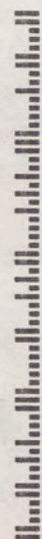


PROGRESSIVE
Rentals

THE VOICE OF THE RENTAL-PURCHASE INDUSTRY
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2004

READY
TO
RUN
THE SHOW

APRO'S NEW
PRESIDENT
SHANNON STRUNK
IS A GO-GO GUY
WITH A BIG,
BIG VISION



S52 P1 *****3-DIGIT 787
BILL KEESE
APRO
1504 ROBIN HOOD TRAIL
AUSTIN, TX 78703-2624

100%

**The chance we're
calling on RTO dealers to
convert to Aaron's.**

Do The Math.

AARON'S SALES AND LEASE OWNERSHIP AVERAGE PER STORE

Average Total Revenue	\$1,329,198
Average Pre-Tax Earnings	\$160,586
Average Pre-Tax Cash Flow	\$153,218

The above averages are based on the actual results of the company-operated stores from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003. Of these 231 stores, 97 (42.0%) stores had higher average total revenue, 115 (49.8%) stores had higher average pre-tax earnings, 118 (51.1%) had higher average pre-tax cash flow, and 81 (35.1%) had higher average total revenue, average pre-tax earnings, and average pre-tax cash flow. As a serious investor, wouldn't you be interested in learning more?

Even though the above figures are actual results, the FTC requires us to include the following statement. CAUTION: "The figures are only estimates; there is no assurance that you'll do as well. If you rely on our figures, you must accept the risk of not doing as well."

0%

**The chance we won't
listen when you call.**

You know the RTO industry and you know that Aaron's, with over \$1 billion dollars in annual systemwide revenue, is on an aggressive growth track awarding new franchises, converting or acquiring existing RTO dealers and opening company stores. When we come to your market, we offer you a unique opportunity to join the Aaron's team. Just "Do the Math" and you'll see why owning an Aaron's Sales & Lease Ownership franchise is a smart business decision. And our proven systems, volume-purchasing discounts, financing programs, national advertising and more, ensure your competitive advantage. We're coming and opportunity is knocking. Are you ready to open the door?

Call Jim Thrash today at 1-800-551-6015



Aaron Rents, Inc. is traded on NYSE (RNT) ©2004 Aaron Rents, Inc.

REFRIGERATORS

RANGES

MICROWAVES



PRETTY. PRODUCTIVE.




The life of a rental appliance is a rough one. Often having to withstand several owners in its lifetime, they each need to be built to last. And at Whirlpool Corporation, they are. With full one-year warranties to back them up, our appliances also offer adjustable settings which allow you to clean everything from denims to delicates. Plus they look great, with colors and styles your customers can appreciate. But not as much as you'll appreciate our extremely low service incidence rates. For more information on our complete line of products and services contact Brian Duke at 269-923-2479. **JUST IMAGINE®**

www.whirlpool.com

888-567-7368

®Registered trademark/™Trademark of Whirlpool, U.S.A. ©2004 Whirlpool Corporation.

APRS Associate Member since 1981



PROGRESSIVE
Rentals

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2004

28 | READY TO RUN THE SHOW

As Shannon Strunk and his wife, Cynthia Baber-Strunk, prepare to open their 49th rent-to-own store in their fourth state, Strunk has taken on a second job as 2004-05 president of APRO and, as ever, he's revved up and ready to go.

BY KRISTEN CARD

34 | CLOCK WATCHING

New overtime rules bring some clarity to what has long been a woolly patchwork of regulations. Because the new regulations are somewhat clearer about what types of employees must be granted overtime, the number of wage-and-hour lawsuits should decline.

BY PHILLIP M. PERRY

38 | THREE NEW BOOKS FROM THE POVERTY PRESS

The poverty press—authors who crank out studies and reports on how low-income Americans live—should be of great interest to rental dealers as they can glean insight into how a portion of the RTO customer base thinks and behaves. Another reason to read these books is because the RTO business is often highlighted in these pages as an example, usually among many others, of how the poor are made to pay more.

BY ED WINN III

44 | TAMPA: TREASURE THE MEMORIES

A summary and photo album of the highlights of the 2004 APRO Convention and Buying Show at the Tampa Marriott Waterside in Florida.

DEPARTMENTS

7 | NEWS BREAK

20 | PRESIDENT'S VIEW

BY SHANNON STRUNK

22 | RTO PERSPECTIVE

BY BILL KEESE

24 | THINKING RTO

BY ED WINN III

52 | WHO'S WHO IN COMPUTERS

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID OMER

For sale A small/medium-sized Midwestern rent-to-own store, 281 B0R. This store—located in Enid, Oklahoma—has been in operation since June 1996. Customer relations and retention are a high priority as evidenced by this store being awarded Enid's best rent-to-own store for 2004. The store sale price of \$175,000 includes store fixtures, equipment and delivery vehicle. Call (405) 410-5823 for more information.



Soar With The Power of Information

Information... It gives wings to your Rent-to-Own business. While it can be a powerful tool, it can also be difficult to manage. Fast and powerful **RSSS** software manages critical information in real time from all of your stores, capitalizing on the latest developments in internet and business technology. Reliable system stability makes **RSSS** the standard for the industry, giving you the freedom to focus your attention on your business, not your software. If you dream of leaving system instability behind and getting back to making money, then **RSSS** Rental and Sales Software is the ultimate solution for you.



Online in Real Time!

RSSS
RENTAL & SALES
SOFTWARE SYSTEMS

The Power of Information
A High Touch Company

Call us at **1.800.334.5224** or visit **www.rsss.com**.

APRO Associate Member since 1986

PROGRESSIVE Rentals

VOLUME 23, NO. 5

PUBLISHED BY THE
ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE RENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS

EDITOR

Julie Stephen Sherrier

ART DIRECTOR

Neil Ferguson

**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
[ADVERTISING]**

Cindy Ferguson, CEM

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Ed Winn III

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bill Keese

COLUMNISTS

Bill Keese, Shannon Strunk
and Ed Winn III

CONTRIBUTORS

Kristen Card, Phillip M. Perry
and Ed Winn III

DIRECTOR OF CIRCULATION

Laurie Hill

EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING OFFICES

1504 Robin Hood Trail
Austin, Texas 78703

512/794-0095; fax 512/794-0097

E-mail: jsherrier@aprovision.org

www.APROvision.org

APRO OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Shannon Strunk

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

"Tiger" John Cleek

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Larry Carrico

SECRETARY

Kevin Quinn

TREASURER

David P. David

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Lyn Leach

DIRECTORS

Rich Bartel, Terry Beville, Robert Briley,
Sidney Burton, Chris Korst, Ernie
Lewallen, John Rogers, Gary Romine,
Richard Rose, Wayne Sutton, Mike Talley
and Mark Windsor

PROGRESSIVE RENTALS (ISSN 8750-6106) is published bimonthly by the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations (APRO) at 1504 Robin Hood Trail, Austin, Texas 78703; 512/794-0095. Basic price \$1 per year to APRO members. Additional subscriptions: U.S. and Canada—1 year (6 issues), \$30; 2 years (12 issues), \$50; 3 years (18 issues), \$65. Periodicals postage paid at Austin, Texas. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Progressive Rentals, 1504 Robin Hood Trail, Austin, Texas 78703.**

Copyright © by APRO, 2004. All rights reserved. Cover and contents may not be reproduced in whole or in part without prior written permission. Back issues \$5 each, subject to availability. For subscription, change of address, back issues, write to above address. Three weeks required for changes on orders. Allow six to eight weeks for the first subscription copy to be shipped.

APRO

You never know who's
really a snake in the grass.



Count on sub-prime consumer information from Teletrack to keep from being bitten.

Would you rent to an individual who's skipped from other rental purchase stores? Teletrack knows who has. We can tell you if they have skipped before, or if they are using a fraudulent Social Security number. We can also tell you if they have rented similar merchandise recently from other stores. Teletrack can help you identify individuals most likely to skip. Avoid the snakes out there. Make decisions based on the right information. Protect your rental-purchase business with Teletrack's risk analysis information.

For more information call today! You can also visit www.teletrack.com or email webinfo@teletrack.com.

Risk Analysis - Fraud Alert - Skip-Tracing

1-800-729-6981 ext. 3

APRO Associate Member since 1991



Thank you!

APRO thanks the following companies for their generous sponsorships at the 2004 Convention and Buying Show, August 4-7 in Tampa, Florida:



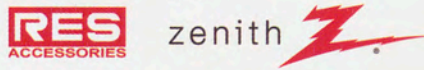
APRO HOSPITALITY ROOM
2-5 p.m., August 4, and 9 a.m.-1 p.m.,
August 5 and 6, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., August 7



WELCOME COCKTAIL RECEPTION
6-7:30 p.m., Wednesday, August 4



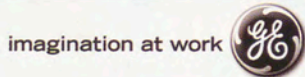
TOM KITCHENS/JOE EASON GOLF TOURNAMENT
8 a.m., Wednesday, August 4



SEMINAR REFRESHMENT BREAKS
Friday, August 6 (RES) and Saturday, August 7 (Zenith)



GALA COCKTAIL RECEPTION: "SPLITSVILLE"
6-9 p.m., Thursday, August 5



GENERAL SESSION, BUSINESS MEETING AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER
10 a.m.-12 p.m., Thursday, August 5



EXHIBIT HALL CHAMPAGNE WELCOME
12 p.m., Thursday, August 5



COMPLIMENTARY ICE CREAM IN EXHIBIT HALL
3-4 p.m., Thursday, August 5 (Ashley) and Friday, August 6 (RentSmart)



APRO PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION
5:30-7 p.m., Friday, August 6



CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST
9-10:30 a.m., Saturday, August 7



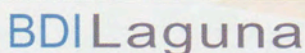
AWARDS RECEPTION
7-8 p.m., Saturday, August 7



AWARDS DINNER: "HAVANA NIGHTS"
8-10 p.m., Saturday, August 7



COMPLIMENTARY RELAXATION STATION



CONVENTION DAILY NEWSLETTERS/BADGES AND NECK STRAPS



REGISTRATION COMPUTERS



REGISTRATION ELECTRONICS



INTERNET CAFÉ



CONVENTION TOTE BAGS



POCKET SHOW GUIDE

news

B R E A K

COMPILED BY
JULIE SHERRIER

RTO revenue grows; customer count stagnant



The annual revenue for the nation's rent-to-own industry grew by more than \$250 million to \$6.23 billion—a healthy 4 percent growth—according to the *2004 Rental-Purchase Industry Survey*. Last year, the industry's revenue was approximately \$5.98 billion.

Rental-purchase industry 10-year economic comparison

ANNUAL REVENUE / \$ BILLION									
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
\$3.8	\$3.9	\$4.1	\$4.4	\$4.7	\$5	\$5.3	\$5.6	\$6	\$6.2
ANNUAL CUSTOMERS / MILLION									
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
2.7	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.3	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.7
ANNUAL MERCHANDISE UNITS ON RENT (B.O.R.) * / MILLION									
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
5.1	5.4	5.8	6.4	7.5	6.9	7	6.4	6.5	7.7
ANNUAL AVERAGE PRICE PER UNIT (A.P.U.) **									
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
\$54.78	\$54.99	\$54.00	\$54.04	\$56.07	\$56.75	\$58.00	\$66.27	\$65.00	\$67.61
ANNUAL VALUE OF CONTRACTS / \$ BILLION									
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
\$3.2	\$3.1	\$3.1	\$3.7	\$3.9	\$4.1	\$4.5	\$4.7	\$4.6	\$4.7
TOTAL NUMBER OF STORES									
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7,500	7,500	7,750	7,750	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,300	8,300	8,300

*B.O.R. = balance on rent; **A.P.U. = average price per unit per month

Curiously, the number of customers served in the RTO industry in 2004 experienced a loss of 240,000 households served. The number of customers served in 2004, according to the survey, was 2.7 million, compared to 2.94 million in 2003, which shows that the RTO customer base continues to be stagnant.

The annual survey was released in August at the APRO Convention and Buying Show in Tampa, FL.

Other interesting statistics show that the number of total merchandise units on rent grew from 6.6 million to more than 7.7 million over the past year, illustrating yet another year of healthy growth (6.4 million in 2002 vs. almost 6.6 million in 2003). The annual average household expenditure for RTO products grew from \$1,585 in 2003 to \$1,650 in 2004, reversing the previous year's decline. The average rental rate per unit per month decreased from \$65.73 in 2003 to \$64.29 in 2004, according to the survey.

For 2004, the average store has annual revenue of \$482,175 with 625 items on rent at any one time compared to \$484,299 in revenue with 613 items on rent at any one time in 2003.

