



NAED Education & Research Foundation's
40TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS BANQUET

SHERATON CHICAGO HOTEL & TOWERS, CHICAGO, IL

May 18, 2010

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NAED Education & Research Foundation's 40TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS BANQUET

SHERATON CHICAGO HOTEL & TOWERS, CHICAGO, IL

May 18, 2010

-
- 6:00 Cocktail Reception/tED Cover Photos
 - 6:45 Welcome by Burt Schraga, NAED chair, 2009-2010
 - 6:50 Dinner served
 - 7:30 Presentation of Foundation Legacy Awards
Complete list of recipients begins on page 2
 - 8:00 Presentation of NAED Annual Awards
Complete list of recipients begins on page 8
 - 8:30 Presentation of 2010-2011 NAED chair, Jack Henderson
 - 8:45-10:00 Featured entertainment: The Blooze Brothers
-

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Celebrating four Decades of LEARNING

In recognition of the NAED Education & Research Foundation's 40th anniversary, 10 receive the Foundation Legacy Award.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the NAED Education & Research Foundation. To celebrate this milestone, NAED is recognizing 10 of the most influential people in the Foundation's history with the Foundation Legacy Award.

The following individuals are being recognized for their contribution to the industry-specific education and training that truly shaped the Foundation.

"What this group of people accomplished in the past 40 years—not just for the Foundation, but for the industry as a whole—is immeasurable," said Michelle McNamara, vice president of NAED and executive director of the Foundation. "It was because of the vision of these individuals that the foundation exists as it does today—offering best-in-class industry-specific training that cannot be found anywhere else.

"We honor these industry leaders for continuing to make the goals of the Foundation a priority in their companies and for inspiring others to carry on their legacies. It is a privilege to honor these leaders and continue their work to make the channel stronger," added McNamara.

• **George Adams Jr.**, president and CEO, Electric Supply Inc., Tampa, Fla.

Among his contributions: Adams



was instrumental in the development of the Certified Electrical Professional (CEP) industry certification program and the first chair of the CEP governing council. The first group of CEPs was announced in August 2009 and the second in March of this year. To date, 106 members of the electrical distribution channel have been certified.

• **Edward Anixter** (*dec.*; Englewood Electrical Supply, Chicago). The award

to be accepted by his son, Steve Anixter, president, Advance Electrical Supply, Chicago.

Among his contributions: As one of the founding fathers of the Foundation, Anixter is remembered as a driving force for ongoing education and for moving the industry toward more professional management. Said Steve Anixter, "He loved the industry; it was something he devoted his life to, and he was always looking for ways to give back. When he had the opportunity to come up with a vehicle to give back, I'm sure he jumped at the chance."



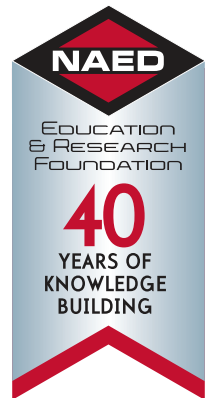
• **Bill Elliott**, president, Elliott Electric Supply, Nacogdoches, Texas.



Among his contributions: As Foundation chair from 2003-2004, Elliott led efforts to create an endowment fund for the Channel Advantage Partnership (CAP). During his term as chair, the Foundation raised more than \$6 million worth of commitments. Today that figure stands at more than \$8 million.

• **Arthur Griswold**, inside/outside sales, Northeast Electrical Distributors (a unit of Sonepar), Salem, N.H.

Among his contributions: In January





1990, Griswold was one of the first 26 people to earn EPEC Gold status. He has served as an EPEC reviewer ever since and was instrumental in the 2009 EPEC upgrade and online development.

• **Robert Lemman**, chairman, North Coast Electric, Seattle.

Among his contributions: Lemman teamed up with Jim Newton (another Legacy Award recipient) to develop and write EPEC—a process that took several years. During his term as NAED chair from 1980-1981, he took personal responsibility for the success of the offering—noting that he knew NAED “bet the farm on EPEC and luckily it was a winner.”



• **Arthur Loeb** (*dec.*; Loeb Electric Supply, Columbus, Ohio). The award to be



accepted by his son, Charles “Skip” Loeb, president, Loeb Electric Supply.

