

ON THE ROAD

WINTER ISSUE 4



“PAVING THE FUTURE”

NATALIE GOCHNOUR:

UTAH'S ECONOMIC
OUTLOOK FOR

2021



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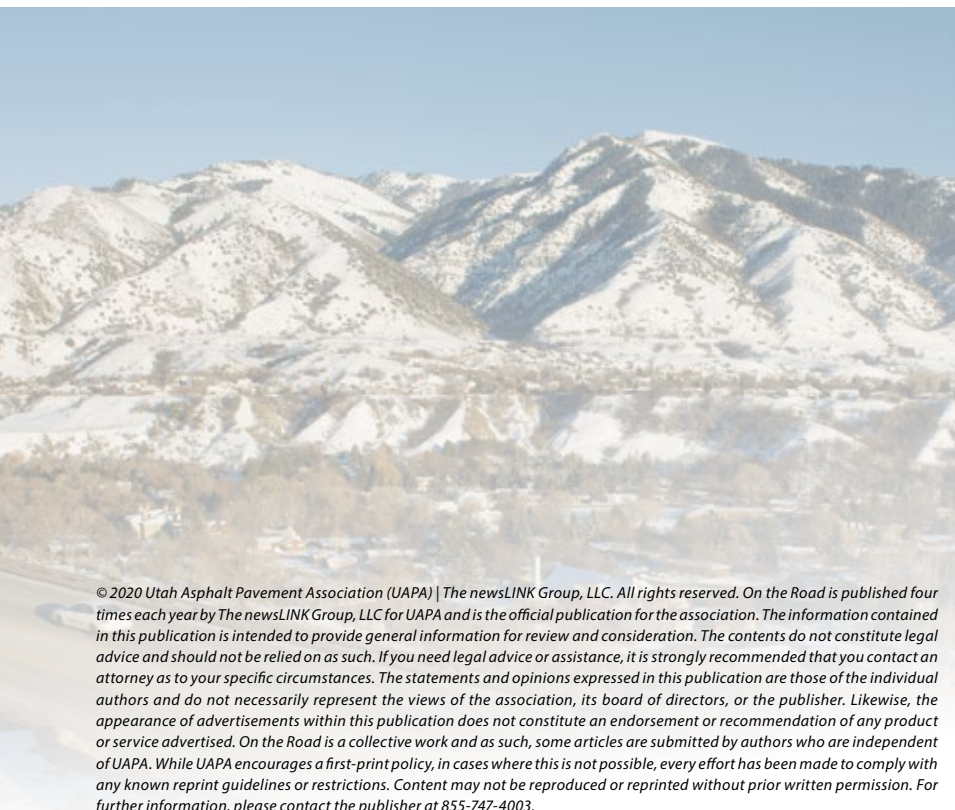


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PAVING THE FUTURE



Reed Ryan
Executive Director
The Utah Asphalt Pavement Association

As we have all come to realize by now, 2020 has changed us. The things we learned this year will shape us into better people for many years to come.



WE MADE IT!

We made it! Welcome to the end of 2020 and the promise of all things ahead in the year 2021. Somehow, two weeks to “flatten the curve” has now turned into a prolonged, nine-month battle for health, safety and life. Like you, I’m saddened at the loss of life we have experienced this year. By now, at a minimum, many of us have known of at least an acquaintance who has passed away due to the global pandemic. And as tough as this year may have been on schedules, on schooling, on our jobs and even on our association, the personal loss many of us have borne helps to keep things in perspective.

As 2020 ends and 2021 begins, I am excited that news of vaccines and their distribution gives us all hope for light at the end of this tunnel. In fact, as I read through this final 2020 issue of On The Road, I think that great things are coming in 2021 both for UAPA and for our industry.

Specifically, how great is it that UAPA was chosen to be one of the first few state asphalt pavement associations to create a Women of Asphalt Branch within our association? Nicole Shields is one of the kindest and most highly driven individuals I have met through UAPA, and I cannot wait to see what she can do with our Women of Asphalt branch as the chair in 2021.

Similarly, despite major obstacles to meeting in person, UAPA launched our second regional leadership council, the Northern Utah Regional Leadership Council, during the fall of 2020. With Craig Fabrizio from Staker Parson Materials & Construction at the helm, this group is off to a wonderful start setting some major goals for 2021 and beyond.

As we have all come to realize by now, 2020 has changed us. The things we learned this year will shape us into better people for many years to come. There is more we have yet to do, however, and that’s why I am grateful that a portion of this issue is also dedicated to our collective and proverbial Elephant in the Room — substance abuse. This is an issue and a beast that often leads to heartbreak, loss of employment, and, sadly, at times, loss of life. I have personally witnessed the ravages of this monster on several occasions in my life. I have seen loved ones and friends battle, I have seen them win the fight, and I have seen them lose the fight as well. Simply put, I hate it. And I wish substance abuse wasn’t a problem, but we need to be better as an industry at dealing with it. I’m hopeful our article here will help build awareness.

So, in 2021, let’s take better care of each other. Let’s watch out for each other. Let’s keep our hope bright and our knowledge strong that we are united in providing an essential service and workforce to the state of Utah. I can’t wait to see all of you — in person! — come 2021. I know that time is soon at hand, and I am oh so excited for that day! Until then, I hope you will continue to use UAPA as a resource to address the needs of owners and industry alike. We’re always better together — here’s to a New Year! ◀

With appreciation,

Reed Ryan
Executive Director
The Utah Asphalt Pavement Association

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NATALIE GOCHNOUR:

UTAH'S ECONOMIC
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2021



November was the eighth month since the March 2020 economic shutdown, and it was also the month for Natalie's 2021 economic outlook. When she worked with Mike Leavitt at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, she learned that all pandemics end. She promised this pandemic would end, too.