As far as product breakdown numbers are concerned, there is a

substantial increase of HDTV rentals (0.6 percent in 2003 vs. 2.3 percent in 2004), computers (4.9 percent in 2003 vs. 5.5 percent in 2004) and washers and dryers (13.6 percent in 2003 vs. 15.6 percent in 2004). Items showing a slight decline include TVs, VCRs, DVD players, stereos and sofas, loveseats and uphol-

stered chairs.

Forty-eight RTO companies responded to the 2004 survey. APRO members who participated receive the survey free of charge. Otherwise, the cost of the survey is \$300 to both members and non-members. To get a copy of the survey, contact APRO at 800/204-2776.

Aaron Rents acquires Home Express stores

Aaron Rents announced the acquisition of 25 rental-purchase stores in a cash transaction from Home Express Inc., based in Spartanburg, SC, on August 31.

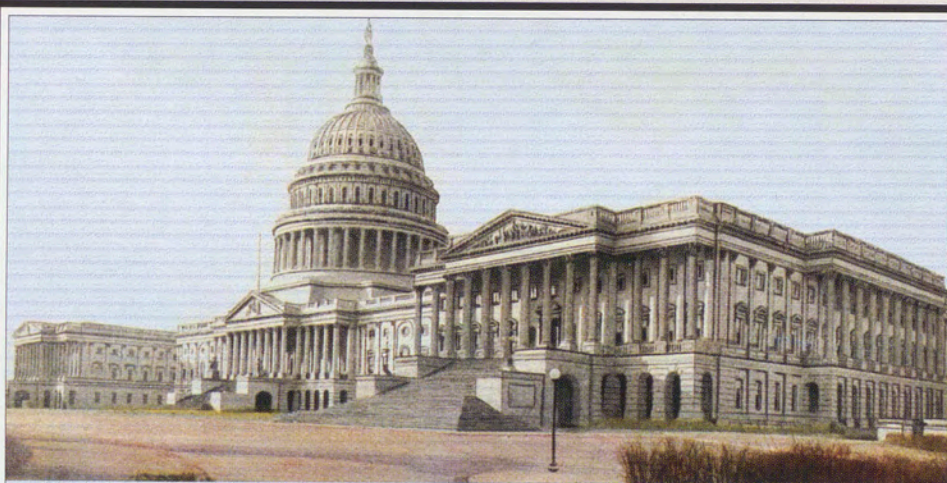
Home Express operat-

ed 21 stores in South Carolina and four stores in North Carolina. Immediately subsequent to the acquisition, the company will sell five of the stores to its franchisees in the same markets as Home Express. Fourteen of the Home Express stores will be converted to company-operated Aaron's Sales & Lease Ownership stores and six of the stores will be merged with other company-operated stores. Four stores will be merged into existing Aaron's Sales & Lease Ownership franchised stores and one store will be converted to a franchised store. The current annual revenue of all the Home Express stores is approximately \$12 million.

"We are excited about this acquisition as it increases our presence in the Carolinas, an important and growing market for us," says R. Charles Loudermilk Sr., chairman and chief executive officer of Aaron Rents.

Northwest RTO dealer Bartel joins APRO board of directors

Regal RTO's Rich Bartel of Vancouver, WA, has joined the APRO board of directors for a two-year term. He was elected to take over the position



APRO 2005 Legislative Conference dates set

The 2005 APRO Legislative Conference, held annually in Washington, D.C., has been scheduled for May 17-18 at the Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel. This conference draws rental dealers and other industry supporters from across the country to meet and educate their elected officials on issues facing the rent-to-own industry.

"We have high hopes that the industry will have succeeded in its mission to have RTO federal legislation passed this fall," says APRO Executive Director Bill Keese. "However, whether that goal is achieved or not, we must continue our efforts to promote and protect our interests among our elected officials."

To make room reservations, call the Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel at 202/484-1000. Registration forms will be available next February.

2004-05

OCTOBER

5-6

Arkansas Rental Dealers Association fall conference, Heber Springs, AR, 870/910-0058, ext. 305

5-7

TRIB Group board meeting, Atlanta, GA, 770/451-4302
www.tribgroup.com

11-15

APRO fall board meeting, Austin, TX, 800/204-2776

14-20

High Point Furniture Market, High Point, NC, 336/888-3700
www.ihfc.com

20-24

Premier Rental-Purchase Dealer Retreat, Pine Island, NC, 757/258-8947
www.premierrents.net

21-22

RSSS User's Conference: "Power '04," Corpus Christi, TX, 361/993-1790, ext. 2119,
www.rsssusersconference.com

27-28

Florida Rental Dealers Association meeting, Orlando, FL, 813/623-5461,
www.frdar-to.com

JANUARY 2005

6-9

Consumer Electronics Show, Las Vegas, NV, 703/907-7600,
www.cesweb.org

21-25

ColorTyme Winter Operation meeting, Dallas, TX, 972/403-4945,
www.colortyme.com

21-24

San Francisco Furniture Mart, 415/522-2311, www.sfmart.com

FEBRUARY 2005

17-20

Tupelo Furniture Mart, Tupelo, MS, 662/844-1473,
www.tupelomarket.com

24

Alabama-Mississippi Rental Dealers Association general membership meeting, Choctaw, MS, 228/769-3795



that was vacated recently by RentWay's Ron

DeMoss. Bartel previously served on the APRO board as secretary and has been involved with APRO since 1983. He has served on the board of the Washington Rental Dealers Association and as president of the Oregon Rental Dealers Association.

Strunks to open Rent-n-Roll stores in Florida and Alabama

Newly elected APRO President Shannon Strunk and his wife, Cynthia Baber Strunk, recently entered into an agreement with Tampa-based Rent-n-Roll to develop freestanding stores in north Florida and several markets in Alabama. The first store is scheduled to open in Pensacola, FL, hopefully by November.

"I am excited to pursue another venture in the family of companies that we are developing. We have a wonderful team and they are eager to begin rolling," says Cynthia Baber Strunk.

In other Rent-n-Roll news, Ernie Lewallen's first Rent-n-Roll store, located in Covington, KY, broke the first month



RTO TV programming now available

Imagery Marketing Consultants, a company owned by Rent One's Larry Carrico, recently launched "RTO TV"—rent-to-own specific television programming that can be played on televisions at rent-to-own stores. Currently 300 rent-to-own stores have paid subscriptions to the service and Imagery is working to have RTO TV in 500 stores by the beginning of next year.

The two-hour loop is produced on a DVD that is shipped to the stores on a quarterly basis to offer fresh programming. The programming is customized to each subscriber while providing entertainment through music videos, product advertisements from vendors to better promote and explain the products in the showroom and generic industry messaging to better explain the rent-to-own concept and in-store specials customized to each store.

"Before RTO TV, employees and customers were being bombarded with a random clutter of broadcast television at each store. Now we have a direct message to a direct audience," says RTO TV Producer Rick Linton. "We now have the ability to educate and promote the rent-to-own industry, our products and the rent-to-own store in a very powerful manner." For more information, go to www.rto-tv.com/.

revenue record for the entire chain. Also, Mike Kent Jr. announced the opening of two more

stores in the Miami market. Last but not least, Jeff Miller will be opening a third Rent-n-Roll

NEWS BREAK

store in the Charlotte, NC, market within the next couple of months.

New credit scoring system to target RTO customers

The national credit scoring system, called FICO, which determines whether a consumer qualifies for credit, recently has been revamped to assist those who don't have any credit history on file from traditional sources such as credit cards, student

loans and other types of borrowing that FICO reports usually show.

The new credit scores will target "underserved" consumers, including recent immigrants, divorcees, students, widows and others who don't have enough of a traditional credit history to qualify for a standard credit score. Fair Isaac, the Minneapolis-based company that compiles the scores, developed an "extended" score that will pull data about consumers from nontraditional sources, including payday lenders, rent-to-own stores and deposit



accounts.

"Between 5 percent and 15 percent of all loan applications are just dropped on the floor because there is no score available for that person," says Craig Dillon, vice president of global scoring solutions at Fair Isaac. "We believe we will

be able to provide scores for about half of that population."

The expanded scoring system is currently not being sold to lenders, but will be available to lenders if they are approached by borrowers who desire credit but don't have a regular

Look what's NEW at ACT!

InFocus
The Big Picture

InFocus
Home Theater Projectors
LCD HDTV Thin Displays

Kodak

KODAK
Digital Cameras with Printer Docks

boost
mobile

Boost Mobile
Nextel Prepaid Cell Phones

fuel

FUEL
Prepaid Cell Phone Services



Alliance
Computing
Technologies,
Inc.

Where finding the right product is just the beginning

1-888-615-5228

APRO Associate Member since 1994

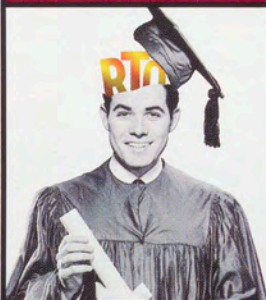
FICO score. Rental dealers who want to promote the development of a healthy credit rating to their customers who pay on time should respond if contacted by various consumer reporting agencies who collect and provide consumer payment data to FICO.

Former Rent Rite group launches new RTO chain

"I believe there is tremendous opportunity for a new regional chain now that so much consolidation has taken place," says Tom Mitchell, former chief financial officer of Rent Rite. "Customers want and deserve a choice and our plan fulfills that need." Mitchell and a group of former Rent Rite executives plan to open or acquire 25 stores within the next 12 months called Payday Rental Purchase and Sales.

"When Rent-A-Center purchased Rent Rite this past May, I knew immediately that I would begin a new RTO endeavor," says Mitchell. The new stores will offer name-brand furniture, appliances and electronics as well as payday advances and other non-traditional services. Mitchell says the company, based in the West Palm Beach, FL, area, will be focusing on growth in

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN RENT-TO-OWN



WWW.APROVISION.ORG

APRO'S NEW RENTAL TRAINING ONLINE COURSE

ALSO AVAILABLE:

INTRODUCTION TO RENT-TO-OWN
RENTAL DELIVERY AND SAFETY
ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT IN RENT-TO-OWN
COMMUNICATIONS IN THE RTO WORKPLACE

SOMETHING HOLDING YOU BACK?

WE CAN HELP!

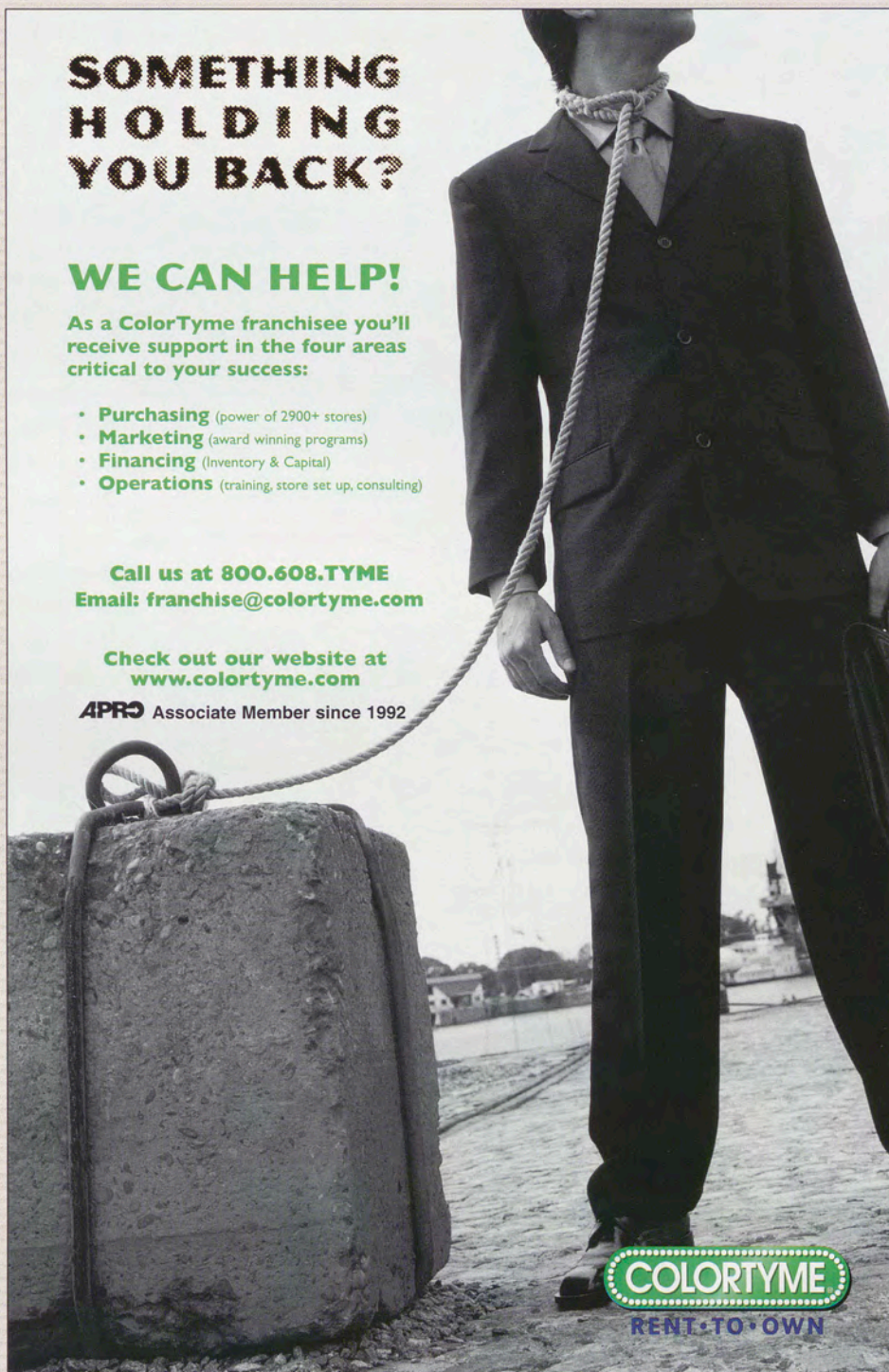
As a ColorTyme franchisee you'll receive support in the four areas critical to your success:

