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## Greene: PHCC tackles challenges facing industry on workforce development

*Design-build, BIM and prefabrication are continuing trends in new construction.*



Incoming PHCC President Charles E. "Chip" Greene

Recently, Plumbing & Mechanical spoke with **Charles E. "Chip" Greene**, president of Macon, Ga.-based Greene & Associates and incoming president of the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors — National Association. Greene, the third generation of his family in the industry, officially started his career at a large mechanical contracting firm, then started his own business 25 years ago. President of the Georgia PHCC from 2004 to 2006, Greene was elected vice president of the national association in October 2013.

**PM:** What is PHCC doing to help attract workers to the trades?

**CG:** We're in the early stages of developing a certificate program where a student would take a course over a short period of time, which would give him a broad introduction to the plumbing-heating-cooling industry. The course would cover topics such as jobsite safety, familiarization with types of materials and how they're applied, and the various plumbing, heating and air-conditioning systems. It might allow that person to be hired at a level just above a normal introductory level.

Another tool the PHCC Educational Foundation will incorporate into its eLearning program is simulation software that uses gaming technology to troubleshoot HVAC troubleshooting scenarios. The player is actually a virtual technician who is troubleshooting a residential HVAC system. Through interactive feedback in the game, the virtual technician is prompted to check different things, which leads him to a diagnosis of the problem. The idea is to use that as a tool to attract interest in the industry at an earlier age.

**PM:** How important is it for members to get involved in politics?

**CG:** I think it's hugely important. Legislators need to hear from people who are in business and who do this work every day. Legislators are going to make decisions based on what they know, and if contractors can take the time to educate them on a particular topic, the hope is that they will make a better decision with that industry knowledge.

Every year when I go to Washington, the legislators thank us for taking time to talk to them because they want to hear from us. I once told my state representative that if he had any questions about the particular issue we were talking about, he could call the government relations person at PHCC. He told me that if he had a question, he wanted to talk to me, to hear my point of view.

**PM:** Where do you see the greatest opportunities for contractors in 2016?

**CG:** Some contractors are just coming out of the recession. With the shortage of labor we've talked about, it should help wages increase for our employees. And if we pass these costs along to the end user, then it would help attract younger people to the industry.

Another opportunity is the design-build process for construction, which seems to be building momentum with a lot of projects in our area. With this concept, you don't have an architect or an engineer on one side and the contractor on the other side, trying to guess what the other was supposed to do on the project. Instead, you start together as a team from day one.

**PM:** What trends are Construction Contractors' Alliance members seeing in new construction?

**CG:** One of the big things is building information modeling. BIM continues to be integrated into larger and more complex projects.

Prefabrication, while always prevalent in the industry, is now a requirement on a project of just about any size. The time on the project continues to be shortened and the only way to keep up with the manpower shortages we are facing is to do prefabrication.

New construction contractors are having to do more documentation during a project to fend off what we call the "heavy-handedness" of construction managers. Some GCs are not builders; they're good at scheduling, but not very good at understanding how a building needs to be constructed.

**PM:** How do PHCC members become recognized as the leaders in water conservation and energy efficiency?

**CG:** A few years ago, PHCC introduced a certified water auditor program to educate contractors on various ways to conserve water and the potential savings to the end user.

The challenge is that not every part of the country is in the same position as the Western states. For instance, in the Southeast where I am, water is fairly abundant and water conservation is not something we've embraced. When you talk to a customer about upgrading to low-flow fixtures and the savings that can be recognized from that, it's difficult because water is cheap here. The payback is not there to generate the interest. **PM**

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Read more from PHCC's Chip Greene at [PMmag.com](http://PMmag.com).