She expects the time between Nov. 11, 2020, and Jan. 20, 2021, to be difficult for the U.S. for several reasons:

- The nation continues to struggle with a public health emergency.
- Educators and parents have challenges with schooling.
- The presidential transition won't be graceful.
- Social unrest as a result of systemic discrimination is ongoing.

Utah is different from the rest of the nation. Although hard-hit by the pandemic, the state has done better than the country as a whole. Part of the reason why Utah has fared so well is because of the thriving construction industry, which is leading the way in Utah's economic recovery.

To put Utah's situation in context, consider the U.S. economy. Annualized growth during 2019Q4 was 2.4%. That ended with the recession, which took place during 2020Q1 (-4.7%) and 2020Q2 (-32%). Recovery began in April 2020; during Q3, the U.S. economy has recovered 35.3%. The shape of the recovery initially looked like a "V" during the spring months, but it has slowed down considerably since then and now looks like a slow, long, sideways-moving slog.

Natalie compared the length and severity of the current recession, in terms of nonfarm employment, to five other recessions: 1973, 1980, 1990, 2001 and 2007. It is more severe than any of the others, with employment dropping about 14%. Except for the Great Recession that started in 2007, it looks as though recovery may take longer than the other recessions until at least 30 months in. Travel was also down substantially, especially when compared with 2019, and so was the demand for U.S. petroleum products.

How strong is the recovery? In early September 2020, the different regions of the U.S. have recovered but are still, at best, between 80% and 85% of what they were. However, Utah is doing better than the nation as a whole when it comes to unemployment and PPP funds.

Consider unemployment first. Some states see year-over percent employment changes that are as steep as -5.9% to -9.9%, but Utah is at -0.9%. The only state doing better than Utah is Idaho, at -0.5%. The U.S. is now at -6.4%, but that's where Utah was in April when the U.S. averaged about -13.5%. Who has been hit the hardest? Eastern and red states are the worst. Places that are doing well now, like Utah, were doing well when the nation went into recession, were hurt less initially and got more than their share of PPP help.

However, not all of Utah is doing equally well. Natalie called Utah's recovery K-shaped. Cache County has unemployment rates of 3.4%. In contrast, San Juan County has unemployment rates as high as 12.8%. Other hard-hit counties include Grand County (12.6%), Uintah (12.2%), Garfield (12.0%) and Duchesne (10.6%).

When it comes to PPP funds for companies with less than 500 employees, Utah is in the top tier. As of Aug. 8, 2020, PPP and cancellations were \geq 21% of the total annual payroll. For comparison, the nationwide average was 19.4%.

The hardest-hit industries between September 2019 and September 2020 were tourism (-15.7%) and energy (-11.6%). In contrast, construction grew by 6.6%. Single-family construction was the most successful area in construction. It peaked in 2018 at 6,846 units, fell in 2019 to 5,861 units, and started rising again in 2020 to 6,422.

The story is a little different for apartments. Apartments had 3,186 permitted units in 2018, and they were gaining on single-family homes. That growth accelerated in 2019. Where the number for single-family homes was 5,861, the number for apartments was 4,834 — a difference of only 1,027 units. But in 2020, they pulled apart again. The number of new apartments fell to 3,585.

The difference between the number of new homes and the number of new apartments increased to 2,837. In other words, the pandemic may have shifted the market away from apartments and toward single-family homes.

Despite all these building projects, Utah's housing shortage continues to grow and would have still occurred even if there hadn't been a pandemic. Utah was short 53,100 units in 2019, but the deficit was 15,381 a decade ago.

The construction industry set record levels of new housing construction between January 2020 and July 2020. At the same time, there has been a historic low when it comes to for-sale inventory. For-sale inventory usually rises during the spring and summer and then decreases during the fall and winter. That wasn't true in 2020. Inventory peaked in May and fell sharply in August. Instead of a list of approximately 9,000 or 10,000+ homes, the number was 5,183. (In August and September 2016, there were about 10,540 homes. These were maximums. The minimums in September 2019 and August 2018, respectively, were 9,836 and 9,347.)

The sold-to-active ratio also showed stress. Its usual pattern is similar to the pattern of for-sale inventory: the ratio of sold to active listings has a maximum value at 50-60% during the spring and summer, then decreases during the fall and winter to about 35-42%. This year, the sold-to-active ratio dropped from about 55% in March to about 43% in April. Then it increased sharply to about 98% in July.

The big problem is affordability. Consider housing price appreciation in three categories between August 2019 and August 2020:

- The mortgage rate went down 0.68%.
- Monthly payments went up 3.74%.
- The median sales price went up 13.03%.

What lies ahead? That part isn't clear. Recovery may take all of 2021, or we might improve by May 2021. However, Natalie quoted an Indian writer named Arundhati

continued on page 6



Vaccines are going to be an essential tool to protect people worldwide from the coronavirus. The first vaccines are probably going to be available sometime before March 31, 2021.

continued from page 5

Roy who won the Booker prize in 1997 for *The God of Small Things* and said something interesting about pandemics. Arundhati

Roy wrote:

“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.”