- **Purchasing** (power of 2900+ stores)
- **Marketing** (award winning programs)
- **Financing** (Inventory & Capital)
- **Operations** (training, store set up, consulting)

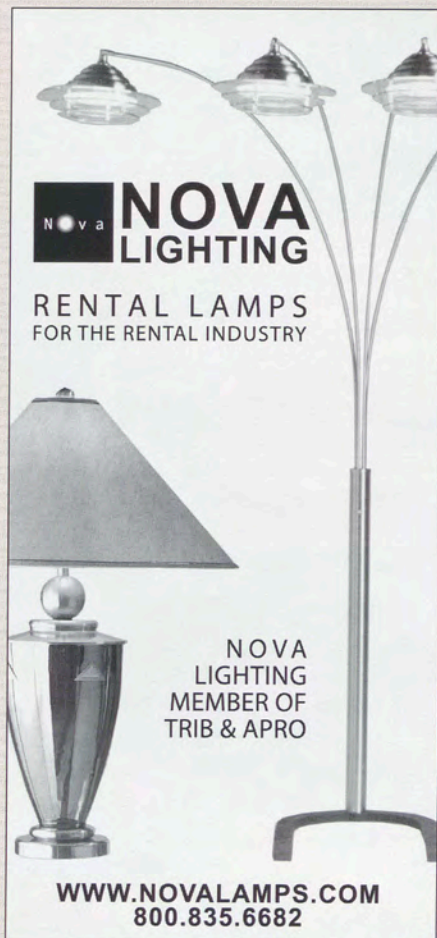
Call us at 800.608.TYME
Email: franchise@colortyme.com

Check out our website at
www.colortyme.com

APRO Associate Member since 1992



COLORTYME
RENT-TO-OWN



NOVA LIGHTING
RENTAL LAMPS
FOR THE RENTAL INDUSTRY

NOVA LIGHTING
MEMBER OF
TRIB & APRO

WWW.NOVALAMPS.COM
800.835.6682

APRO Associate Member since 1995

PREMIERTM
RENTAL - PURCHASE

**Open Your Own
RTO Company**

We are a licensing company that provides startup and ongoing assistance to experienced RTO operators. We can provide financial assistance with startup capital and have a program to help new business owners obtain inventory financing with SBA Guaranteed Loan assistance. If you have the desire to own your RTO company, this is an opportunity you must review. See our Web site at www.premierrents.net for complete details or call Trooper Earle at (800) 2-Premier.

**EQUITY INVESTMENT FUND AND
SBA LOAN ASSISTANCE**

NEWS BREAK



**Start planning for
the 2005 winter markets**

Fall is in the air and it's time for everyone to start thinking and planning on attending the upcoming winter markets. APRO would again like to invite all rental dealers to join us at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, January 6-9. BDI-Laguna will sponsor a rental dealers' hospitality suite 6-7:30 p.m., January 7, at Mandalay Bay. The APRO booth, always a popular gathering place for rental dealers, will be located in the lobby of the Las Vegas Convention Center (booth #L11). For more information on the Winter CES Show, call 703/907-7600 or visit the CES website at www.cesweb.org.

Other markets of interest to rent-to-own dealers include the San Francisco Furniture Mart, January 21-24. APRO will not be attending this market, but for more information you can call 514/552-2311 or visit www.sfmart.com.

As always, APRO will be participating in the Tupelo Furniture Market, which is being held February 17-20. The APRO booth will be in its usual location in the lobby of Hall B of the Mississippi Market Complex. Rental dealers are invited for complimentary hors d'oeuvres and drinks 5-7 p.m. February 17, in Tupelo Building No. 4 (sponsored by Ashley Furniture). For more information on the market, 662/844-1473 or visit www.tupelomarket.com.

Another market you may want to add to your calendar is the High Point Furniture Market, scheduled for April 14-20. Although APRO will not be present at that market, you can get more information on High Point by calling 336/888-2700 or by visiting the Web site at www.ihfc.com.

the Southwest and Midwest initially and is already in discussion with potential sellers.

Former Rent Rite execs joining Mitchell are Jim Whitney, director of operations; Tom Simon, director of purchasing and marketing coordinator; Joe Janik, director of training and acquisitions coordinator; John Jenkins, controller and IT director; John Kennedy, director of internal audit; Leslie Collins, human resources manager; and Paul Richards and Andy Smith as district managers.

Rent One adds online shopping program

A new online shopping program for current and new RTO customers is now available through RTOtoGO.com, developed by Imagery Marketing Consultants in Missouri. Illinois' Rent One is the first RTO dealer to sign up for this innovative online shopping experience, which is available to rental-purchase dealers nationwide.



With RTOtoGO, customers can view items by category, choose their preferred pricing (weekly, monthly or cash), fill out a secure online order form and click. It's even easier for returning customers who have estab-

lished an online account since the site keeps customer information stored and ready for future orders.

While the site and information sent through the online process is secure, customers also can shop online and then order by phone with their nearest rent-to-own store. No payments are made until the merchandise is delivered.

Customers can find the nearest participating store location through a zip code search at RTO-



Distributing Technology Solutions Worldwide.



Possibilities Never End.

computer technology | consumer electronics | cellular products

At SED, we take possibilities and turn them into real solutions. The sky is the limit whether you are looking for computer products, consumer electronics or cellular solutions. Stop searching for the hard to reach products. See how far our selections will take you! Call Sed International today for products from leading manufacturers like these:

1BIT acer AOpen CREATIVE Elight intel Maxtor MSI NETGEAR SAMSUNG DIGITAL SVA TEAC XIMETA

Broaden Your Horizons. Call SED Today!

www.sedonline.com 1-800-745-7700



Atlanta, GA | Bogotá, Colombia | Buenos Aires, Argentina | City of Industry, CA | Dallas, TX | Miami, FL | San Juan, Puerto Rico



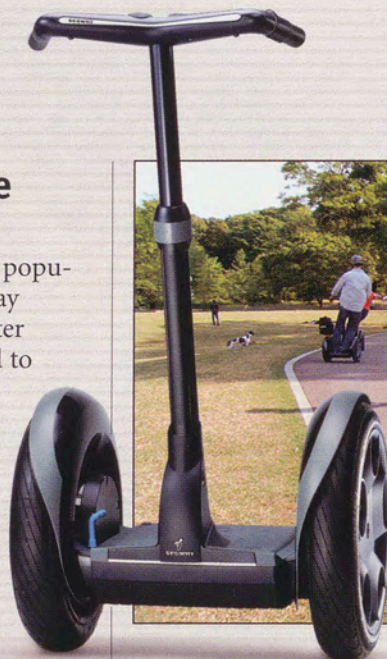
NEWS BREAK

toGO.com, which will be promoted through aggressive online marketing, print materials and television and radio advertising.

"RTOtoGO has been an instant success," says Carrico. "We rolled it out at [the] APRO [Buying Show] and Marty Smith signed up three more customers immediately. All a customer has to do is enter their zip code and Imagery will route the customer to the appropriate client's Web site. Learn more this latest concept by visiting RTOtoGO.com.

Segway: the next VCR?

The increasing popularity of the Segway Human Transporter vehicle has turned to rent-to-own in order to capture a larger consumer market share. The two-wheeled vehicles, featured in numerous feature films with a futuristic theme, range in price from \$3,000 to \$4,500 retail, but an innovative company in the San Francisco Bay area is quickly



profiting from renting the low-maintenance vehicles to the public. "We started thinking

that with the growing popularity of the Segway, maybe a rental business would be a good way to get new people into it,"

Introducing 2 New Programs!

from Imagery Marketing Consultants



RTOtoGO

This innovative online shopping experience helps customers find your stores and makes it easy for them to order online! The custom store front can be maintained by your staff or ours! Don't miss out on this new sales tool that's already proven successful!

www.rtotogo.com



RTO-TV

Tell customers and employees about the benefits of your company and RTO – it's easy with this custom 2-hour in-store video playing on all your televisions! Excellent production, custom messages and the latest music videos combine for cost effective marketing that works!

www.rtotv.com



Find out more about all of our great services by visiting us online at www.imageryadv.com or by calling 314 835.0004.

We're Working For Better RTO!

says Darren Romar of Slide4Less.com. Romar and his partner, Steve Steinberg, run a ski lift ticket Web site and also dabble in the electric skateboard business and now have entered the Segway market. Slide4Less is now an official Segway retailer and does most of its marketing on the Internet.

"We rent the machines for \$20 an hour, \$99 a day or \$489 a week, with 60 percent of the rental fee going toward the purchase of a new unit," says Steinberg. "We have made much more money renting the Segways than by selling them. All of our 29 units are rented out almost every weekend and all we have to do is recharge them and fill the tires once in a while."

Steinberg says that he and Romar waited until they collected enough rent from one Segway prior to buying their next one and are now listed on the Segway Web site as a retailer. "We get anywhere from 5,000 to 6,000 hits a week on the Segway site," he says. "When the unit is rented for 35 days, it has paid for itself."

Steinberg stresses the low-maintenance of the units and the safety features of the Segway as being the primary selling features, as well as the novelty and entertainment.

To find out more, visit the Segway Web site at

RTO Pro Software

**COMPLETE POINT-OF-SALE SOFTWARE
FOR RENTAL AND RETAIL STORES ONLY**

\$899⁰⁰

OR LEASE FOR \$75 A MONTH

RTO Pro includes:

Complete inventory, including depreciation
Retail sales | Complete rental | Check cashing
Collection and overdue reports and on-screen account
Management | Billing | Airtime accounts
Contract laser printing | Cash-advance transactions
Data conversions from other software available

For Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000 and XP—single and network versions

HOME OFFICE SOFTWARE AVAILABLE!

FREE DEMO CALL [800] 351-6299

OR VISIT OUR WEB SITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

OR TO DOWNLOAD THE DEMO

WWW.RTOPRO.COM

FUTUREWARE ENTERPRISES INC.

2503 Gables Drive, Eustis, Florida 32726

APRS Associate Member since 2000

"May I help you?" is not a rhetorical question



Does it seem to you that, somewhere along the line, work ethics changed? In our parents' day, weren't more people polite? And punctual? And didn't praise for a job well done make those workers swell with pride?

Time hasn't changed the way we do business at **TRIB Group**. For over twenty years, we've been serving the needs of independent rental dealers all over the nation, negotiating price structures with vendors and manufacturers and giving all our members the buying power of The Big Guys. Our goal is simple: you must be satisfied with our services. Or we'll give you your money back.* Pretty straight-forward guarantee policy.