Among his contributions: Loeb was elected the first president and chair of the Foundation, serving from 1969-1970. In 1969, under his leadership, the Foundation began the search for an educational coordinator and went to work to raise funds.

• **James Newton Sr., ret.**, Oakes Electric (now Horizon Solutions), Holyoke, Mass.



Among his contributions: Newton is considered to be instrumental in the conception, development, and production of EPEC. In addition, Newton founded Sales Tech, a company that trained hundreds of electrical distributor inside and outside sales reps on sales basics.

• **Walter Norton Sr.**, CEO, Norton Electric Wholesale, Los Angeles.



Among his contributions: Norton helped spearhead the development of the Foundation. An advocate for ongoing education, he also recognized the need to perform various studies about the business aspects of running a distributorship and the value to the industry of disseminating that information.

• **Thomas Schmid** (*dec.*; Crescent Electric Supply, East Dubuque, Ill). The award to be accepted by his son, Dick Schmid, senior vice president, Crescent Electric Supply.

Among his contributions: As one of the founding fathers of the education foundation, Schmid is remembered as a man who “always believed that a well-rounded education set the foundation and the life course for an individual,” said Dick Schmid.

SE STATE ELECTRIC SUPPLY COMPANY

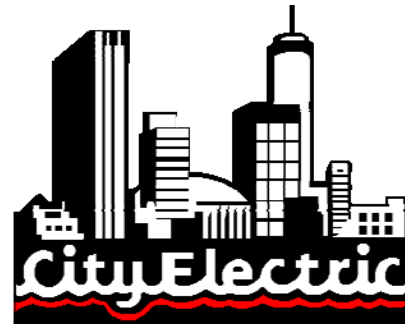
Molding good minds into GREAT minds.

We would like to thank the NAED Education & Research Foundation for providing us with a forum for best practices, outstanding training tools and excellent support staff.

State Electric Supply has actively participated in the Education & Development Council since 1994, and several of our employees have successfully completed NAED training programs.

With over 100 EDGE graduates, 34 have achieved EPEC Bronze, 21 EPEC Silver and 15 wear the honor of EPEC Gold. We are also proud of our 20 VDV grads, the 49 participants in UED/UID, and our recent CEP's.

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City Electric Company has been proudly serving the residential, commercial and industrial markets of Central and Northern New York with an educated and knowledgeable STAFF since 1919.



"In an environment where technical knowledge is the true lifeblood of the company, as it is with the electrical distribution industry, continuing education was paramount both for the company and the individual," he added.

• **Chuck Steiner**, former CEO of Branch Electric Supply (now Rexel), Upper Marlboro, Md.



Among his contributions: Steiner served as Foundation chair and on the Foundation board.

He is also recognized for developing the distribution school-to-work initiative that he shared with the association and created the Education Development Council (EDC), formerly known as the Industry Education Council (IEC). ■

About the Foundation

Formally established in 1969, the mission of the NAED Education & Research Foundation is to further the professional growth and career development of the thousands of people who work in the electrical industry. Over the past decade, more than 45,000 individuals have been impacted by the NAED Education & Research Foundation's multitude of educational programs, thanks to the annual contributions of electrical distributors and manufacturers.

Offerings include:

- **The NAED Learning Center (NLC)** is a web-based learning management system that provides a central location for employee training and development in the electrical distribution industry. The NLC offers online NAED industry-specific courses, manufacturer product training courses, and a range of soft- and business-skills courses.

- **The Channel Advantage Initiative** is composed of the Channel Advantage Partnership (CAP) Council and CAP Associates. Founded in 2004, the Council meets twice per year with regular communications to fund, select, coordinate, and monitor critical research and development of educational programs. Founded in 2006, the Associates meet annually to discuss industry issues and work together to develop research topics.

- The wide range of **training courses and products** offered by the Foundation include EDGE and EPEC, OSHA safety courses, Profit Talk products, and more.

Learn more about the Foundation at naed.org.

Congratulations to the NAED Education and Research Foundation from The Hite Company, as you mark your 40th year of educational excellence!

Thank you for your role in training and educating the electrical industry.

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Honorary Life Award

RECIPIENTS

This award recognizes retiring individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the channel.

• **William Genne**, worldwide distribution manager (ret.) of Eaton/Cutler-Hammer, actively supported and promoted the electrical distribution channel.