When you look at trends, it is essential to distinguish between relatively minor cyclical trends. Cyclical trends are not that big, and they tend to repeat themselves, but structural trends are orders of magnitude larger and can change the world. Natalie listed the following structural trends that she thinks are worth watching:

- A new banking paradigm: During the next couple of years or more, the federal funds rate will stay close to zero. That rate affects the discount rate and the prime rate. Reducing the interest rate to support the economy won't work anymore. The Federal Reserve has decided to review its monetary policy framework every five years, approximately, to better respond to the current banking challenges.
- De-globalization, reshoring and shorter supply chains: The pandemic has made it very apparent that long supply chains can be easily broken by disruptions such as pandemics. That's good news for Utah. As companies shorten supply chains and bring them back to the U.S., Utah is in a great position geographically to benefit from trade conducted more locally.
- The pink-collar recession: The industries that have been hit hardest by COVID-19 are also industries that employ many women. Also, as primary caregivers, many women left the workforce to take care of family members such as young children. Although many men lost their employment as well, more women than men were affected. For example, 3 million women stopped working in April 2020 versus about 2.75 million men. In September 2020, almost 1 million women stopped working, whereas with men, the number was closer to 250,000 thousand.
- “Zoom town” migration: Remote work was suddenly the only way many companies could continue to stay in business. Since many people were no longer tied to a specific geographic location because of work, they soon became interested in moving closer to family and small towns. The net migration forecast for 2020 in Utah is 22,000. That number represents the difference between the people moving to Utah minus the people moving away from Utah. That is down from 2019 and 2018; the number in 2019 was 24,987, and in 2018 it was 23,200.
- Tech-enabled services: Thanks to internet services and companies like Zoom, which make it possible to hold virtual meetings on a large or small scale, employees have been able to work from home offices like never before.
- The reckoning of commercial real estate: Owners of hotels, restaurants and office buildings have seen a drastic drop in demand for their services. That will affect the commercial building industry.

Vaccines are going to be an essential tool to protect people worldwide from the coronavirus. The first vaccines are probably going to be available sometime before March 31, 2021. The last may not arrive until April 1, 2022. When researchers decide to start giving vaccines to the general population, it's expected that medical professionals will distribute 25 million doses in the U.S. ◀



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Q&A

WITH NATALIE GOCHNOUR

Do your economic scenarios change depending on who is in the White House?

Yes. The differences are not good or bad; they are just different. For President Trump, trade is not so good. There's also a question about the economy. President-elect Biden will have a more functional federal government. That's important because the virus requires national leadership. Right now, states are competing for PPP, and they are not supporting Anthony Fauci. Both administrations will spend too much.

What about brick-and-mortar retail?

There will be less retail. The trends were already in place, but they have been accelerated. However, some retail is thriving:

- In Murray, Utah, Fashion Place Mall will continue to thrive.
- Many strip malls will be converted to housing. There is pressure to make affordable housing, and strip malls offer a good place to do just that.
- Remote sales are taxable sales. The state's income from that is robust.
- People are nesting. They are spending money on food and their homes.
- Eating out and clothing purchases are both down.

Will in-migration hurt Utah's culture?

Utah has traditionally taken a "wait and see" approach to things. We will see significant changes, some improvements and some negative things, but Utah is still a good place to be. Utah is egalitarian and mobile. If you are in the bottom fifth, you are more likely to rise here than anywhere else. As far as the pandemic is concerned, we are now doing everything short of shutting down.

Nov. 7, 2020, the governor used the alert system to tell people about a statewide address. It was very hard for the governor to get to a point where he had to mandate masks, but at least there has been no restriction on the economy. People who are 15-34

are the ones spreading the disease the most. Utah is a young state, so there are lots of people in Utah who are that age. The worst danger spots are informal settings, such as families spending time together at home after school.

Will our values be diluted? The three forces affecting Utah are urbanization, diversification and aging. Births continue to sustain our growth, and more than 24,000 people have moved here in the last 4-5 years. Many are past residents who are returning. As new people move into the state, we can invest in education, and we can persuade newcomers about the values that are important to us.

Will there be a national or state stimulus for construction?

We do need a new stimulus package, but nothing will happen until Jan. 20, 2021. It is better to borrow money for the stimulus package than not because the U.S. economy is not doing well. Ideally, we will get a \$1-2 trillion stimulus. That means checks, help for targeted industries, testing and health care, and money.

Many state governments don't spend money well, and the U.S. Senate doesn't want us to reward irresponsible states.

We have \$900 million in the rainy-day fund, and we haven't touched it yet. Revenues are OK, and we still have money to spend from the CARES Act. We need \$5 million for the arts, which have been devastated. Also, we need to help people who have been laid off. Airlines will get help.

If there are bailouts, where will the money come from?

Money is borrowed from the Chinese.

What else do you want to say?

These are challenging times, but I don't want to end on a negative note. I've studied what happens when people get shipwrecked. The big question after a shipwreck is always, when will you get help? It turns out that the best way to survive is to seek kind people and be kind to others during uncertain times. That's true now, too. Be positive, helpful and hopeful. ◀

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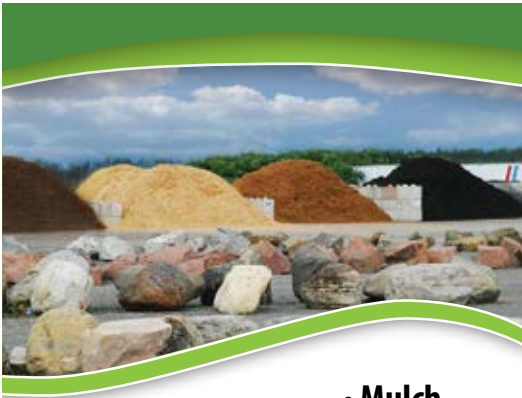
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COVID-19: IMPACTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTLOOK

Our own members weigh in on the impacts, opportunities and industry outlook resulting from COVID-19.