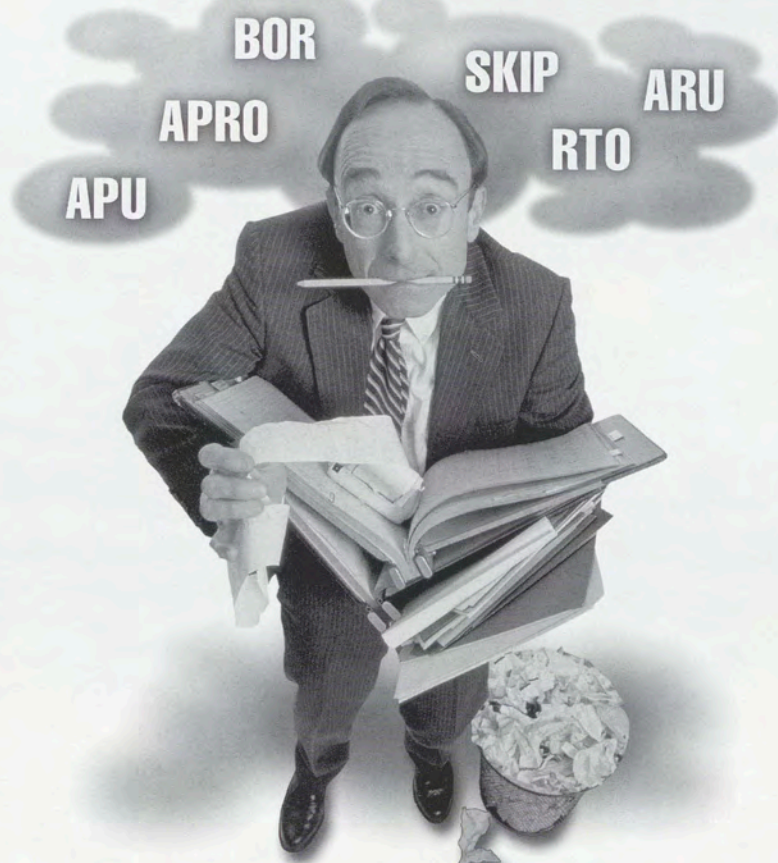
TRIB Group

✉ 2775 Cruse Road #2401
Lawrenceville, GA 30044
☎ phone 770-451-4302
☎ TOLL FREE 866-800-TRIB
☎ fax 770-451-4312
🌐 www.tribgroup.com



* If, after 90 days, you do not perceive significant benefits from membership, we will refund your joining fee in full. You must be in good standing at the time of the refund.

APRS Associate Member since 1983



**WHEN YOUR ACCOUNTANTS
DON'T KNOW "BOR" FROM "IRS,"
THAT CAN SPELL "TROUBLE."**

It's your money. How much you get to keep depends in part on how smart your accountants are. The people at Kirkpatrick, Sprecker know their business. But just as important, they know yours, too.



Our family has used Kirkpatrick, Sprecker & Company for almost 40 years. I have always been impressed with their ability to stay in front of the accounting changes that happen on a regular basis in the RTO industry. They always have maintained a reliability and consistency that I expect. Their service has been great from 1 to 500 stores.

Mike Talley - Talley Rents, Inc.

From the inception of RTO over 30 years ago, this Wichita, Kansas, firm has included among its clients some of the industry's most prominent players. Kirkpatrick, Sprecker

has been at the heart of the industry's efforts to standardize and improve accounting practices. They've represented RTO interests before tax and regulatory agencies. They've worked side-by-side with RTO clients of every size, offering informed advice on financial matters of every sort.

No CPA firm in the country knows more about Rent-To-Own. Call 877-299-1532 or e-mail jim@kscpa.com.

**KS KIRKPATRICK, SPRECKER
& COMPANY, LLP**

311 South Hillside • Wichita, Kansas 67211-2195
Phone: 877-299-1532 • Fax: 316-685-4575 • On the Web at www.kscpa.com
Associate Member APRO

NEWS BREAK

www.segway.com and/or the Segway section of the Slide4Less.com.

APRO Vendor Advisory Committee elects new officers

On August 6, at the exhibitor breakfast and election during the APRO Convention, six associate APRO members were elected or re-elected to the Vendor Advisory Committee to serve a two-year term. Four of the current committee members were re-elected. They are:

Don Julson, Zenith Electronics; Bob Saunders, Michels & Co.; Tim Shannon, Thomson Inc.; and John Rogers, High Touch Inc. The two newly elected members are Craig Moon with Sears Contract Sales and Marty Smith of Imagery Marketing Consultants.

These vendors will join the following committee members who are serving out the second year of their term: Ellison Crider, RSSS; Michael Gerwe Jr., RES Accessories; John Blair, Jerry Bogo Co.; John Foster, Alliance Computing Technologies; Karen Greenwald, Ther-A-Pedic International; Rich Anderson, Ideal Software; and Norm Smith, honorary member

The next Vendor Advi-

sory Committee meeting will be held in Austin, TX, on October 11.

Nationwide Mattress and Furniture Warehouse appoints new management team

Nationwide Mattress and Furniture Warehouse, a national retail chain and an affiliate of Sun Capital Partners Inc. of Boca Raton, FL announced the appoint-

OUR BUDDYS

IN TAMPA: Buddy's Home Furnishings welcomed APRO members to Floridian paradise for the 2004 Convention and Buying Show. APRO Executive Director Bill Keese paid a visit to Buddy's home offices during the convention.



ment of their new senior management team.

Steve Glucksman, has joined Nationwide as the new CEO and President.

Glucksman has held various executive positions throughout his 20-year career. In his most recent position at Brandon

Home Furnishings, he was the President & COO. Glucksman has also held executive positions at Rent Rite, Crazy George's

SPENDING CONTROLS
PURCHASING CONSOLIDATION
STORE OPENING PACKAGES

APRO
Associate Member Since 1986

Coast-to-Coast
ONE STOP SHOP

TRIB GROUP
Approved Vendor

APPLIANCES • ELECTRONICS • CHEMICALS • FURNITURE [®]

RES
ACCESSORIES
JEWELRY • WAREHOUSE • PROMOTIONAL • FORMS

- Over 15 years experience serving the Rental Purchase Industry
- More than 2000 Available Products
- Eliminate Multiple Suppliers
- Customized Corporate Programs

ORDER HOTLINE
1.800.444.7304
FAX :1.800.444.7312
www.resacc.com

(U.K.) and Rent-A-Center. When asked about the opportunity with Nationwide, Glucksman stated: "With our management team and experienced employee base, we expect to capitalize on the opportunities and drive business benefiting customers, employees and vendors alike."

Peter Limeri has joined Nationwide as its chief financial officer, and has more than 15 years of executive financial and operational experience. Prior to joining Nationwide, Limeri was the CFO of Ander-

E-MAIL ALERT

The APRO staff has changed e-mail addresses. Please update your address books!

- Executive Director Bill Keese: bkeese@aprovision.org
- Office Manager Tulisha Carson: tcarson@aprovision.org
- Marketing Director Cindy Ferguson: cferguson@aprovision.org
- Art Director Neil Ferguson: nferguson@aprovision.org
- Membership Director Laurie Hill: lhill@aprovision.org
- Administrative Manager Jeannie Hutchison: jhutchison@aprovision.org
- Education Director Shelley Martinek: smartinek@aprovision.org
- Public Affairs Director Richard May: rmay@aprovision.org
- Communications Director Julie Sherrier: jsherrier@aprovision.org
- Government Relations Director Ron Waters: rwaters@aprovision.org

son Press Incorporated. Frank Trapasso will remain in his post as the chief operating officer, which he has held since 2002. Trapasso has more than 35 years in senior retail management positions, including mer-

chandising and retail store organization. His background includes work for Fortune 500 firms throughout the U.S. including Circuit City, Sears and Eye Care Centers of America. Nationwide Mattress

and Furniture Warehouse specializes in affordable bedding and furniture. Nationwide buys merchandise direct from factories, avoiding "middle man" prices and passes savings down the retail chain to the end customer.

New growth, support & development

dedicated to meeting RTO's software needs!

- Added tech-support staff...99.3% of calls answered LIVE!
- Regularly scheduled training courses teach users to run stores efficiently & profitably!
- Ideal User Meetings in our new 30,000 sq ft facility provide invaluable learning opportunities!
- New Development & added functionality of "The Ideal Rental Manager (TIRM):"
 - Price tag printing ■ Barcoding & electronic inventory audits
 - Quickbooks/Peachtree Accounting Interface ■ Expanded reports ■ Laser agreements



Our November '03 aquisition increased our store count from 7 to 15 locations. The new stores were operating on several other leading RTO management systems, which we confidently converted to The Ideal Rental Manager (TIRM). Both our corporate staff and store managers have been very pleased with our decision to entrust our business to Ideal Software.

Robert Briley ■ RENT CITY / ABILENE, TX



Contact us today!

Tel 800 964-3325 x153
www.idealss.com



IDEAL
Software Systems, Inc.



THE HOTTEST TECHNOLOGY UNDER THE SUN.

Opportunity is coming to market. Featuring 130,000 potential partners, competitors and market makers. New products from 2,400 exhibitors. CES is the world's first look at the hottest technologies under the sun. Make the connections that will make your year, and watch your business grow. Register today at www.CESweb.org.

JANUARY 6-9, 2005 | LAS VEGAS

2005 International CES®

www.CESweb.org

grow



I have always had the greatest respect for our members and feel privileged to be a part of the APRO membership. I look forward to all of our meetings: the Mid-Year Conference, the Legislative Conference and, of course, our conventions—mainly because I know I will see old friends, new friends and meet new people. These are the people who have made a powerful impact on my life, education and business. It is for this reason that I felt compelled to run for the APRO board of directors five years ago. I want to increase that circle of friends and teach other people that it is APRO's most powerful member benefit. Yes, I

.....
"I believe the opportunity to network with the membership is our best member benefit!"

The influx of new people is what we are all about. They provide the questions that stimulate us into thinking about why we do what we do and how we do it; it either strengthens the reasons or provides the basis for making changes. It is vital to the networking for all of us.

At the convention in Tampa, I was fortunate enough to be elected president of this great Association. I say fortunate because now I have the opportunity to share with more people the most effective way to improve their business and help continue the work of the constant remaking of APRO. As leaders in the Association, it is our responsibility to leave the APRO better than we have received it. Lyn

Meaningful relationships

believe the opportunity to network with the membership is our best member benefit!

I want to focus on increasing the attendance at APRO's networking opportunities. It is from these encounters that I made the change from concentrating on BOR to focusing on revenue. It is from these encounters that I realized the bonus plans our company had in place were no longer an incentive for our employees to perform their best. APRO's networking opportunities create the environments that allow competitors to share "secrets" with each other and improve both companies.

This year, at our convention in Tampa, I witnessed first hand the beginning of many new relationships at our first-time attendee welcome reception. The room was packed with many first-time attendees, APRO board members and others in our industry who just wanted to meet new people. Many of these people will not realize that they started some of the most meaningful relationships in their business career until they reflect on it in the years to come, just like me.



By SHANNON STRUNK
 APRO's President

One of the questions that I struggle with most as APRO president is how to educate our members and non-members of this most meaningful benefit when it only becomes evident a few years down the road. I also struggle with how to educate our current members of their obligation to introduce anyone in this industry who is not a member to the Association.

Leach and the past board have done a great job and have most definitely raised the bar for this year's board.

We have great leaders this year who have stepped up to the plate. Ernie Lewallen is the new chairman for the public relations effort and has exciting ideas to continue improving and building a great image. Chris Korst is the chairman for the Government Relations Committee and will continue our effort to get federal legislation passed that defines our industry. Kevin Quinn, as secretary, will be chairman of the APRO Membership Committee and will succeed in continuing our membership growth. Mark Windsor has agreed to chair the education committee and is committed to improving the educational opportunities for our membership. John Cleek, as first vice president, will be chairing the Nominations Committee as well as the State Association committee. Larry Carrico, as second vice president, will be chairing the Communications Committee and David P. David, as treasurer, will be chairing the Budget Committee. Robert Briley will be chairing the ethics committee and Sidney Burton will be co-chairing the PAC committee.

It is the very talented board of directors you elected this year who will leave the Association better than we received it so that the new members will have an even better Association to build upon. ■

Shannon Strunk is the president of Baber's Inc. in Pascagoula, MS.

The Ultimate Wireless Notebooks with Intelligent Technology

Thin, Light & Affordable



starting at \$799



N14PA

- Mobile AMD® Athlon® XP-M CPU
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- 14.1" TFT display
- CD-ROM or CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive
- Up to 80GB Max. Hard Drive
- Built-in Wireless LAN



BUILT-IN CD-RW/DVD COMBO DRIVE



THIN AND LIGHT



3-IN-1 MS/MMC/SD CARD READER SLOT



FULL MULTIMEDIA FUNCTIONS

Twinhead recommends Microsoft® Windows® X Professional for Business

Semi-Ruggedized Series
Tough Enough For Rent To Own



Slim, Mobile & Ruggedized

N1400



- Mobile Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor - M
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition or Professional Edition
- Durable Magnesium Upper & Lower Case Design
- Built-in Wireless
- 14.1" TFT Display
- 80GB Max. Hard Drive
- CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive

N15RN



- Mobile Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor - M
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition or Professional Edition
- Durable Magnesium Upper & Lower Case Design
- Built-in Wireless
- Dedicated Graphics
- 15.1" TFT Display
- CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive



Spill Proof Keyboard, Touchpad & Speakers



Wireless LAN Connectivity



Full Multimedia Functions



Magnesium Alloy Case

Twinhead Corporation

Email: sales@twinhead.com • Tel: 510-824-6788 • Fax: 510-492-0820 • URL: www.twinhead.com

It is fall in an even-numbered year and those of you who are political junkies will know what that means. That's right, it is election time again. If you are lucky enough to live in Missouri, Ohio, Michigan, New Mexico and a half dozen other battleground states, you are getting bombarded with the most expensive presidential media buy in the history of the Republic. You are probably hearing more about the two major candidates running for the presidency of the United States than you ever thought you had a right to know. After all, hundreds of millions of dollars in commercial air-

percent of the United States Senate says its time to define rent-to-own. While we all know it takes a majority vote to pass legislation, the number of co-sponsors who have signed on to HR 996 and S 884 is far more than most legislative efforts.