An active member of NAED for more than 25 years, he spent 45 years (minus a stint in the U.S. Air Force) in the electri-

cal distribution industry and was a major contributor in helping to bring manufacturers and distributors more closely together for the good of the overall industry.

He was nominated by Kenneth Narod, segment director-U.S. Government, Eaton.

• **Tom Latanision** is chairman of the board at Crescent Electric Supply, East

Dubuque, Ill. (he retires in June after 10 years in that position) and serves on the board of directors at Omni Cable. Prior to joining Crescent, he worked at Thomas & Betts until retiring in 1999.



Latanision became active with NAED in the 1970s, initially as a member of the Utility Committee and later serving on the Industrial Automation/High Tech Committee. In 1990, he and a group of manufacturing colleagues formed the Manufacturers Committee; Latanision served as its first chair for six years. In 1992, he received NAED's Award of Merit.

He was nominated by Tom Naber, president and CEO of NAED.

• **John McBride** is a former chairman and CEO of Don Blackburn & Company, Livonia, Mich., and an NAED member for 30



years. McBride was very active in his support of and participation in the association—including serving on the regional council, on the board of directors,

and as Central Region vice president prior to its merger with the Southern Region. He was also chair of the Advocacy Committee Customer Subcommittee and served on the Government Affairs Committee.

He was nominated by Peter de Steiger, CEO of Raymond de Steiger Inc., Sterling Heights, Mich.

• **Charles "Chuck" Steiner**, former CEO of Branch Electric, Upper Marlboro, Md. (now a division of Rexel), currently serves on the Channel Advantage Partnership (CAP) Council.



A member of NAED since 1973, Steiner served as chair of the Education & Research Foundation and on a number of NAED boards and committees. In addition he developed a distribution school-to-work initiative that he shared with the association.

In 2000 he received NAED's Arthur W. Hooper Award and in 1984 was presented with the Distinguished Service Award.

He was nominated by Burt Schraga, CEO, Bell Electrical Supply, Santa Clara, Calif. ■

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Education & Research Foundation
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Annual Award RECIPIENTS

NAED's Annual Awards recognize those who have made an outstanding contribution to the channel.



• **NAED's Distributor Distinguished Service Award** recognizes a distributor for outstanding and dedicated service to NAED and the electrical distribution industry. This year, the honor goes to Tammy Miller, CEO of Fargo, North Dakota-headquartered Border States Electric (BSE).

"It is a real honor to receive this recognition from NAED," said Miller. "When Burt Schraga called to tell me I had been selected to receive the award, my first reaction was, 'Why me?' Burt responded by reading a list of all the committees, task forces, boards, etc., that I had served on."

In fact, Miller's record of service with NAED is quite extensive. In addition to her terms on a number of the association's boards, councils, and committees—including serving as the SPA Distributor Task Force chair and two terms as the Finance Committee chair—Miller holds the distinction of being the first female chair of NAED (she served from 2008-2009).

"Never had I sat back and thought about it all," she explained. "It never seemed like a lot because I have always been passionate about our business, our association, and volunteering. I am always interested in doing what I can to enhance our industry, and the assignments have always been fun."

Miller singled out her year as chair—which coincided with NAED's 100th anniversary—as one of her proudest industry accomplishments. "It was a very fun and special time for the industry and for me personally," she said. "I hope I serve as a role model to inspire more women to pursue careers in our industry and become more active in our association."

Her accomplishments as CEO of BSE are equally as impressive. She has led the company through big moments of convergence that include blending acquired companies into BSE's company culture and managing the growing pains associated with standing at the helm of a 100% employee-owned company—all while making a point of nurturing the communities in which the company has flourished.

"Service to the community and to others is one of the guiding principles I live by and one of our values at Border States," said Miller. "Growing up, my parents were fine role models. Whenever something was going on in our small community, they were and continue to be some of the first to volunteer their time and talent.