• **Derek Andersen** is the owner of Andersen Asphalt. The company is a trusted asphalt maintenance contractor with state-of-the-art equipment, resources, and expertise to help customers find solutions that provide long-term value. With its proven asphalt maintenance treatments, customers significantly extend the life of their pavement and avoid costly replacement. The company is extremely meticulous and detail-oriented with its work. Employees use rigorously tested and

proven products and techniques to provide customers with the very best solutions.

• **Jeremy Lapin** is the public works director for Saratoga Springs. This city is located in Utah County on the northwest shores of Utah Lake. The city was incorporated in December 1997 and currently has about 32,000 residents. It is in the top five fastest-growing cities in Utah, with a build-out population of more than 120,000 residents.

What are the main challenges your organization has encountered as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?

Derek: The main challenges we have faced are the many changes in our overall environment. Challenges have included some large customers freezing spending, customers going out of business and keeping our

employees safe and healthy. We have had to make adjustments that have come with a learning curve.

Jeremy: The first major challenge is the uncertain financial impact. While many businesses have been required to shut down or limit service, public utilities must continue operating. Water, wastewater, and other essential services must be maintained. In fact, due to an increase in sheltering and working from home, we have seen an overall increase in the demand placed on our utilities. Conversely, revenue has declined due to forbearances in shut-offs due to nonpayment.

The second major challenge is the risk to our workforce posed by the pandemic. Most public works employees need to be “on-site” to complete the critical tasks necessary to ensure the operation of our municipal services. They are unable to shelter at home,



I have also seen that the determination of our public employees to continue providing services to our residents, despite the dangers the COVID-19 pandemic has posed to their own lives, has contributed greatly to the local government being seen as critical in and caring for the lives of the people.

potentially putting them at greater risk. If the virus were to spread among employees, this could necessitate the use of quarantine and threaten operations.

Although President Kennedy was wrong when he said the Chinese word for “crisis” also meant “opportunity,” sometimes a crisis does present a chance to improve. Have you seen any opportunities as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?

Derek: The pandemic has presented us with the opportunity to seek a different business that we previously didn't look for. For some customers, spending was frozen, and work that was to be scheduled was put on hold. We found that as heavily as some industries were impacted, many were thriving. We had the opportunity to seek and capture some of those “thriving companies.”

Jeremy: This pandemic has forced us to digitize many components of our operation to protect our employees and better serve our customers. In turn, these systemic changes in our organization have streamlined many processes, resulting in increased efficiency across our organization.

What have your experiences during the pandemic taught you?

Derek: The pandemic has taught us to be more creative. We needed to be creative in our approach to capturing new business

and ensuring the health of our employees and customers.

Jeremy: One is the importance of mutual aid agreements. Not only is it a lifeline to have a network and relationships among other municipalities in the region, but it is also a great opportunity for our employees to see and experience how other agencies work.

Another is that information sharing is the key to success in emergency responses. It is difficult to plan correctly for what seemed to be a very uncertain situation. During this pandemic, we have developed several mechanisms for information sharing, learning from other organizations, and diffusing best practices.

How will your organization's plans for 2021 be affected?

Derek: We plan to continue helping our customers find the best solutions for their pavement maintenance needs. We must use what we have learned since the pandemic began and continue to make sound adjustments as new challenges arise.

Jeremy: The increased occurrence of remote work and the transition to the use of digital services is here to stay. We will continue to refine and update our practices and procedures to fully embrace this new “normal.” As long as system demand and revenue streams remain unpredictable, we must remain prepared to deal with issues of organizational capacity. We will

likely limit the expansion of our workforce for the foreseeable future while relying on the use of contractors and mutual aid agreements to deal with periods of high demand.

What long-term consequences do you expect within the industry?

Derek: I expect overall spending to be lower and production to weaken. Many companies are faced with restrictions, consumers are spending less, there have been budget cuts and layoffs, and in some cases, a shutdown of operations. I expect this to affect our industry long term but think we will prevail and improve due to this pandemic.

Jeremy: I think the strategies devised during this pandemic to strengthen the resilience, effectiveness, and responsiveness of our public services will become part of the industry's best practices. We will remain better prepared to deal with this type of issue in the future.

I have also seen that the determination of our public employees to continue providing services to our residents, despite the dangers the COVID-19 pandemic has posed to their own lives, has contributed greatly to the local government being seen as critical in and caring for the lives of the people. The ongoing work of first responders has, in many places, elevated a sense of trust in local government. ◀



WOMEN OF ASPHALT

In 2017, after having worked in the asphalt industry for a handful of years, Amy Miller and Natasha Ozybko crossed paths. By chance, both women had made careers in male-dominated industries and were aware they were frequently one of only a handful of ladies in the room for any given meeting. Miller floated the idea of starting an organization devoted to supporting women in the asphalt industry with some female colleagues and shared the idea with Ozybko. Miller and Ozybko, along with Ashley Batson (director, South Carolina Asphalt Pavement Association), Audrey Copeland (president and CEO, National Asphalt Pavement Association) and Tracie Schlich (marketing director, Asphalt Institute) joined forces. They founded Women of Asphalt (WofA).