.....
“While Congressional races don’t draw the kind of media attention a presidential race draws, they are, in many ways, much more important than the presidential race.”

On November 2, just do it

time still buy a lot of 30-second ads.

Thank goodness presidential campaigns come along only every four years. Well, maybe that is not right. If we had presidential races every year where this much money was being spent, all for a \$400,000-a-year job, we might just generate a booming economy again!

But every even-numbered year is election time for members of the United States House of Representatives and one-third of the U.S. Senate. While these races aren't as sexy and don't draw the kind of media attention a presidential race draws, they are, in many ways, much more important than the presidential race. After all, it's the Congress that makes the laws that affect our daily lives—such things as how much money is spent on highways in our area or dams to build reservoirs where we like to ski and fish and how much individual freedoms we have.

Congress is one of the keys to the future of rent-to-own. We have been working for many years to get Congress to define our industry the way 46 states, the Internal Revenue Service and others define us. Currently, HR 996 has 95 co-sponsors. That's 22 percent of the members of Congress who have said that this

is such an important issue that they are willing to put their names and reputations on the line to convince others in Congress they should do likewise.

The Senate is even straighter forward about the need to have defining RTO laws. Twenty-six

I hope every one of you reading this column is a registered voter. If not, go and register today. But if the readership of *Progressive Rentals* is at all like the national demographics, only about half of you are registered and only about 30

percent to 40 percent of you who are registered will actually go out and vote.

If the presidential election of 2000 didn't dispel the urban legend that your vote doesn't really matter, than the high mold count in the atmosphere must have gotten to you. Your vote does matter and unless you are so apathetic that you are willing to let someone else decide your future, you have an American duty to register and vote.

I am of a generation that was inspired to public service by the call of John F. Kennedy when he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." America needs your educated participation in our political process. In today's vernacular, "Just Do It!"

To bring this plea closer to home, I urge you to get more involved with APRO. You should be asking the question, "What can I do for APRO?" just as you should be asking the question, "What can I do for my industry?"

In the past 15 years, I know of many who have asked these questions—the most recent is your new president, Shannon Strunk. Not only has he stepped up to the presidency of APRO, but he continually stresses that if he does his job as president, he will leave APRO and the rent-to-own industry, better than he found it. I believe that is the essence of leadership. Welcome aboard, Shannon! ■

Bill Keese's e-mail address is bkeese@aprovision.org.



By BILL KEESE
APRO's Executive Director

Is Your Cash Cow Out To Pasture?



Nothing beefs up your profits as quickly as cutting overhead costs. The **PRO/FORMS** feature of High Touch software products feeds your bottom line by producing professional, up-to-date forms on your laser printer less expensively than carbon, continuous fed paper.

PRO/Forms Feature Benefits:

- Prints Rental Agreements, Waiver Forms, Delivery Check Lists, manuals and other documents, as needed
- Eliminates outside printing and shipping costs for preprinted forms
- Reduces costs associated with warehousing documents
- Produces timely documents automatically
- Provides the ability to easily and instantly change documents with little expense

If you're hungry for increased productivity and higher profits, call High Touch.

"PRO/Forms saves us time and money by allowing us to print only the documents we need when we need them. We don't have to wait on an outside printer; we've eliminated printing and shipping costs altogether. And, the laser printed forms make Talley Rents look very professional."

Mike Talley, Partner
Talley Rents



High Touch
REACH HIGHER



1.800.326.6059 | www.hightouchinc.com

APRO Associate Member since 1984

Redlining in the common parlance is the practice of refusing to do business with someone based on where he lives. The company, most often a bank or insurance company, decides not to do business in a certain neighborhood because it thinks that it can make more money lending or insuring in other neighborhoods. Companies who redlined literally circled with a red pen the "bad" neighborhoods on maps on the wall in company headquarters, thus the name, "redlining."

The practice had a disparate impact on low-income consumers, mainly minorities, and the fed-

Redlining revisited

eral government stepped in years ago and passed anti-redlining statutes covering financial institutions and insurance companies and, later, telecommunication companies and cable companies.

Then, in big cities, pizza delivery drivers started getting robbed and shot and occasionally killed out on the job and some of the national pizza chains started redlining a few neighborhoods in big cities, not out of racial prejudice but for employee safety reasons. Consumer advocates, on behalf of their pizza-deprived clients, clamored for justice and several cities, notably San Francisco in 1996, passed ordinances requiring pizza companies who advertised "city-wide delivery" to do just that—deliver everywhere, almost no matter what. Lawsuits have been won against pizza chains in California, Missouri, Florida and Pennsylvania. Car rental companies, taxi services and an online grocery delivery business have also been targeted in related "service redlining" lawsuits.



By **ED WINN III**
APRO's General Counsel

Rental companies have been spared, until lately. Now, in Chicago, the Cook County Commission on Human Rights is wondering whether a rental company's claim that its refusal to deliver product to a tenant in a certain housing project was truly security-based or, instead, was nefariously based on housing status. The particular store in question has a high percentage of minority customers and a substantial percentage of its customers live in public housing. This ought to

demonstrate that the refusal to deliver to that particular project was genuinely safety-based, especially since

delivery employees for the company were victims of a robbery just a few blocks away. But, a single refusal to deliver has brought legal aid to the rescue, expressing unhappiness and suspicion over the situation. The company has had to compile crime statistics and other data to prove the bonafides of their policy vis-à-vis the project.

The message from Chicago is that rental dealers may want to review their policies about where they will and will not deliver. They will certainly need more evidence in the files other than "we heard it was bad over there." Neighborhoods can and do change over time. In Tarpon Springs, FL, a local pizza owner who had redlined a neighborhood for seven years because of a bad experience, changed his policy in the face of threatened litigation when he drove through the neighborhood and acknowledged that it was a nicer place than when he first adopted his policy.

Crime statistics maps are available on the Internet for many jurisdictions and rental companies may want to collect such data when reviewing neighborhoods deemed too unsafe to deliver products.

The irony, of course, is that if the company sends an employee into an unsafe neighborhood and the employee gets hurt, he will have a cause of action against the company for negligence—failing to provide adequate security for employees. A restaurant in Delaware was tagged with a \$600,000 judgment when a waitress was assaulted in the parking lot on just such a claim.

Dealers occasionally wonder what to tell a customer who cannot get a TV because she lives in a neighborhood that is too dangerous. The answer is to tell her the truth. If the neighborhood is really unsafe, then the rental company does not have to deliver there. However, be advised that the burden of proof may be on the company to prove the danger.

So, finally, rental dealers, first of all, have an obligation to keep their employees safe at all costs. But at the same time, they do not want to be turning down deliveries because of outdated or simply bad information about where someone lives. ■

.....
"The message from Chicago is that rental dealers may want to review their policies about where they will and will not deliver."

Ed Winn's e-mail address is edwinn@e-bylaw.com.

Sandberg Rental Express.



Great taste. Less wait.

Not only is Sandberg Furniture known for up-to-the-minute, fashionable style, they're famous for bringing your customers the looks they want and the prices they'll love, with no waiting!

- Exclusive Ultra Gloss on most styles
- All merchandise in stock for immediate delivery
- Master Bedroom, Youth Bedroom and Entertainment Systems all from one source and all delivered on one truck
- Replaceable tops
- Replacement parts shipped within 48 hours of notification
- Steel Mirror supports supplied with every mirror



Contact: Wayne Harris or Gary Catarina
ph: 863-534-8915 fax: 863-534-3009

323.582.0711 • www.sandbergfurniture.com

APRO Associate Member since 2003

Nationwide coverage you can count on.

RCA and DSI are teaming-up to bring the RPI quick reliable nationwide delivery.

Sometimes, we can't always predict which of our products are going to be the next rental "wow-factor" product. So when your demand spikes for that RCA 61" diagonal 16x9 HDTV Monitor, you can breathe easy knowing RCA and DSI have you covered.

Our enhanced relationship is designed to take advantage of the 30 DSI distribution locations around the country to keep your rental business supplied through greater product availability, easier ordering and streamlined delivery.

The goal is simple: deliver the RCA products you need when your customers want them with DSI.

Team up with RCA and DSI.

For information on RCA, GE and RCA Scenium brand electronic products and services contact:

Timothy Shannon
National Manager Consolidated Specialty Sales
800.217.3935 voice
tim.shannon@thomson.net

For the DSI location nearest you go online to:
www.dsisystemsinc.com
password=2save

© 2004 Thomson Inc.
The DLP™ logo and DLP™ medallion are trademarks of Texas Instruments.





50" diagonal 16x9
DLPTM HDTV

15" diagonal LCD
TV/DVD Combo

At left, Tom Roper,
Vice President/GMM of Merchandising & Purchasing
DSI Systems, Inc.
At right, Timothy Shannon
National Manager Consolidated Specialty Sales
Thomson Inc.

APRO Associate Charter Member



Changing Entertainment. Again.
www.rca.com



O

nce you've spent a few minutes talking with Shannon Strunk, it's easy to envision him as a 10-year-old boy with energy to burn, taking over his older brother's neighborhood *TV Guide* route just to have something to do. "Every Thursday I went around and had regular customers who bought *TV Guide* from me," Strunk says. "And, of course, I'd always order extra and try to make new customers. My mom was happy I had a job as I was probably driving her crazy."

Strunk's rapid-fire speech belies his longtime residence in deeply Southern, moss-covered Pascagoula, MS (population 26,000). Though this port city may be named for a peaceful Native American tribe—translated, the name means "bread eaters"—and hometown to such legendary easy-goers as singer/songwriter Jimmy Buffett, Strunk definitely doesn't fit the stereotype of the droll and drawling gentleman of business. Strunk is less antebellum, more ambition.

"I've always had a job; as a matter of fact, I've always had two jobs," he says. "I've held more jobs than you can possibly imagine. I've never been happy sitting around. Never."

Even today, as Strunk and his wife, Cynthia Baber-Strunk, prepare to open their 49th rent-to-own store in their fourth state, Strunk has taken on a second job as 2004–05 president of the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations and, as ever, he's revved up and ready to go.

APRO's new president,
SHANNON STRUNK,
is a go-go guy with a
big, big vision

Ready to
THE SHOW

APROFILE *by* KRISTEN CARD
PHOTOGRAPHS *by* DAVID OMER



run...

Perhaps Strunk's propensity for perpetual motion began in his childhood as he and his five siblings were moved from home to home as their father accepted various military posts. Strunk doesn't have much to say about his youth, other than he worked a lot—mostly jobs related to the restaurant or food industry—and went to school.

Then, somewhere along his career continuum, Strunk opened a restaurant with a man with whom he ended up at odds. Strunk left and found himself—for the first time since age 10—unemployed. He arbitrarily answered a newspaper ad for an account manager (“I had no idea what it was,” Strunk says) and went to work for Baber's, then a 12-store rent-to-own appli-

opening new stores, because the key is to continue growing existing stores while you grow new stores. Right now, we're on-target for our external goal.”

In order to stay on target, Baber's is having to change its *modus operandi*. Historically a rural-based company, more than half of its stores are located in towns with populations averaging fewer than 10,000. But recently, the Strunks have begun building on their rural foundation by branching into larger, urban markets—an evolution Strunk claims was inspired by Baber's 215 or so employees and his company's commitment to them.

“When we open in bigger cities, the stores can grow larger,” Strunk says. “Our pay structure is based on the size of the store, so we can offer good employees better opportunities by going there. We make promises to our employees all the time: ‘You do well, and I'll make

“We talk about our customers all the time; they are our business. But the customer side doesn't matter if the employee side isn't right. If you don't get the employees right, nothing matters.”

ance and electronics business.

“I worked here about a week and a half and made plans to get out,” Strunk says. “I didn't think I liked the business.

“But about two weeks into it, I went to collect on a washer and dryer and the customer refused to give them to me. What she said to me was she was never going to own the laundromat. And that was my education in the rent-to-own business. That's when I understood what was happening here. I stopped my pursuit of changing careers and started working, working hard.”