"Tammy is an incredibly skilled and tireless leader for our company and has added that same great value with her service to our industry. I'm particularly proud of the fact that she was the first female chair of NAED. She is one of the finest people and leaders I have ever had the privilege to be associated with."—GARY MILLER, PRESIDENT

"Tammy has the unique leadership quality to challenge you to become better and improve yourself in everything you do. She has brought those same qualities to the industry with her leadership roles in NAED. She understands the major issues facing our industry and challenges us to not sit idly by, but rather to work together and face them head on."—BRIAN BECKER, VICE PRESIDENT/FINANCE

"Tammy is a role model for many. She is well respected for her dedication to the industry, our company, and our employee-owners. She displays an energy that is just plain contagious and encourages others around her to create and implement new and innovative ideas to continuously improve our industry and our company."—SHERRI SANDVIG, VICE PRESIDENT/HUMAN RESOURCES

"Tammy has made it known that there is a place in our industry for women, and she is an excellent role model. I value her friendship and believe in her leadership and where she is leading our company into the future. Her goal is to keep this company growing profitably and maintain the ESOP intact so that all employees can benefit from it."—GREG THRALL, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT/OPERATIONS AND IT

"I have had many great volunteer experiences with NAED," she continued. "I am proud to have had the opportunities and pleased that I have been able to give back to this great industry and our association."

Undoubtedly, Miller's contributions have made both NAED and the electrical industry a better place for all involved, but she is quick to point out that the benefits are not one-sided.

"My association with NAED and the relationships I have cultivated at association meetings have provided great value—not only from a training, vendor relationship, and networking standpoint, but also because it has provided great visibility for me and for Border States," she said, noting that several of the company's recent, large acquisitions have been a result of the relationships fostered at NAED events.

"On a personal note, serving on NAED task forces, committees, and boards has broadened my industry knowledge and given me the opportunity to meet and network with many industry leaders," she added. "And serving as chair provided me with a great opportunity to polish some of my public speaking and facilitation skills."

"Finally, and probably most importantly, my husband, Craig, and I have made many friends at NAED meetings; many of these friendships will last a lifetime," she added.



• **NAED's Associate Service Award of Merit** is presented to an individual associated with an electrical manufacturing firm who has demonstrated consistent promotion and support for the tenets and goals of NAED. This year, that person is Phil Barrios, senior director of corporate marketing and e-business at Hubbell Incorporated, who is being recognized for his leadership on the IDEA board of directors and participation at the National Electrical Leadership Summit.

As an associate member in a variety of positions with Hubbell Incorporated for the past 30 years, Barrios noted that his exposure to NAED occurred through regional, marketing, and annual meeting events and from working on several task forces for NAED and NEMA. "However, it wasn't until the collaborative formation of IDEA by NAED and NEMA that a more intimate relationship with the industry evolved," he explained.

"NAED is a great venue to meet our trading partners and solicit what we are doing right, what would make us a better company to do business with, and how we can work together to improve the channel," said Barrios. "This common ground became the mission under which IDEA was formed, and hence why Hubbell Incorporated and many others became charter members—we shared the vision."

For Barrios, who described IDEA as "a change agent and catalyst to the future," it's a very passionate vision. "The success or failure of IDEA is a barometer of our industry's ability to evolve and adapt to a new era of electronic commerce. Its mission encompassed two of my passions: business processes improvement and technology utilization. It began building the foundation for future e-commerce through development of EDI standards, Internet commerce transactions, crossing over the dot-bomb era, and enabling online self-service options to data synchronization through the first Industry Data Warehouse (IDW)."

The current effort in e-commerce, he explained, was akin to past standards de-

"Phil has been one of those guys in the industry who truly understands the needs of distributors from an operational efficiency perspective. He understands the value of the initiatives we work on as partners and how they can benefit the industry. He has a good grasp on how those initiatives impact the bottom line for both vendors and distributors."—RON SCHLADER, VICE PRESIDENT/OPERATIONS AND QUALITY, CRESCENT ELECTRIC SUPPLY, EAST DUBUQUE, ILL.

"Phil has devoted much of his time advancing the objectives of NAED through his active support of IDEA standards in his role as chair and member of its board. We congratulate Phil on receiving the NAED Associate Service Award of Merit. It is well deserved."—TIM POWERS, CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT, AND CEO, HUBBELL INCORPORATED

"Phil has helped make Hubbell Incorporated a leader in e-commerce and devoted much of his time in the past few years to advancing IDEA standards and the use of the Industry Data Warehouse by distributors and manufacturers alike. We at Hubbell Incorporated are proud of Phil and his accomplishment as the recipient of NAED's Associate Service Award of Merit."—BOB MURPHY, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/MARKETING AND SALES, HUBBELL INCORPORATED

velopment for another example, one that “assured that the width of train tracks were consistent from coast to coast,” so commerce (trains) could ride throughout the system without adjustment, restriction, or delay. “The simple proposition was to have one set of industry standards for e-commerce, which could lower the cost of entry and improve the speed, accuracy, and quality of the transactions throughout the supply chain, which ultimately improves profitability,” he said.