Miller is a civil engineer who began her career as a design consultant. She transitioned into the materials area, and that eventually led her to the asphalt industry. She currently serves as the Asphalt Pavement Alliance National Director (based in Orange Park, Florida), an organization whose mission is making asphalt the preferred pavement of choice. When asked why she enjoys

this industry so much, she replied, "This industry represents the essence of good, hard-working people who put in an honest day's work to support their families. They create safe roads for us to travel every day."

Ozybko has made a career working in sales and marketing. In 2012 she joined the asphalt industry and currently serves as the west regional sales manager for Arkema-Road Science, an additive and emulsifier producer. Ozybko is a graduate of Arizona State University (ASU) with a degree in Business Administration and is currently working on her Master of Business Administration through the ASU executive program (Class of 2022). She lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and is training for her fifth Ironman triathlon.

The Early Days

Thinking back to the time before the group's origins, Miller recounted sitting in meetings with few to no other women. While she enjoys working with both men and women, she wished there

WOMEN OF ASPHALT UTAH BRANCH

UAPA is proud to announce that Utah has its own Women of Asphalt branch. Nicole Shields, Stacy Kelley, and Nicole Maxwell currently lead the Utah branch.

Nicole Shields, Chair
Barricade Services
nicole@barricadeservices.net

Stacy Kelley, Vice-Chair
Construction Materials Recycling, Inc.
stacyk@cmrinc.co

Nicole Maxwell, Secretary
Maxwell Products, Inc.
nicole@maxwellproducts.com

were more female cohorts to share insight on roles and responsibilities both at work and outside of work. "I talked to several different ladies who I knew would be good team members and who represented different sectors of the asphalt industry. With their support and an idea in hand, we got the group together," said Miller.

Still not knowing how receptive the asphalt industry would be to this idea, the ladies decided to introduce a WofA organization at World of Asphalt in 2018. With generous financial support from companies across the industry, WofA was able to have a booth, host a networking event and a standing-room-only panel discussion that featured women in various roles representing different geographic regions of the country. "By the time we left Houston, the most asked questions we got were 'Is there a local branch in my state?' and 'Where can I send my check?'" said Ozybko. "We knew right then and there we were onto something." The ladies began a methodical approach to develop a strong organizational foundation. They established the fundamental organizational structure, including their mission, vision statement, bylaws, website, board structure and eventually applied and received 501 (c)(6) status while incorporating in Florida. Next, they created a strategic plan that outlined the programs of the organization and a process. They created six working groups, each led by a board member, responsible for creating the programs outlined in the WofA goals. The name "working group" was intentionally selected as it was important for the all-volunteer group of ladies to understand they were creating an organization from the ground up. "We have some very specific ideas of what we want Women of Asphalt to accomplish. While we know they're possible, we recognized the five of us founding members could not do this alone. So many of our female colleagues have approached us and asked how they can be involved. We thought the working groups were a natural fit," said Ozybko. This decision allowed the women to have a hand in designing programs that create value for members while achieving the mission of WofA.

Garnering Support

In an industry that consists of more than 90% men, with the vast majority of senior leadership positions held by men, the ladies recognized that collaboration was critical to WofA's success. "We are proud that we have the support of so many men in the industry.

We need them backing our efforts and appreciate their desire to help our organization achieve its mission," Miller noted. Since 2018, Miller and Ozybko, along with other founding members, have traveled across the country speaking on behalf of WofA. A number of the state asphalt pavement associations (SAPAs), including California, Colorado and Pennsylvania, hosted panel discussions the first year featuring women from their states. "A lot of the SAPA directors recognized early on what we were trying to achieve and threw their full support behind us," said Ozybko. And then there was the whisper campaign. As Ozybko recounts, "I can't tell you how many men came up to me and whispered 'You know my women are my best workers.'" She replied, "You need to stop whispering and start saying that loud and proud."

Running a volunteer organization, especially one being built from the ground up, takes grit, determination and a lot of perseverance. But it also needs money. The industry was exceptionally supportive in helping the organization get started. The founding board members worked diligently to show the organization's value and have continued to receive industry support. WofA is extremely grateful for the companies that have supported their efforts. Blackledge Emulsions was a first supporter and has provided resources for many of the branded assets, including the recently acclaimed top 10 construction industry podcast, Where We Belong. As WofA entered its third year, Wirtgen America supported the organization as a Diamond Partner. Companies large and small recognize the value of having a diverse group on their team and want to be associated with an organization that promotes the same values. Currently, the organization is 100% volunteer. All money goes to programs and operational expenses. As WofA continues to grow exponentially and meet the organization's goals, the group will need to hire full-time staff soon.

Shining a Spotlight on the Ladies

When people think of the asphalt industry, they picture males — their dad, brother or son — working on a paving crew or running an asphalt plant. Ladies? They're flaggers or doing administrative jobs. One of the first goals of WofA was to change the perception of what a typical asphalt employee looks like. Before 2019 World of Asphalt in Indianapolis, Indiana, WofA launched the "I am a Woman of Asphalt" campaign. In the days leading up to World of

continued on page 18



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Asphalt each day, they featured a woman doing a different job in the asphalt industry. Her photo accompanied a brief biography and answers to a series of questions about her work experience and personal life. Over 100 days through an enormous media campaign, people in the industry were introduced to chemists, project managers, roller operators, CEOs, lab technicians, flaggers and women doing every job that touches the design, construction and maintenance of asphalt pavements. The campaign was so successful it caught the eye of Monica Dutcher, editor of NAPA's Asphalt Pavement magazine. She began dedicating the magazine's July/August issues to women in the asphalt industry with the 100 Women campaign as the first cover story. In July 2020, WofA featured "20 to Watch in 2020" video interviews showcasing 20 women making a difference in the asphalt industry. It has recently been announced that the theme for 2021 will feature women working in the field (more details to come). In addition to using social media platforms, WofA wanted to connect with their industry colleagues on a more personal level. Thus, the Where We Belong podcast was born. Over the past two years, the founding members have interviewed a dozen women holding various roles. In 2019-2020 they released a successful six-part series featuring women in leadership positions, including five of the 14 female state DOT secretaries or directors of transportation and Nicole Nason, the FHWA administrator.

