mills, Retired U.S. Army Staff Sergeant, founder of Texas Mills Foundation.

Monday, October 17th - General Session featured Emmitt Smith, Hall of Fame NFL Running Back, Entrepreneur.

Tuesday, October 18th - The Closing General Session featured Scott Pelley, Journalist, Anchor, Author.

Tuesday, October 18th - The Closing Event was at the Palmer Events Center. The program featured Carly Pearce, winner of CMA Female Vocalist of the Year

Governor's Session

The NECA Governors voted on By-Law Amendment Proposal I – New Vice President of Integrated Systems Contractors and District 10 Vice President Duties. Also, Charles Fairchild, Fairchild Communication Systems, Inc. was voted in as the new Vice President of Integrated Systems Contractors.

Electrical Construction Innovation Challenge (ECIC)

NECA Student Chapters competed with this year's challenge – create a bid proposal for a Student Center. Iowa State won the overall competition. The NECA IIT Student Chapter placed Third overall in the Video Competition.

Academy of Electrical Contracting

David Hardt, Chairman of the Academy of Electrical Contracting, Hardt Electric, Inc., introduced the new members of the Academy. Fellowship in the Academy of Electrical Contracting is one of the highest honors bestowed upon an individual in the industry. The Academy honors outstanding leaders in the electrical contracting industry, as it preserves and utilizes their wealth of experience and knowledge for the benefit of the industry. These individuals have rendered exceptional service to the industry and the National Electrical Contractors Association. Their service is continued and enhanced through their fellowship in the Academy. This is accomplished through the Academy's Working Group, special papers presented by Fellows, participation in the Annual Meeting and the general camaraderie among Fellows.

NECA PLC Update

Steve Diamond, Malko Communication Services, LLC was recognized for 20 years in the PLC! Eric Nixon,

NECA Governor, Maron Electric Company, was on hand to accept the award on Mr. Diamond's behalf. NECA's Political Leadership Council (PLC) recognizes and provides greater involvement for members whose personal commitment to NECA's political action program was at the maximum allowed - \$5,000 per year. The PLC helps integrate political action and member involvement to achieve legislative results. It is open to all NECA members and chapters and helps NECA make an ever-stronger impact on the national legislative landscape.

Safety Round Table

Attendees were updated on the most recent OSHA statistics concerning safety on the jobsite, among other areas.

ELECTRI Sessions

Attendees were given a review of ELECTRI activities, as well as an introduction to Future Workforce Development programming. ELECTRI International – The Foundation for Electrical Contractors (ELECTRI) was established in 1989 by the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), the voice of the \$160 billion electrical construction industry responsible for lighting, power, communication and low-voltage, energy efficient and sustainable systems in buildings and communities across the United States. ELECTRI International works to help electrical contractors meet today's demands and tomorrow's challenges by funding, conducting,

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coordinating and transforming research results into meaningful, useful educational and consulting programs and practical publications. On the international scene, the Foundation conducts seminars, briefings and studies on cross-border relationships to encourage business and cultural exchanges among contractors.

Business Development Round Table

Group discussions with contractors and NECA Premier Partners on challenges in the industry – supply chain issues, as well as innovations, technology, data products to advance the industry.

Powering Chicago - 3M Tour in Austin

Powering Chicago went on the 3M Tour and conducted a number of contractor interviews. The “Power of Better” Powering Chicago YouTube Series premiered on October 17th! The Labor Management Cooperation Committee of Chicago (LMCC Chicago) works to promote the unionized electrical construction Industry in Chicago and throughout Cook County, Illinois. The LMCC formally trademarked Powering Chicago as it’s public identity, and is now completing year three after re-branding and

launching a major marketing strategy to grow union market share in Cook County. Powering Chicago’s mantra of “better construction, better careers and better communities” has provided the framework to showcase our superior construction, quality career opportunities, and extensive charitable work our members do.

We thank all of the Chapter attendees for their participation with this year’s NECA Convention. We look forward to next year’s Convention, which is to be held on September 29 – October 2 in Philadelphia!

The above information is a sampling of the year-round activities of the Association. It is through the participation of our member volunteers that has kept the Association on the forefront of the industry. We hope that all signatory contractors within the Cook County area will make the commitment to the industry and join our Association. Please contact the ECA office at: (708) 531-0022 or visit us on Facebook or on our website at: www.ecachicago.com for membership information, as well as information regarding Chapter and NECA programming. ●

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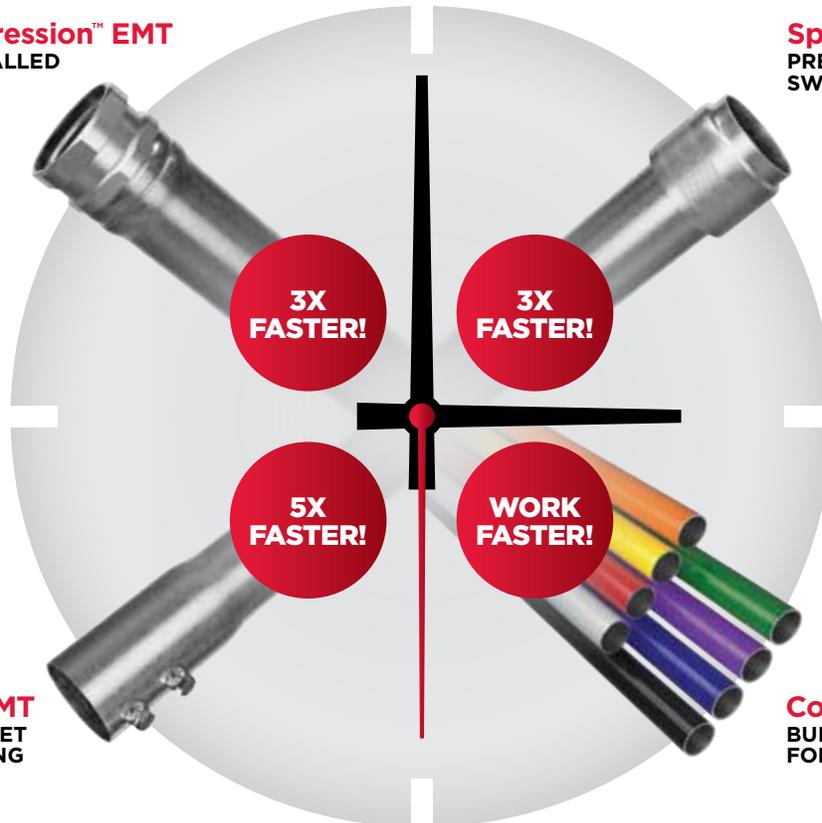
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