And most satisfying about working in this industry? “Engaging in the journey, not just taking a trip,” said Barrios. “Our predecessors’ vision, the founders of the organizations like NAED, NEMA, EFC, IDEA, and others, were clearly focused on making a better, stronger channel, and the selfless contribution of volunteers who could spend their time doing other things...are my heroes. Seeing a task completed that enables the next generation to take the baton and continue the journey and having the opportunity to play a role in building that future has been my greatest satisfaction.”

Asked about his feelings about receiving this award, Barrios described it as both an honor and very humbling.

“As much as I appreciate being selected for this prestigious award, I see it as a reflection of NAED’s recognition for the results of many, not just one person,” he said. “The support I receive from [Hubbell Incorporated’s] management comes from the top. Tim Powers, our chairman, president, and CEO, not only served as chair of IDEA, but fully supports these initiatives and enables me to continue service to the industry.”

• **NAED’s Industry Award of Merit** recognizes an associate company that has been exceptionally active in promoting, supporting, and/or improving the electrical distribution channel—a description that typifies Eaton’s dedication to the electrical distribution industry.



“This award affirms our strong partnership with NAED and the electrical industry and recognizes Eaton for its contributions and overall support of NAED,” said Jerry Whitaker, president of the firm’s Americas Region. “It also validates the emphasis and strategic importance we place on the channel, the investment we make in resources to drive relationships, and the active participation in NAED and other industry organizations and events.”

Eaton’s promotion and support of the channel include membership in NAED’s Education & Research Foundation and CAP Council, meeting sponsorship, and participation in various task forces and the NAED Learning Center. Eaton is also an IDEA founding member and shareholder.

According to Whitaker, NAED provides the platform and overall programs for manufacturers and distributors to openly discuss and find solutions to improve operating efficiencies and increase sales that are mutually beneficial to both distributors and manufacturers.

“It provides a vehicle to foster relationships outside of the normal day-to-day grind and gives both manufacturers and electrical distributors an opportunity to interface with senior management personnel who may not be able to get to each location as much as they would like,” he noted, adding that the business and personal relationships established through NAED are long lasting and imperative to Eaton’s success in the industry.

He added that NAED also provides a forum for addressing industry-wide challenges such as SPAs and counterfeiting and provides visibility via the sponsorship program. “It also helps us attract potential partners that value our support of the organization and provides educational opportunities on topics important to the membership, which helps us be a better partner,” he noted. ■

“Our relationship with Eaton extends far beyond everyday business transactions. They are a trusted partner, committed to the pursuit of excellence with respect to leadership, professionalism, and quality. For the past 90 years, Eaton has been enhancing the manner in which its products and services are delivered, but it is the overall integrity of its management team and staff that has facilitated the transition from a parts supplier to a multinational electrical manufacturer.”

—GASHAW ABEBE, VICE PRESIDENT OF SUPPLIER RELATIONS, WESCO

“We have represented Eaton exclusively for more than 38 years and it has been a mutually profitable partnership. Eaton respects the role distribution plays in lowering cost and bringing value to our customers. It is an innovative American company that believes in quality and fair dealing. What comes to mind is integrity. Once all of the facts are understood, Eaton does the right thing, even when it hurts.”

—BILL ELLIOTT, PRESIDENT, ELLIOTT ELECTRIC SUPPLY, NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

A close-up portrait of Mike Barker, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair and glasses. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a patterned orange tie. He has a slight smile and is looking directly at the camera. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with some blue and yellow elements.

The Journey of a LIFETIME

Mike Barker's entry into electrical distribution may have been serendipitous, but it's his skill and passion for the industry that have earned him NAED's highest honor: The Arthur W. Hooper Award.

Story by Misty Byers

PHOTOS BY TERRY FARMER

Nearly 40 years ago, when Mike Barker, president and COO of Springfield Electric Supply in Springfield, Ill.—then a newly married senior at Illinois State University—walked into a Springfield career fair, he wasn't looking for a job in the electrical distribution industry; he was just looking for a job.