Growing the Organization

Three areas of focus for 2020 have been WofA Branches, the WofA Mentorship Program and the WofA Job Board. The ladies knew that it was critical to get local branches up and running for the organization to meet its goals. Under the direction of board member Kirsten Fowler and her working group, a partnership agreement was created for SAPAs interested in supporting a branch in their respective state. To date, they have launched eight official branches (Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri and Utah), with another half dozen expected to launch in 2021.

With so few women in this industry, and realizing how much they could have benefited from a mentor, especially early in their

careers, the WofA Mentorship Program was especially important to Miller and Ozybko. They turned to a fellow board member (and a woman with a lot of experience putting together one of these programs), Kari Shifflet. With her working group, Kari put together the inaugural 2021 WofA Mentorship Program comprising over 100 women and men. The program is no longer accepting applicants for 2021 but will open back up again next fall for 2022.

Before the global pandemic, the industry's paramount issue was a shortage of workers, especially those working on paving crews, at the plant or in the lab. Following the mission of WofA to bring more women into the asphalt industry, the ladies wanted to position their website (www.womenofasphalt.org) as a clearinghouse for jobs specific to this industry targeting ladies. Companies posting jobs on the free platform tell people their company sees the value in a diverse workforce. New jobs are added daily, and the team continues to explore ways to engage with ladies who might not have considered a career in this field.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Miller and Ozybko frequently lament that WofA is "a labor of love." What started as a desire to make the industry a little more "female-friendly" has grown into something so much more. "We knew the things we wanted to accomplish. We knew where there were opportunities for improvement to help women succeed in this industry, and we set out to try and make things a little better. Every once in a while, we would look up and see we just registered our 1,000th member, the FHWA had incorporated us in their Women's Initiative Playbook, or we were invited to the CONEXPO-CON/AGG opening ceremonies for the unveiling of a 30-foot statue of a female construction worker (to go alongside the two male statues that greet visitors). And those are the moments we realize, 'Yes, we are making a difference.'" said Ozybko.

Miller served as the organization's first president (2018-2020), and Ozybko is the current president (2020-2022). ◀

Q&A WITH NICOLE SHIELDS ABOUT WofA



What are the origins of this organization in Utah?

We just started our Utah branch thanks to UAPA's Reed Ryan and Keri Dumont.

How did you get involved with it?

I have had the distinct privilege of working for the past several years now with Keri and Reed on the planning committee for the Utah Asphalt Conference. I have put together several presentations for safety and other topics. Reed and Keri asked me to be the chair of the Utah branch of WofA.

Why is WofA important?

WofA is a national organization that supports women in all aspects of the asphalt industry. It is important to provide a platform to network, support and create opportunities for women in this tough industry.

What are WofA's goals and achievements?

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THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

TACKLING THE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE'S ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE USE ISSUES



By Karyn Salerno and Cal Beyer, CSDZ, a Holmes Murphy Company

The phrase “the elephant in the room” refers to an issue that is too large to ignore or sweep under the carpet and have the potential to be disruptive if left unaddressed. These issues apply as much in our personal lives outside of work as it does in the workplace. A major reason organizations (and families) do not address these “elephants in the room” is the fear of the unknown, including the unknown ripple-effects of addressing the issue being overlooked. One such “elephant in the room” in the construction industry is alcohol and substance misuse among the collective workforce.

Why Alcohol and Substance Use Is “An Elephant in the Room”

The data is too important to ignore. According to the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the construction industry workforce has the second-highest rate of heavy drinking, described as 5-7 drinks in a single setting. Moreover, data from Quest Diagnostics annual Drug Testing Index continues to show concerning substance misuse trends in construction, among other industries, including rising positive tests for marijuana, post-accident tests and among federally regulated safety-sensitive positions. (See Resources for more information.)

Unfortunately, similar data does not exist for alcohol tests. From the data on substance misuse, it can be argued that a comprehensive substance use testing program is no longer adequate for deterring substance misuse.

Why the “Elephant in the Room” Can No Longer Be Ignored

The consequences are too great to not address substance misuse by workers. First and foremost, the safety of the workforce and the general public is at risk. Despite the decreasing rates of recordable and lost time injury case rates, the frequency of serious injuries and fatalities continues to remain stable over the past two decades. Many safety, human performance and well-being professionals are focusing on “what’s under the hardhat” to explain this phenomenon.

The role of fatigue, impairment and distraction from substance misuse must be considered while also recognizing that work and schedules may compound this fatigue and mental stress. Work schedules and the challenge of production may create and foster unexpected substance use while coping with long hours, time away from home, isolation and out of town work. More needs to be done to help educate the workforce, including supervisors and leaders, about

the importance of substance misuse and the associated complications of “what’s under the hardhat.”