Strunk moved up quickly within the ranks of this family business, settling in the Pascagoula headquarters when a plane crash took the life of the owner's son. The son's widow, Cynthia, also worked for Baber's. Three years later, she and Strunk married. Then, following the death of founder James Baber in 1999, the couple bought the rest of the company from the other half of the family.

Within the past four years, the Strunks have grown the business from 35 stores to 48, located across Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. They'll extend their reach even further in December with the opening of a Pensacola, FL, location.

“Our goal is 100 stores by 2010,” Strunk says. “Our first year [of sole ownership] was concentrated on internal store growth—making sure we knew what we were doing and we could grow internally without

things better for you. I'll create opportunities. We must continue honoring the promises we make.”

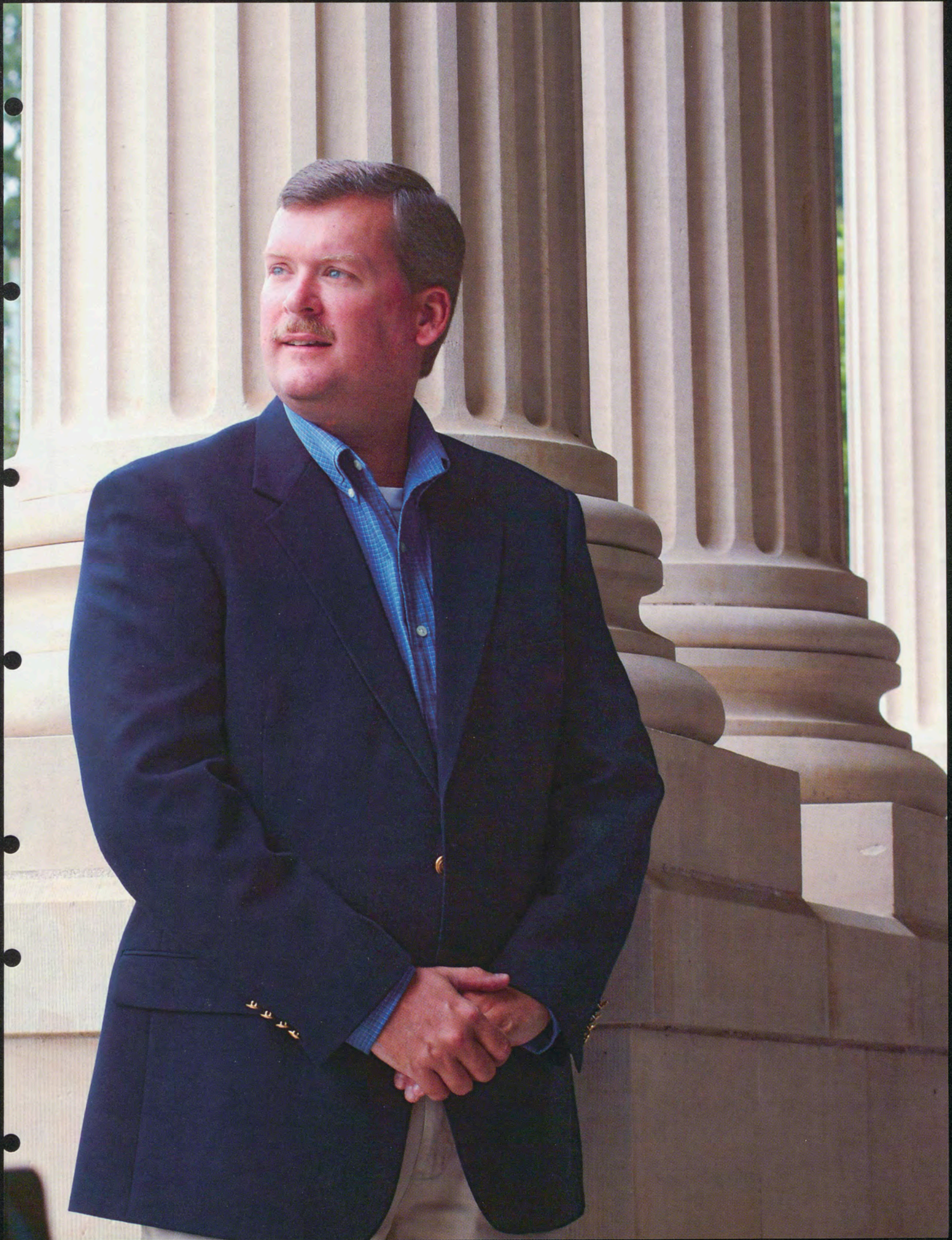
Employee focus

When it comes to Baber's employees, following through with his commitments is only the tip of a mammoth iceberg for Strunk. In fact, at Baber's, the customer may be king, but the employee is everything.

“Our business philosophy is not so much customer-oriented as it is employee-oriented,” Strunk says. “We talk about our customers all the time; they are our business. But the customer side doesn't matter if the employee side isn't right. If you don't get the employees right, nothing matters. You can see it in store after store after store. If the employees are out of whack, then it just doesn't matter what else is going on as that store is just not going to perform.”

Strunk says Baber's intense focus on employees is almost as much about logistics as it is about philosophy. With nearly 50 stores and more than 200 employees—as well as several other related businesses to manage—the Strunks can't afford to delve too deeply into the details of day-to-day.

“It's not that we don't care about the customer,” Strunk says, “but clearly, we understand that, as big as Baber's is, we can't concentrate directly on the customer. All we see are employees, typically at the man-



agement level. So all of our emphasis and concentration is on the store-manager level and above—in developing them and helping them become better people so that they can continue to do more and more and, hopefully, better than they expected. Our focus as owners is 100 percent dedicated to our employees and their personal development.”

This investment of interest in employees is returned many times over to the company, Strunk says, and has proven to be key to Baber’s success.

“Strong, strong employee loyalty is probably our biggest asset as a company,” he says. “What we do best is take good people and make them better. We educate and motivate them into doing a better job so that they can move up.

“We have a lot of promotion within the company,” he says. “If people don’t work out, then we move them back—but we don’t lose them, which is very uncommon. We have a lot of employees who have let us try them out in a variety of positions and move them around if it doesn’t work out.”

Overseeing Baber’s employees and operations is Strunk’s main responsibility as company president, while his wife oversees the company’s financial dealings. The couple is careful not to intrude upon one another’s areas of responsibility, but Strunk says they still share everything—including an office.

“Cynthia’s my wife, my friend, my business partner, she’s everything to me,” Strunk says. “We provide a counterbalance for each other, both professionally and personally. I’m the one who will crawl out on the limb; she’s the one who stays close to the trunk. She keeps me from going way out and falling off; I get her far enough out to enjoy it. And everything we do, we do together.”

Last year, the unqualified success of the Strunks’ togetherness approach was acknowledged by the RTO industry as a whole, when APRO presented its 2003 Rental Dealer of the Year award to the two-some as a unit, making them the first couple to be honored this way. The event was a high point for both Cynthia and Shannon.

“It was an absolute surprise,” Strunk says. “When your friends and colleagues are watching you and saying they appreciate what you’re doing and you’re the best out there doing it, it’s a wonderful feeling. Then, to be recognized with your

soulmate at the same time...well, it just doesn’t get any better than that.”

Raising the bar for APRO and its membership

Though his wife will definitely be cheering him on from the sidelines, Shannon Strunk’s APRO presidency will be a solo act, although he’s no novice. An APRO member since 1987, Strunk has played several leadership roles for the organization already, including serving as chairman of the nominations and the public relations committees and most recently as APRO’s first vice president. Additionally, he helped organize and has served as president of both the Mississippi Rental Dealers Association and the newer Alabama-Mississippi Rental Dealers Association.

Strunk’s vision for the rental-purchase industry is broad, as you might expect from this big-picture kind of guy.

“I want to serve. I want to make a difference. I want to do more,” Strunk says. “I want to continue the remaking of APRO. I’ve got a basic philosophy that



year after year—not just from beginning to end, but every year—it's our responsibility to leave the Association better than when we took it. In taking over as president, I have a big task ahead."

Strunk, who has participated in more than 70 APRO Legislative Conference meetings with Congressional members, counts passage of the federal Consumer Rental-Purchase Agreement Act among his top priorities for the organization. But he also wants to hone in on APRO's membership, especially how to attract new members and satisfy current ones.

"We've got to expand the services we offer and constantly monitor what members want," Strunk says. "I

We must collect the money, put it aside and begin providing scholarships to well-deserving people. It's just that simple."

Stress breakers: food and vacations

The fast-paced trajectory Strunk is taking through life is necessarily streamlined. He and Cynthia spend the bulk of their time managing Baber's and their other businesses, which include collection, check-advance and real-estate businesses and managing their blended family that includes four kids aged 14 to 27.

"I believe the Education Foundation is the most important way for our industry to give back to the people who have given to us and to cultivate our future business leaders."

want to get people involved and lead by example. There isn't a single time when I've not gotten more from the organization than I've given, in an educational way. For example, I had the opportunity to speak for a group and while I was there, members of the group educated me more after the seminar than I educated them during my speech. They told me about new things they were doing or new ways they were doing it or new products they were offering. Then, when I came back and made changes at Baber's, we all benefited from them. Every single meeting we go to, that's what happens. This organization is a networking opportunity unlike any other."

Also toward the top of Strunk's priority list is his own pet project, the APRO Education Foundation, which Strunk launched almost single-handedly last year. His goal is to create a fund for the organization to grant educational scholarships to RTO customers and employees.

"I believe the Education Foundation is the most important way for our industry to give back to the people who have given to us and to cultivate our future business leaders," Strunk says. "With this, we can educate people, send them through college and bring them back into our industry to become our leaders, which would be the greatest thing of all. The rent-to-own industry is trying to show people who we really are, not just tell them. And by offering these scholarships, we're showing them."

Currently, APRO is working to raise the Education Foundation's "seed" money. "We need to collect a million dollars and just put it into the bank," Strunk says, "so that we can have a perpetual scholarship and don't have to continue trying to sell carnations or whatever.

When one or both of these areas are giving him trouble, Strunk releases his demons with a perhaps-unexpected pastime, which he tackles with his usual, um, zest.

"I love to cook," Strunk says. "I like to try new things, go way out there. There's nothing I won't try. I cook a big old meal to burn off bad days. I do a lot of seafood, I'm crazy about seafood."

Occasionally, Strunk and his wife also indulge in their favorite escape, which is escaping. The Strunks enjoy travel-together, naturally—particularly where saltwater sports are part of the trip. But even this interest seems to be dictated by their real calling: their profession.

"We like short vacations, like three- or four-day get-aways," Strunk says. "We want to get back to work, because we love it. When I die, I hope I come home from work and sit down in a recliner and just go. I don't ever want to retire, ever. Business is a passion for me. I love it."

What fuels Strunk's passion for his business is what he learned about the rental-purchase industry during his first two weeks working in it and what's kept him working in it over 17 years: it's a business that helps people.

"We provide a needed service other people aren't providing," Strunk says. "And it's not a wanted service, it's a needed service. We give people a choice to get something they might not have a choice of getting otherwise. Whether it's for a short-term need or whether they intend to own, it doesn't matter. We give them choices and opportunities no one else does." ■

Kristen Card is an independent business writer in Austin, TX.

CLOCK WATCHING

BY PHILLIP M. PERRY

W

ho gets paid overtime? If you're like most employers, that question has caused more than a few sleepless nights. After all, lots of money rides on the answer. Load up the hourly gravy train and you end up with a bloated payroll that erodes your profits. Exempt the wrong people, though, and you face a worse risk—costly litigation for back pay from employees claiming misclassification. * No wonder employers often feel caught between red ink and a lawsuit. Is there a solution? Maybe. New overtime regulations from the U.S. Department of Labor provide some clarity to what has long been a woolly patchwork of regulations. * The new rules, which took effect August 23, seem to be a mixed blessing for employers. On one hand it looks as though more lower-income workers will be eligible for overtime. That means you may well be paying out more in wages under the revised regulations. On the other hand, the extra expense may be more than offset by a decline in legal expenses. Because the new regulations are somewhat clearer about what types of employees must be granted overtime, the number of “wage-and-hour lawsuits” is expected to decrease.

**a look at the
new overtime rules
and how to avoid
costly penalties for
wage-and-hour
violations**





three key changes

The complete regulations are long and complex (see sidebar for more information). You should become aware, though, of the following three provisions. The first two are expected to substantially add to the rolls of employees eligible for overtime; the third is expected to slightly moderate that number.

1) The new rules mandate overtime for all workers earning less than \$455 per week, which translates to \$23,660 annually. This three-fold increase from the former threshold of \$155 is expected to increase the number of non-exempt workers by some 6.7 million.

