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Building Contractors  
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With 100 years of history, the Building Contractors Association champions northeast Indiana's commercial construction industry to prepare it for the future.

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article by Tammy Davis • photography by Jeffrey Crane & Steve Vorderman

**T**he commercial construction industry usually receives little fanfare, despite the fact that modern society depends on it so heavily. Lori Harvey, executive director of Building Contractors Association of Northeast Indiana (BCA), would like to change that. "Commercial contractors build our churches, hospitals, schools, office buildings and infrastructure," says Harvey. "Many people don't really understand the commercial side of construction and what it entails. The AFL-CIO identifies eighteen different trades associated with commercial construction."

BCA, which represents more than 90 contractors in the area, has focused on supporting and promoting the local commercial construction industry since its inception in 1917. Unlike other





(L-R) BCA Board of Directors: Eric Pedersen, John Brogan, David Michael, Mark Veerkamp, Phil Miller, Greg Lynch, Ron Roberts, Brad Smith, Jake Fettes, Mark Warsco, Eric Olson, Devon Kirk, Brandon Bushee and Gary Voirol



Andrea Yoder, administrative assistant, Lori Harvey, executive director and Stefanie Custer, administrative coordinator

**"To survive 100 years, the association has had to evolve and change, just like the industry it serves..."**  
-Lori Harvey

associations that usually function as local or state chapters of a national organization, BCA remains completely independent. That means 100 percent of its resources are focused on northeast Indiana's eleven counties.

Those resources – financial, human and otherwise – support five key areas designed not only to promote the industry, but also to better it. Since its early years, BCA has strongly emphasized safety awareness and training. Its dedicated Safety Committee, comprised of full-time safety directors from local companies, puts together a robust program of events. They answer questions from members, facilitate peer-to-peer discussions and regularly offer OSHA compliance and other safety-related courses.

According to Steve Goodman of Mosaic Building Solutions and BCA

Centennial Committee Chairman, the organization is committed to "push the bar higher in terms of instilling a stronger safety culture on area construction jobsites. Workers are the most precious resources we have. Every worker should be able to go home at night to his family."

BCA places similar emphasis on promoting the region's economic development. Its Economic Development Committee works together with the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, as well as the local economic development organizations (LEDOs) that represent northeast Indiana's eleven counties. to network and learn about the area's challenges and opportunities. The group raises funds to support these organizations' efforts to attract and retain business; to date, BCA has invested more than \$500,000 in the region.

Ultimately, BCA hopes to create a business-friendly environment which attracts investment to the area. Accordingly, the organization has long advocated for a one-stop-shop permitting system in conjunction with local planning departments. The Government Affairs Committee maintains relationships with northeast Indiana legislators on behalf of BCA members to voice support for, or opposition to, proposed issues. Members work regularly with local elected officials and agency heads on matters of importance to the local industry. To stay true to its local focus, BCA neither employs professional lobbyists nor maintains a presence in the state capital.

As BCA looks to the future, the most important item on its agenda is bringing up the next generation of the industry's workforce. There is a dire need, says Harvey, for more

workers to enter the trades. The size of the trained labor force is already a driving factor in determining construction costs, which will continue to rise as qualified tradespeople and laborers become more scarce.

To attract more workers, BCA has entered a formal partnership with Build Your Future Indiana, a collaboration of employers and industry associations facilitated by the Indiana Construction Roundtable Foundation, a 501-C-3 non-profit association. Together, they will work to make career and technical education a higher priority in schools. They will also offer additional outreach to ensure area youth are aware of the challenging, high-paying careers available in the commercial construction industry.

For fifteen years, BCA has presented its annual Construction Career

Academy. The program offers a two-day, in-depth look into twelve different construction trades to 60 of northeast Indiana's top building trades high school students. "This program has a proven track record of bridging the gap from the students' classrooms to our members' jobsites," says Harvey, "but there is much more that we could be doing."

Harvey also wants to collaborate with guidance counselors in area high schools to present training in the trades as a viable alternative to attending college. She wants to ensure students understand that vocational training can also offer a path to success, particularly for those who may not thrive in a classroom setting. "Not everyone is suited for a college degree or the classroom," says Harvey. "Construction is something best learned with your hands, not in a book."

Goodman adds, "It's hard work, but this is an exciting industry. You can actually see and touch your accomplishments."

None of the work undertaken by members of BCA is done for its own sake. "It's all about the people," says Harvey, "the generations of construction families that comprise the strong foundation of BCA. We have a very strong group of professionals in this community, and we're here for them."

Harvey deliberately uses the word "professionals" when referring to BCA members. Although the organization originally included only contractors, over time it has grown to include material suppliers, architects, engineers and professional service providers such as banks, insurance agencies, CPAs and attorneys.



BCA Young Professionals, keeping the legacy moving forward

“To survive 100 years, the association has had to evolve and change, just like the industry it serves has had to evolve and change,” explains Harvey. “It takes more than a contractor to build a building.”

Today, BCA works to connect general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, service providers and construction users. It wants to help build solid relationships that continue to raise the bar for the quality commercial construction on which northeast Indiana has built its reputation. Members meet regularly to discuss industry issues and look for solutions.

“Even though many of us are competitors, we’re all friends,” says Goodman. “We sit together and collaborate.”

In addition to its regular agenda of networking events, educational

programs, discussion forums and annual awards programs, BCA will bring members together Sept. 22 to celebrate its 100th year of operation. The Centennial Jubilee will take place in the Embassy Theatre — a building erected by BCA’s first president and recently renovated by a current member contractor — and will feature a casino night, fireworks and refreshments.

As the community celebrates a century of the important work BCA has done on behalf of the commercial construction industry, Harvey and Goodman hope people will look ahead rather than behind.

“It’s not about yesterday or today,” stresses Goodman. “It’s about tomorrow. We’re here for the future.”



### BUILDING CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION OF NORTHEAST INDIANA

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**Executive director:** Lori Harvey

**Number of members:** 280, including 94 contractor members

**Years in business:** 100 years; founded in 1917

**Products & services:** BCA is a nonprofit trade association that dedicates 100 percent of its work and revenues to the commercial construction industry of northeast Indiana. Members are general and specialty contractors, both merit shop and organized, architects and engineers, material suppliers and professional service providers, all of whom work together to address issues of common concern to the industry.

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Building Contractors Association of Northeast Indiana

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