Why the “Elephant in the Room” Can No Longer Be Accepted

Chris DeHerrera, CEO of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Utah, cited statistics from ABC’s 2020 Safety Performance Report showing that “one-third of all incidents on construction job sites are drug- or alcohol-related.” DeHerrera continues, “Substance abuse programs and policies with provisions for drug and alcohol testing where permitted lead to a 66% reduction in TRIR and a 67% reduction in DART rates and can be an effective method of incident prevention if used properly.”

Bryan McCurdy, human resources director for Lakeview Rock Products in North Salt Lake, Utah, states, “We have accepted a problem that should not be an acceptable problem. Why are we willing to accept these behaviors? Is it because the behaviors are not affecting us all the time?”

Calling out the “Elephant in the Room”

A “gut-check” question company leaders must consider is, “are you accepting substance misuse because behaviors may not manifest as an immediate issue or problem?” If that is not compelling enough, then leaders should also consider the potential effects substance misuse can have on key operational factors, including productivity, schedule, job site safety, quality and rework, owner concerns or delays, and profitability.

To make matters even more real, in a Construction Executive article titled “Opioid and Substance Abuse in the Construction Industry,” author Marko Kaar states there are more deaths by suicide and opioid overdoses in the AEC industry than those attributed annually to OSHA’s Focus Four. Armed with this information, contractors need to expand the level of behavioral

The addiction epidemic is a concerning, ongoing problem in the construction industry. Nicole Shields talked about addiction and other subjects earlier this year in issue 2 of On the Road in an article called Industry Challenges and Opportunities Q&A. You can read that article here:

<https://on-the-road.thenewslinkgroup.org/flippingbooks/Pub2-2019-2020-Issue2/16/>



health literacy to understand the true direct and (hidden) indirect consequences of substance misuse. DeHerrera also asserts, “the stigma of mental and emotional health in the construction industry has stifled the conversation for many years.”

Finding Solutions for the “Elephant in the Room”

The construction industry must continue to illuminate the problem through education and training while continuing to develop solutions. For example, construction employers are right to be concerned with opioids for the treatment of chronic pain for musculoskeletal injuries to trades workers. Travelers Chief Medical Director Dr. Marcos Iglesias echoes this concern, stating, “The tools we use for treating acute pain are not effective in managing chronic pain, and there is no silver bullet that works in all cases.”

Dr. Iglesias shared that the “approaches that introduce active techniques and equip workers to manage their chronic musculoskeletal pain are most effective.” Dr. Iglesias shared numerous such examples, including “physical activity, pain management education, sleep restoration and behavioral approaches, such as fear-avoidance behavioral therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and acceptance and commitment therapy.” Dr. Iglesias concluded, “Since there are multiple options to manage chronic pain, it’s important that you have a shared philosophy with your insurance carrier in order to help employees recover functionally from an injury.”

Again, Dr. Iglesias offered perspective for employers on the most important steps to address substance use among employees. Iglesias said, “Effectively addressing substance use in the workplace requires a strong commitment from management, human resources, supervisors and employees and a coordinated approach

to ensure that policies, education, training and support align.” Dr. Iglesias elaborated on the importance of “a common purpose and sense of accountability being crucial to making a program successful.” Dr. Iglesias recommends “making information available on the risks of misusing alcohol and drugs, how to avoid misuse and how to improve physical and mental well-being.”

Conclusion

DeHerrera believes “we must have the vital conversations in order to promote the solutions and resources for the entire AEC industry. It’s imperative that we continue the educational process for company leaders.” It is important to keep employees from slipping through the cracks by encouraging and equipping them to seek help. There needs to be greater recognition that alcohol or substance misuse may be the result of another problem or unresolved issue. It is time to incorporate more about worker’s mental health and well-being into job site safety. It’s time to focus on the holistic health in construction safety AND health. ◀

Resources

Kaar, Marko. (Aug. 24, 2018). *Opioids and Substance Use Disorders in the Construction Industry*. *Construction Executive*. <https://www.constructionexec.com/article/opioids-and-substance-use-disorders-in-the-construction-industry>

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Quest Diagnostics. (April 11, 2019). *Workforce Drug Testing Positivity Climbs to Highest Rate Since 2004, According to New Quest Diagnostics Analysis*. <https://www.questdiagnostics.com/home/physicians/health-trends/drug-testing/>

The following list of websites might be helpful for anyone struggling with mental health issues or addiction:

- 24/7 Utah Crisis Line
1-800-273-TALK
- AmericanAddictionCentersRecovery.org
Admissions navigator,
1-888-497-6809
<https://recovery.org/browse/utah>
- Health University of Utah Addiction Recovery Services
<https://healthcare.utah.edu/uni/conditions-treatments/detoxification-treatment>
- Hope4Utah
<https://hope4utah.com/utah-mental-health-agencies>
- Utah Addiction Centers
24-hour hotline: 801-766-2233
<https://utahaddictioncenters.com>
- Utah Department of Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health
<https://dsamh.utah.gov>

Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. (SAMHSA). National Helpline. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

Author Biographies

Karyn Salerno is a risk and safety specialist for CSDZ in Salt Lake City. She has extensive experience in construction safety and risk management working with construction contractors and associations in the western United States. She is partnering with contractors to address physical safety and behavioral health issues. Contact Salerno at ksalerno@csdz.com or 801-910-8436.