"My wife, Sandy, and I had just gotten married, and I was getting motivated to start job hunting. In other words, Sandy was starting to ask when I'd start looking for work," laughed Barker. "Finding Springfield Electric was a complete instance of serendipity. I went into that fair focused on talking to the larger companies, but ended up sitting down with Bill Schnirring."

Schnirring, currently chairman of Springfield Electric, was president at the time. For Barker, the chance encounter was life changing. "People talk about winning the lottery, but my lottery win was running into Bill that day," said Barker. "I was very impressed by him. There was a strong sense that he was interested in and caring about people. He was also very confident in the growth opportunities in the company. It was just a great connection."

Barker was offered the position of manager of the lighting showroom at Springfield Electric's Bloomington, Ill., branch shortly after that. "I didn't have a clue about the electrical distribution business," Barker admitted. "But talking with Bill gave me the idea that it was a people business, and that appealed to me. I just felt like it was the right thing for me. I was right then, and I still feel the same today."

FROM THERE TO HERE

While chance may have been what opened the door to electrical distribution for Barker, it was more than fate that brought him to where he is today.

"I'm a person who tries to prepare so that I can be in a position to take advantage of opportunities as they come," said Barker. "I've been fortunate, but part of it is preparation. We have a saying around the company; when people ask, 'How do I get myself in a position to be considered for a position with greater responsibility?' my response is always, 'First do a great job in the job you are in.'"

"I am very proud of Mike and where he is today," said Schnirring. "He never walked on anybody's back to get here. He just did it. We gave him a job and he did it—and did it with excellent interpersonal skills and caring for the people who worked for him."

"Mike is one of those amazing individuals in our industry who is a nonfamily member chosen to lead a family-owned business," said Tom Cloud, who recently retired from the position of CEO at United Electric Supply in New Castle, Del. "The Schnirring family recognized Mike's talents early in his career. He possesses a natural leadership style. He is modest, is low key, and fits well into a management team. He studies the facts and shows a self-assured style with an absence of ego."

"Prior to my joining Springfield Electric in 2006, someone described Mike as a 'man of integrity,'" said Nikki Baker, vice president of human resources and development at Springfield Electric. "I have had the opportunity to witness Mike's commitment to doing what is right. As president, he sets the mark for all who work here. He sees the big picture and balances the needs of the individual and the company. He leads by example. He recognizes and draws out the talent in others. He walks his talk."

"One of Mike's most admirable qualities is his foresight and vision as a businessman and leader," said Bill Snyder, vice president of channel development at Schneider Electric, whose professional relationship with Barker extends back nearly 22 years. "Mike has led Springfield Electric into new opportunities and markets—

Did you know?

Most people in the electrical channel who know Mike Barker know his wife, Sandy, whom he married in 1970. They probably also know he has three children (a daughter, Abby, and two sons, Jed and Seth), and that he's a lifelong resident of Illinois.

Those closer to him may even know that he's an avid cyclist, who logs about 2,000 miles a year—and once biked across the state of Illinois for charity.

There are even some—though perhaps fewer—who can attest to his claim of being a self-declared "1960s rock nerd."

"Mike's interest in '60s music reflects his analytical panache for details," said Nikki Baker, vice president of human resources and development at Springfield Electric. "He frequently can name that tune in one note along with the musicians, year, and some other quirky details.

"He probably knows more details about the Beatles than they do," she added with a laugh. "He has a picture of Abbey Road—not the album, the actual road—on the bulletin board behind his desk. He also knows not only the first, but also the second song the Beatles sang for their Ed Sullivan appearance—and the songwriter."

But almost nobody knows this one thing about Mike Barker: He is the drummer in a band. A rock band.

"I played drums in a rock band in high school and college," Barker revealed. "After college we took a 30-year break, and now my bandmates and I get together every so often."

While Barker refused to disclose the name of the band, he did say that its speciality is '60s and '70s rock, and that the group plays the occasional gig in his hometown. —M.B.



Alan Baum, vice president, marketing; Mike Barker; and Nikki Baker, vice president, human resources and professional development

some that might not have been quite so traditional. He also has really good insight into the manufacturer business model. There's almost a 'we/they' relationship between some distributors and suppliers, but in the case of Springfield Electric and its relationship with us, the goal is to grow both businesses: theirs and ours.

