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Women Know What's Hot

The hottest topic in concrete repair is our next generation," says Tanya Wattenburg Komar, Ph.D., from California State University, Chico. Komar is in a unique position to know this. She works with students in the Concrete Industry Management program.

Recounting some recent experiences with her students, she led off the presentations at the fourth annual Women in Concrete Luncheon and Forum at the World of Concrete in February. The 2009 program included a panel of experts discussing hot industry trends.

Repairing our past

Komar led the event by describing her student research team's efforts in investigating historic concrete at Pointe du Hoc, Normandy, France. The team is evaluating WWII concrete bunkers using onsite in-situ testing methods and non-destructive testing equipment. The goal is to stabilize the eroded D-Day landing site so it is safe enough for WWII veterans to visit the cliffside monument.

"For our younger people, preserving a site like this, there is no better way to communicate what really happened ... to understand the tragic events."

Creating today

The next speaker, Shellie Rigsby, owner of Acanthus/Concrete Stain Designs, Plano, Texas, explained the many opportunities available today in decorative concrete. "The technology has changed so much in the last 11 years, it's so exciting," says Rigsby.

She also provided a step-by-step account of the techniques and materials she used to create a downsized version

of The Alamo, which included insulating concrete forms, stamped vertical overlays, stencils, and handcarving. "It's a lot more fun if you go outside the box to explore what you can do," says Rigsby of decorative concrete projects.



Audience members posed questions to the speakers during a Q&A period.

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She went on to say that the down economy does not have to be bad news for decorative concrete contractors. The key is to provide cost-effective options to architects who want artistic elements in scaled-back budgets: "There's still a lot of business out there, but we have to tell the architects what's available."

Planning our future

The final speaker, Julie Babb Smith of the FIGG Engineering Group, Tallahassee, Fla., detailed how the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis incorporated sustainability into every aspect of the design. "When I talk about sustainable design for this bridge, the things I am referring to are protecting the environment with

eco-friendly materials and practices, and creating a lasting design for the future with quality, innovation, and planning," says Smith.

With an expected 100-year service life, the bridge opened Sept. 18, 2008—11 months after the project began, three months ahead of schedule, and a little more than a year after the infamous collapse that killed 13. Eco-friendly materials used in the project include recycled aggregate and photocatalytic cement products that reduce airborne pollutants, thereby cleaning the air. "They clean the air and they are also self cleaning. It was the first use of this cement in North America," says Smith.

Smith also explained how this was truly a community project, down to the children making decorative tiles to adorn a permanent part of the new bridge.

Co-hosted by CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION and THE CONCRETE PRODUCER magazines and sponsored by LaFarge, the two-hour program brought together female professionals from all segments of the concrete construction industry, and provided them with a unique opportunity to connect with peers. View videos of the presentations at www.concreteconstruction.net. **CC**

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