2) Workers earning more than \$455 weekly and less than \$100,000 annually are subject to protections from loss of overtime pay, under standard "duties tests" that are equal to—or more protective than—former tests. This provision, then, should also increase the number of non-exempt workers.

3) Employees who earn more than \$100,000 in annual pay are subject to a new set of "duties tests," which are less protective than the ones for the middle tier of workers. This provision is expected to result in some 107,000 highly compensated employees losing overtime protection.

avoid costly penalties

You must take action quickly to make sure you comply with the new regulations. "Most employers are looking at jobs now and auditing their positions," says Joseph P. Harkins, a partner at Washington, D.C.-based Littler Mendelson, the nation's largest employment law firm. "It's important to do this and make adjustments where required."

Delay too long and you can get hit with costly financial penalties from two sides. First, employees may sue you for misclassifying them as exempt from overtime, leading to back wage settlements. Second, you may be hit with government fines.

"If you do not comply with the new rules, you could be penalized for any overtime that the Department of Labor believes you should have paid to

employees," says Timothy S. Bland, a partner in the Memphis office of Ford & Harrison. Ford & Harrison is a law firm that defends businesses on employment-related matters. "You can also be assessed liquidated damages—fines totaling double the back pay you are deemed to owe misclassified employees."

In either case, it's clear that the longer you wait the greater the potential financial damages. Be aware that your investigation may uncover instances of what attorneys call "task creep." This refers to the gradual modification in the duties performed by an employee, so that a formerly exempt individual becomes non-exempt or vice versa. Task creep can occur unnoticed and can lead to serious misclassifications.

your payroll may increase

So how will this affect your payroll costs? If you are like most employers, it will mean more money spent for wages. Your own experience, though, will depend on your location and current wage structure.

"This law will impact employers very differently depending on where they live," says Robert D. Lipman, managing partner at the employment law firm Lipman & Plesur in Jericho, N.Y. "The biggest impact may be felt in rural areas where employees may earn less than \$455, but still have a fair amount of responsibility." Smaller employers in general may be more affected since they may have a greater percentage of employees who might not meet the minimum salary test under new rules.

The effect may be mollified in some cases by a reduction of overtime eligibility by individuals who earn a salary higher than the legislation's "highly compensated" upper threshold. If an employee makes \$100,000 a year and the person's "primary duty includes performing office or non-manual work," the employer only has to justify exemption by showing that the employee "customarily and regularly performs any one or more of the exempt duties" as specified in the regulations. "This will impact those employers who have hourly jobs near the upper threshold," says Harkins.

the muddled middle

You are most likely to come to grief trying to classify people with earnings that are more than \$455 weekly but below the amount needed to be highly compensated.

"Most employees fall in between the lower and upper thresholds," says Harkins. "Employers are struggling to figure out where these individuals fit."

Unfortunately, the new guidelines are not much help. "While the law is slightly different in wording, it is basically similar to the old one," says Harkins. "You must still deal in vague terms such as 'independent judgment' and 'discretion,' and 'responsibility to hire and fire.'"

You and your attorney will need to reference the complete law that defines terms, describes details and provides real world examples. Here, though, are some key points that will assist you when talking with your attorney:

The Department of Labor has stated that you may classify as exempt from overtime certain employees whose workplace activities "primarily involve executive, administrative or professional duties." Most readers of this magazine will be concerned with the first two categories. In addition to the salary tests described earlier in this article, exempt individuals in these categories must meet the following "duties tests":

1) For an executive employee: The "primary duty" of this individual must be the "management of the enterprise." Additionally, this person must be one who "customarily and regularly directs the work of two or more other employees." Finally, this individual must either have the authority to hire and fire other employees or offer suggestions and recommendations for such personnel actions that carry "particular weight."

Retailers have typically relied on the executive exemption for their managerial personnel. So are the new rules favorable or not? "A lot depends on the size of your store," says Harkins. "An exempt individual is required to supervise two full-time equivalents. That's great for a branch of a big store. But a small shop might not meet the test."

2) For administrative employees: This person's "primary duty" must be

"the performance of office or non-manual work directly relate to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers." Additionally, the primary duties must include the "exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance."

Retailers typically rely on the administrative exemption for personnel who are not managers, but who are critical to store operations. Unfortunately, the language of the new regulations adds little or no clarity in this area.

"We had hoped that the administrative exemption would be cleared up and made easier to apply," says Bland. "That's not the case. This is unfortunate for retailers."

Just how much "discretion and independent judgment" has to exist to meet the duties test is extremely difficult to apply in the real world. "Some employees have very little discretion in the job and are obviously not exempt," says Bland. "A few have so much discretion they clearly are exempt. But most employees, by far, fall into a grey area, so it comes down to a judgment call."

Be aware that the above paragraphs provide a sketch of the complete picture, the shading and color of which must be filled in by you and your attorney. They do, however, provide a basis for discussion.

define your terms

The new regulations attempt to define the key terms used in analyzing personnel exemptions. For example, the rules provide a long list of activities that constitute the practice of "management" and what factors constitute "particular weight" for determining the

exemption of executive employees.

For administrative exemptions, the regulations attempt to define phrases such as "discretion and independent judgment" and "directly related to management."

Reiterating such definitions is beyond the scope of this article and must be done in conjunction with your attorney to analyze the particular status of your personnel. One term, though, is particularly important because it pops up in all of the duties analyses. That is "primary duty."

The term primary duty has been expanded from the time spent on exempt work to the perceived value of exempt work. An employer might claim that many non-exempt tasks performed by an employee are in support of exempt tasks. By way of example, an administrative assistant might be doing a lot of clerical tasks but they are all in support of getting vendor agreements in order. This person might well be classified as exempt.

The new regulations have discarded the old rule that an exempt individual could not spend more than 20 percent of time on nonexempt work. Indeed, it is not even necessary that an individual spend more than 50 percent of work time on a duty for that activity to be deemed "primary." Rather, the determination must be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account such matters as "the relative importance of the exempt duties" and "the employee's relative freedom from direct supervision" and wage disparities between the individual and nonexempt employees.

By way of illustration, the regulations posit an assistant store manager who spends more than 50 percent of time "performing nonexempt work such as

running the cash register." Such an individual may still be exempt if he or she performs managerial work such as supervising other employees and ordering merchandise. The exemption becomes questionable, though, if the individual is "closely supervised" and earns "little more than nonexempt employees."

The regulations also note that an assistant store manager may perform concurrent nonexempt duties without losing exempt status. For example, an exempt employee can "simultaneously direct the work of others and stock shelves."

better safe than sorry

Given the number of people in the muddled middle and the vagueness of the applicable duties tests, it's clear you will need to engage in serious analysis to avoid non-compliance penalties.

When faced with ambiguity, many employers are taking the "better safe than sorry" option. "I do not see a lot of clients going out of their way to make hourly people salaried," says Harkins. "But I do see employers taking salaried people and putting them into the hourly category. So I would not be surprised if the new legislation increases the number of people eligible for overtime to a level even higher than what the DOL has predicted."

Now is the time to take a new look at your own employees and classify them appropriately. When in doubt, remember that the law presumes your employees are hourly—it's up to you to show otherwise. Says Harkins: "It's always legally safer to pay wages and overtime." ■

Phillip M. Perry is a free-lance business writer based in New York.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- ▶ For a complete copy of the new regulations, go to the special Fairpay section of the U.S. Department of Labor's Web site: www.dol.gov/fairpay. Click on "regulations" then the hyperlink for either Web-view or PDF versions of the law. This site also offers online video seminars and fact sheets.
- ▶ Littler Mendelson, the nation's largest employment law firm, has posted a document to help employers understand the new legislation. Visit www.littler.com, then click on "DOL Revised White Collar Regulations."



THREE
NEW
BOOKS
FROM
THE

POVERTY PRESS

here is a publishing phenomenon in the country—authors who crank out studies and reports on how low-income Americans live. Some books take the large view, looking at life in general; others focus on particular aspects of lives lived at the lower socio-economic levels, such as schools, inner city housing, nutrition, health care or family life. These works generally decry the plight of their subjects and call on the powers that be to tax the rich more, give the money to the poor and make it better. They make this plea even though life as a poor person in this country has more ease, comfort, safety and creature comforts than life in most other places in the world.

A R E V I E W B Y E D W I N N I I I

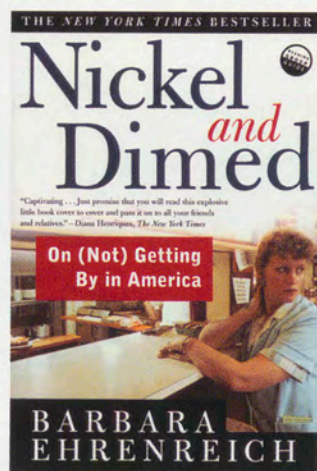
The goal of these works is often to shock the middle and upper classes and to goad them into, presumably, more redistributive thinking. Some books have specific messages for people or for the government, advice on how to fix some socio-economic problem and in the most strident tomes, a grand plan to do away with the existence of poor people once and for all. Some books merely chronicle the misery of a life of poverty, contrasting such a life with the lives of the books' readers. The goal, often unspoken, is to trip guilt levers and strengthen the charitable or activist impulse. Whatever the reason for such books, there is an unending flow of them. They get bought and read and speak to something in human souls, perhaps like Greek tragedies used to do. They both serve to purge the emotions. They allow the reader to exhale and mutter, "There but for the grace of God, go I."

The poverty press is, of necessity, of interest to rental dealers because their business is often highlighted in the pages of such works as an example, usually among many others, of how the poor are made to pay more. Dealers may also glean insights into how a portion of the RTO customer base thinks and behaves. Most of the output from the poverty press is either shrill and sanctimonious or academic and unreadable.

There are, however, three new books from this nook of the publishing world worth noting because a couple of them have been best sellers: *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, Holt and Co., 2001; *Taming the Sharks: Towards a Cure for the High-Cost Credit Market*, by Christopher Peterson, University of Akron Press, 2004; and *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*, by David Shipler, Alfred A. Knopf, 2004

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America

Of the three, the Ehrenreich book is perhaps the best known, although it is also the least insightful and most polemic. Ehrenreich is a best-selling author and hers is an easy read. The book is a first-person chronicle of the author's few months of "slumming" as it were. She left her comfortable life as a writer of left-wing books and articles and took a series of low-paying jobs, incognito, first in Key West, then in Maine and then in Minnesota. She recounts her experiences, emoting what it felt like to work in those jobs as a waitress, house cleaner, dietary aide in a nursing



home and Wal-Mart associate. She writes of her fellow employees that she met along the way and their various plights and hers, with making ends meet at the low end of the economic spectrum. She has unkind words for all of the bosses and managers, as well as drug tests, personality tests and all of the other accoutrements of the job application process.

The good news is that

she does not single out industries for attack and nowhere does she mention RTO. Rather, her beef is with management in the large sense, which consistently and intentionally underpays labor to such an extent, in her view, that workers cannot make ends meet and that ought not be the case in a country as wealthy, overall, as this one.

She shows great sympathy for her co-workers, whom she abandons without further thought every few weeks, but she is continually astonished that they don't daily take up arms against the system, which she indicates she would certainly do if this was how she really had to live.

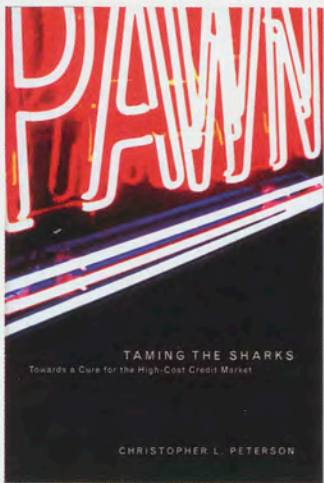
She reached the following conclusion after a couple of months in the trenches: "You don't need a degree in economics to see that wages are too low and rents too high." She abruptly left the "low-income" life to write her book about her experiences fully persuaded that all employers resist wage increases with every trick at their disposal and also persuaded that the poor cannot make it in America, despite the fact that they do.

Her experiences demonstrated to her that the rich and even the middle classes are isolated from the poor. They live in different neighborhoods, they shop in different stores and they send their children to different schools. The goal of the book is more than merely to trigger guilt among the non-poor. Ehrenreich wants to shame all those who she sees as living on the backs of the poor without realizing it. She offers no real recommendations for changing things, assuming that the unveiling of the precarious lives led by low-income workers will spur others into action. For rental dealers, her reporting on her experiences with the job application process and how applicants react may help them reexamine their own application processes to make them less intimidating, more likely to result in an upgrade to the workforce.