"Another notable thing about Mike is how he personally engages with his customers and suppliers. He doesn't sit in his office and issue edicts or commands and expect his people to do the work—Mike works for a living," Snyder said, laughing. "When you have someone who knows the business, is personally engaged, and has a lot of foresight and vision, you have a solid businessman and leader—and that's how I would describe Mike."

Alan Baum, vice president of marketing at Springfield Electric, has known Barker for more than 40 years and calls him a "great husband, father, grandfather, and friend who is both honest and sincere.

"Mike has a unique 'hands-on' style, without coming across as a micro-manager," said Baum. "He is very down to

"I am very proud of Mike and where he is today. We gave him a job and he did it—and did it with excellent interpersonal skills and caring for the people who worked for him."

— BILL SCHNIRRING, SPRINGFIELD ELECTRIC

earth and is never afraid to lend a hand—whether it's helping with branch physical inventories or riding along with one of our late-night delivery drivers as we initiate a new logistical interbranch transfer system. He's always the first to volunteer to help at an upcoming associate appreciation cookout or participate in a long-standing Springfield Electric tradition—a company-sponsored holiday shopping event where gifts of a more practical nature (such as clothing, shoes, and food) are purchased and then distributed to families in the community that are less fortunate. This company has always had great leadership, and it certainly continues today under Mike's tenure."

"Mike is respected by everyone," added Schnirring. "As a person in charge, you are not always going to make a decision that is going to be 100% well received; but those who work with Mike respect him because he is fair, communicates well, and is very open.

"A few years back," continued Schnirring, "when I was grooming someone to take on some of my responsibilities, there were several candidates, all of whom were well qualified, but I found Mike to have the best balance of understanding the business and handling people."

A ROAD BEST TRAVELED

While rising through the ranks at Springfield Electric (in addition to his starting position as lighting showroom manager, he has served as manager of the consumer products division, marketing manager, vice president of marketing, and executive vice president), Barker was an active participant in NAED, dedicating both time and energy to the betterment of the association and the channel.

"I don't know of anyone who has done more for this industry," said Schnirring. "There are certainly many people who have done a lot, but I think Mike has done as much as anyone in the past 10 years or so to serve both the industry and NAED."

In fact, Barker recalled that it was at an NAED meeting when he first realized the full extent of what the industry meant to him.

"In 1977 I attended my first NAED meeting—the annual meeting in Chicago," Barker said. "I remember sitting in the general session listening to [then NAED Exec-



From left: Paul Piphus, lead counter sales associate; Mark Barthel, vice president, sales; Mike Barker; Dan Dungan, senior vice president; and Darren Schulze, Springfield branch manager

utive Director] Art Hooper talk about the strength of electrical distributors—he pronounced it ‘distribu-TORS’—and I started to realize that I had gotten into something more significant than maybe I thought. It was a kind of ‘ah-ha’ moment.”

Barker also recalled some of the earlier learning opportunities he was provided by the association. “Some of my more formal learning experiences were back in the early AdVenture and PAR conferences,” he said. “They gave me a

great opportunity to interact with a lot of people, and I am thankful to Springfield Electric for

encouraging me—and many others in the company—to get involved and be there for those experiences.”

Over the years Barker has held seats on the Channel Advantage Partnership and regional councils as well as on numerous task forces and committees and, most notably, served as chair from 1999-2000.

“Mike’s personal support of NAED—as past chairman and through his engagement in so many activities in NAED and

his leadership by example to his team within his company—has inspired an awful lot of Springfield Electric’s people to engage in NAED activities,” noted Snyder. “He’s a strong and vocal supporter NAED and our industry in general—and an excellent leader of his company as well.”

“Mike has walked the walk and talked the talk—he’s done it all,” said R. Lee Hite, chairman and CEO of The Hite Company, Altoona, Pa. “Whether it be committee assignments, leadership and chairmanships, or presentations and study groups, he’s been a very active and involved member of NAED and other associated groups as well. He has spent his entire career supporting such initiatives. His contributions have been numerous and he never says ‘no.’”

Describing Barker as “open minded,” Hite noted that he is the kind of man who also thinks before he acts, participates in activities and events, and is willing to put in the time needed. “He is a take-charge guy and has good vision and insight on issues presented him,” he said.