Cal Beyer is vice president of workforce risk and worker well-being for CSDZ in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is a Certified Wellness Practitioner (CWP). He is a member of the Executive Committee of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention and the Expert Advisory Group of the Center for Workplace Mental Health. Cal was instrumental in the launch of the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Contact Beyer at cbeyer@csdz.com or 651-307-7883.

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LAUNCH OF THE NORTHERN UTAH REGIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Since the beginnings of the Utah Asphalt Pavement Association (UAPA), the goal was to establish regional councils that provide members with a localized, closer-to-home voice and provide leadership opportunities for members across the state.

Despite the challenges we have seen with COVID-19, UAPA saw the launch of the Northern Utah Regional Council this last fall.

The chair of the Northern Council, Craig Fabrizio, is immensely pleased. As one of the first charter members of UAPA, Craig Fabrizio notes that the regional councils have been on the association “to do” list for quite a while. “While I don’t think the needs, per se, of northern Utah cities, counties, and pavement contractors is that much different from the rest of our state, we wanted to provide a local forum for the discussion of all things asphalt. That is important because it’s more relevant when the discussions happen here, where we live and work. It also allows us to grow leadership from areas that we may not reach otherwise,” says Fabrizio.



Three action-oriented goals were formulated the first week of December for the council:

- 1 The council will survey cities, counties and smaller contractors to determine what specifics they would like to see the council focus on.
- 2 Lunch and Learn meetings will be started with topics specifically of interest for the northern area. The plan is to grow local participation in UAPA.
- 3 The council will take on workforce development as one of its first objectives, with the goal being to develop ideas to attract young people into the industry. ◀

The Northern Utah Regional Council welcomes the following members:

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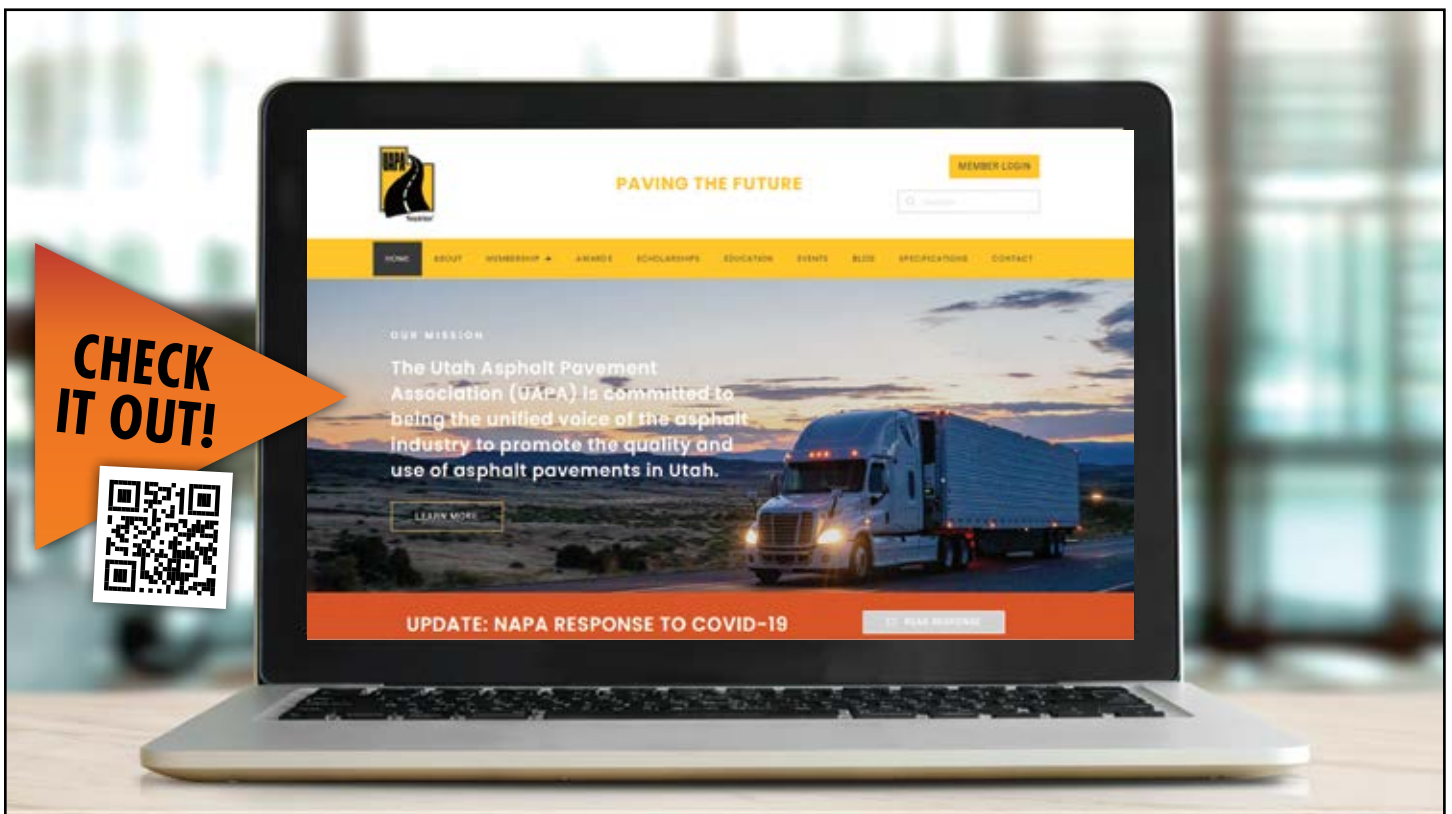


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