“Mike is also a good example of a nonfamily president/leader of a family business who thinks and acts as a family member and owner,” Hite continued. “As the leader of a family business myself, I see the quality in his decision making,

“When you have someone who knows the business, is personally engaged, and has a lot of foresight and vision, you have a solid businessman and leader—and that’s how I would describe Mike.” — BILL SNYDER, SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC

leadership, and skill sets. I see it in his treatment of people in his own company as well as in his involvement and interest regarding NAED. He's a sound thinker and a true advocate of our industry, and is respected by his peers and industry associates."

"Throughout his career Mike has always readily volunteered his time to serve our industry in anything we have requested of him," added Cloud. "He has truly been a leader of our industry and is one of the people that make me proud to have participated in it."

"In many ways, Mike has 'grown up' along with NAED," said Baum. "Highly respected by his industry peers, he has given unselfishly his time and talents in many industry association positions."

Although his contributions to the channel are many, Barker noted that his most memorable experience was serving as chair. "To contribute at that level is exciting and demanding; it challenges creativity and is really rewarding," he said.

He also remembers his term as a unique period in the history of the association, as it had relocated from Connecticut to Missouri a few years earlier, not only establishing a new headquarters, but also bringing in a new staff.

"It was very much a transitional time for NAED," Barker recalled. "During my three-year term—as chair elect, chair,

and past chair—one of the focuses was to get NAED up to speed. We worked with the staff to help them understand the industry and the culture. Today, some of those 'rookies' are leaders—Tom Naber [president and CEO], Mike Martin [*tED* publisher], and Michelle McNamara [vice president of NAED and executive director of the NAED Education & Research Foundation], just to name a few. It's a great feeling to know that I was part of the collaboration that helped bring that group together."

He noted that another focus during his tenure was the four pillars of NAED that Hite had defined during his term as

"He has truly been a leader of our industry and is one of the people that make me proud to have participated in it." — TOM CLOUD (RET.), UNITED ELECTRIC SUPPLY

chair two years earlier: networking, education, advocacy, and defined standards.

"As chair-elect, I had been given charge of the advocacy initiative, putting together a committee and defining the focus of what advocacy was going to be," Barker explained. "This included resources to help companies recruit people and bring a greater awareness, understanding, and appreciation of electrical distribution in order to keep it as the channel of choice.

"If you go to the NAED website, you'll see those pillars are still there; advocacy continues to be an integral part of the focus of NAED," said Barker. "It's a great feeling to know I was involved in that."

Asked about his feelings about receiving the Arthur W. Hooper Award, Barker had one word: humbled. "I look back on those who have received this award and am more than honored; I am humbled to be included on this list of men who are so respected in our industry," he said.

Acknowledging the fact that Springfield Electric is the first company to produce two Hooper Award winners (Schnirring received the award in

2002), Barker added: "I'm proud to join my boss and mentor, Bill Schnirring, in receiving the award. And because Springfield Electric has a long tradition of support and participation in NAED—including three YET chairs and two NAED chairs—I feel that this award is also very much a recognition of the entire company." ■

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Industry thoughts

With nearly four decades of electrical industry experience under his belt and a career that has taken him from showroom manager to president and COO, Mike Barker certainly has a firm handle on the channel. Here, he shares some of his thoughts:

Q. What are the fundamentals of running a successful distributorship? First, have a clear picture of your value proposition. Then, with that in mind, select motivated people who are really passionate and enthusiastic about customer service. Next, provide them a ridiculous amount of individual and/or group development opportunities. Finally, encourage them and generously reward their results.

Q. What advice would you give to someone just entering electrical distribution? To take the time to understand the business, to understand the business processes and interac-

tions that make a distribution company work—and to always remember that, when it's all said and done, it's a people business. To be successful you need to be a person who really cares about people. Care about your employees, your customers, and your suppliers, and really get involved and care about your community. This will put you on the road to success.

Q: What is one of the biggest challenges facing electrical distribution? Retirement is in view for a significant number of very experienced executives in our business and I think that the industry is on the verge of a major "brain drain." We all need to be well along in creating succession plans and developing the talent needed to fulfill those plans. Personally, my goal is to have a leadership team in place that will take our company way beyond where it is today. It's something I hope others in the industry are planning to achieve as well. —M.B.