Taming the Sharks: Towards a Cure for the High-Cost Credit Market

The least readable and the most academic in approach is the Peterson book. In contrast to Ehrenreich, this book offers specific recommendations for making the world a better place. This book also discusses RTO in some detail, although it reaches back to allegations made 10 years ago to score points against the industry. Peterson does insist that RTO be included among his definition of "high-cost credit" and that the RTO industry be made subject to the credit reforms that he proffers.

Peterson is a law professor and his thesis is that the high



rates of interest paid by the working poor have a high social cost, not only on the borrower, but also on the borrower's family, neighborhood, community and, finally, society as a whole. He analogizes the prevalence of high-cost credit today to an illness in the country and seeks solutions by examining the issues of informed consent in medicine and how the

country has dealt with tobacco use, another societal illness in his view. Contributing to the malaise are payday lenders, pawnshops, tax refund loans, rental-purchase companies, tote-the-note car lots, mobile home dealers and sub-prime mortgage lenders, each of which gets analyzed and condemned in this book.

Peterson offers a worldwide historical review of how societies have dealt with the extension of credit to consumers—as opposed to commercial lending—from pre-Biblical times, including an analysis of Babylonian, Roman and Chinese laws relating to debt. He categorizes the different social attitudes that have arisen toward consumer credit over time. The historical analysis is fairly balanced, although Peterson does have a point of view and it shows. His opinion is that “the American culture has become one of reckless borrowing” over the past 40 to 60 years and the ramifications of such behavior are deleterious and far-reaching. During his historical review, Peterson identifies the 1920s as the turning point in America, “when the culture of thrift and rugged individualism gave way to one of consumerism and personal debt.”

The author considers the advent of the Truth in Lending Act in the 1960s to have been a watershed event in this country. However, Peterson determines that the effort to provide uniform disclosures without unduly interfering with the free market was ultimately a failure, because while Truth In Lending may lay out the truth of a transaction for all to see, the disclosures fail to work as intended because consumers do not understand them.

The economic underpinnings of free market theory are only operative when knowledgeable buyers and sellers get together. When the buyer fails to understand the transaction, the economics are flawed, according to Peterson. He gives anecdotal evidence that consumers either do not or cannot understand current credit disclosures in a variety of contexts. Peterson veers off into psychology and behavioral economics when analyzing the current high-cost credit market in the United States and why it has grown so over the past 30 years.

Readers will have to assimilate Benthamite utilitarian

preference theory and positive and negative Pigouvian externalities when learning why it is that consumers take out payday loans at 400 percent to 800 percent interest when, according to Peterson, they clearly should not do so.

Peterson does attempt to remove morality from the analysis, even though, “for millennia, human civilizations have produced both social norms and laws construing high-cost consumer borrowing as morally degenerate.” Peterson notes also that “[i]n the early American consciousness, consumer credit was inextricably associated with poverty, untrustworthiness and the path to moral decay.”

It does no good, he argues, to maintain that high-cost creditors are bad, unscrupulous people or that high-cost debtors are undisciplined or lazy. If the debate over what to do remains on the moral plain, no progress can be made, with each side pointing fingers at the other, crying “foul” or “shame.”

He argues that instead of moral finger pointing, the debate and new research and policy decisions should be about the personal financial risk of using high-cost credit. He explains that early on there was a moral argument against tobacco use, which ultimately failed. It was not until empirical evidence was adduced about the health risks of smoking that the anti-tobacco forces began to make real progress.

Peterson acknowledges that the policies underlying Truth In Lending were sound, but that the implementa-

THE POVERTY PRESS IS, OF NECESSITY, OF INTEREST TO RENTAL DEALERS BECAUSE THEIR BUSINESS IS OFTEN HIGHLIGHTED IN THE PAGES OF SUCH WORKS AS AN EXAMPLE, USUALLY AMONG MANY OTHERS, OF HOW THE POOR ARE MADE TO PAY MORE. DEALERS MAY ALSO GLEAN INSIGHTS INTO HOW A PORTION OF THE RTO CUSTOMER BASE THINKS AND BEHAVES.

tion of disclosing credit information needs updating. He wants credit tiered by the government, so that the low-cost credit is everything under 6 percentage points above the yield on comparable term Treasury notes, middle-cost credit is everything under 12 percent annual percentage rate and high-cost credit, “including rent-to-own transactions,” is everything over 24 percent APR. The higher the cost for the credit, the more disclosures and other safeguards for consumers. Peterson does not suggest that any current credit offerings be banned or even curtailed.

He insists that “any borrower can borrow any loan at any price” under his plan. He does want consumers to have to jump through a lot of procedural hoops, however, including passing a test to show an understanding of the

transaction, before entering into a high-cost credit transaction. He wants strongly worded financial warning labels on high-cost loans not unlike those devised for cigarette packaging. He comes up with six concrete proposals in all, which, if implemented, would add a level of federal oversight over consumer lending heretofore unknown. He does not discuss the cost of such a bureaucratic burden, but one can assume that Peterson deems it less than the current social cost of high-cost credit to the country.

As an academic piece aimed at the popular market, the book is thorough, well documented and often carefully argued. The book ultimately fails by exaggerating the ills of the current system and then by attempting to create grandiose and impractical forms of government intervention. It is unlikely that Congress will undertake implementation of the proposals suggested by Peterson. The Federal Reserve Board does not want to start e-mailing and then grading exams for every consumer who wants to borrow money at a rate more than 24 percent.

Some of Peterson's suggestions, however, are the kinds of initiatives that a progressive state legislature might consider. Rental dealers would not want to be lumped in with all of the consumer financial service sectors against whom Peterson rails and, in that sense, the RTO debate will not change based on anything in this book. If state governments or the federal government start considering radical amendments to the credit laws in this country, some of Peterson's ideas may have purchase with policy makers. For this reason, it will be useful for rental dealers to be conversant with the suggestions Peterson puts forth.

The Working Poor: Invisible in America

The third book, by David Shipler, is the best written of the three. Shipler won a Pulitzer Prize for his book, *Arab and Jew*, and is a gifted literary artist. Shipler's vision is the broadest as he examines every facet of life among low-income Americans. He tackles schools, migrant workers, medical care, childcare, welfare, taxes, parenting, immigration, the textile industry, housing projects, child abuse and teeth.

Teeth loom surprisingly large in the Shipler book. He maintains that dental care is an expense most often deferred by low-income Americans because it can be, which in turn leads to tooth decay and, finally, bad teeth. Bad teeth lead to embarrassment and are an impediment to a good self-image, which in turn leads to bad performance and self-consciousness during job interviews. Bad teeth, then, tend to keep low

wage earners from rising to such an extent that Shipler postulates that bad teeth have become an indicator of a certain low-income lifestyle.

The Shipler book is full of real people, skillfully drawn, bad teeth and all. He recounts tales of tragedy, mostly. There is little triumph in this book. The difficulties that befall the people in this book are not always the fault of employers or landlords or the government or the system as they are in the Ehrenreich book. Many injuries among the poor are self-inflicted and painful to read about, especially in the hands of a good writer:

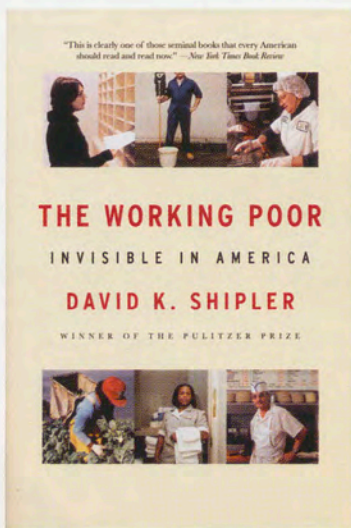
"The villains are not just exploitative employers, but also incapable employees, not just overworked teachers, but also defeated and unruly pupils, not just bureaucrats who cheat the poor, but also the poor who cheat themselves. The troubles run strongly along both macro and micro levels, as systemic problems in the structure of political and economic power and as individual problems in personal and family life."

Shipler brings into sharp contrast the American myth that anyone "from the humblest origins can climb to well-being" and the American anti-myth, which "holds society largely responsible for the individual's poverty." Shipler, by telling in deft detail the stories of real people he met and interviewed, explains how real life is neither myth nor anti-myth, but is lived somewhere in between. "Each person [in the book] is the mixed product of bad choices, bad fortune, of roads not taken and roads cut off by the accident of birth or circumstance." Among books published by the poverty press, it is rare to find one so balanced, so nuanced and so gracefully written, which is what makes this book a standout among works in this genre.

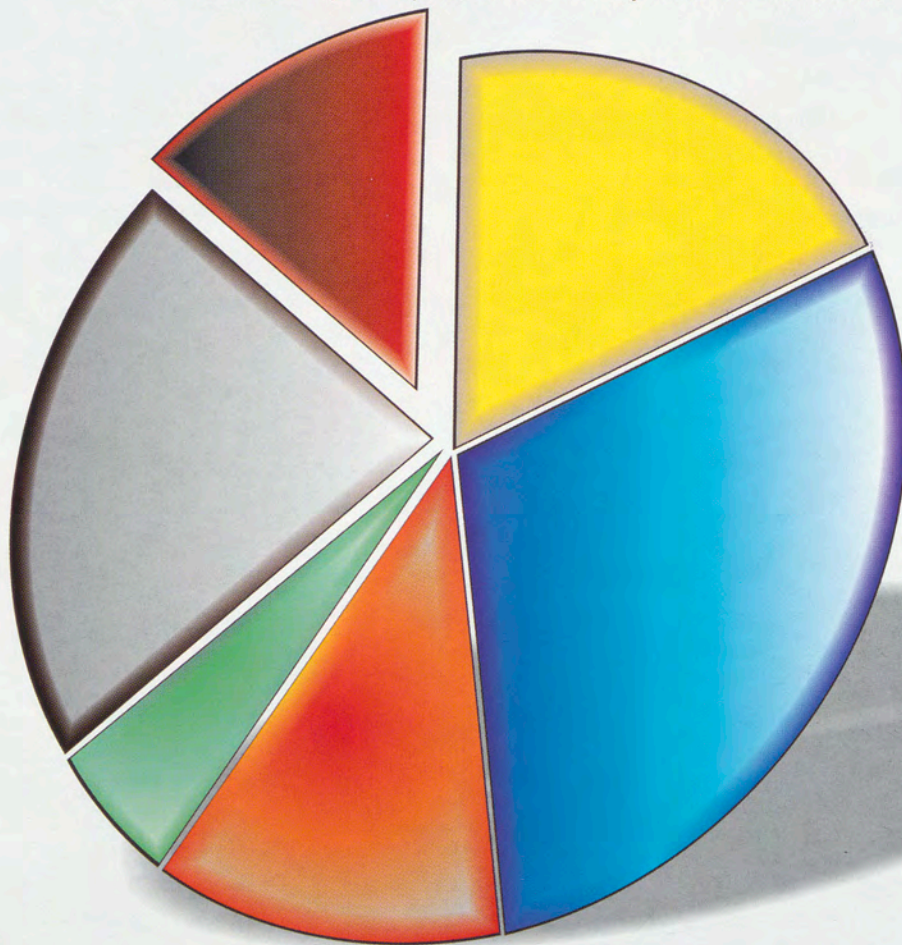
The goal of Shipler seems more to make visible what he thinks is invisible, how the working poor live, rather than to offer up social policy to correct the ills that he sees. The picture he unveils is a complex one. To make life better for the working poor would require the will, effort and resources of everyone: government, business and, not the least, the poor themselves.

Middle-class Americans will be shocked when they read this book, rental dealers perhaps less so. Rental dealers already know a great deal about how the working poor live. Some, even many, are rental customers. Rental dealers hear their sad stories every day, but the Shipler book occasionally cuts deeper than the idle chat in the store on Friday afternoon or even than the lessons learned while collecting on hard accounts. The chapter about child abuse in families is especially poignant. Shipler's is an accurate eye, often a piercing one. Dealers may not rent more TVs for having read the Shipler book. They will, however, think harder about their business and about their customers. They might even work harder. They will almost certainly know that they have spent time with a talented writer and will leave with a better understanding of and appreciation for their lot in life. ■

Ed Winn III is APRO's general counsel. His e-mail address is edwinn@e-bylaw.com.



Gain a new perspective on your business!



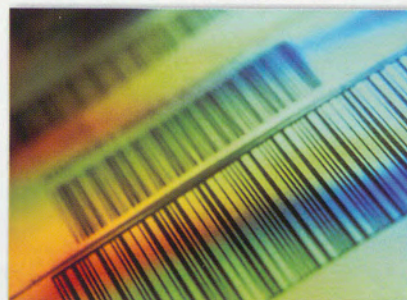
Introducing.....



Designed for the Windows® operating system

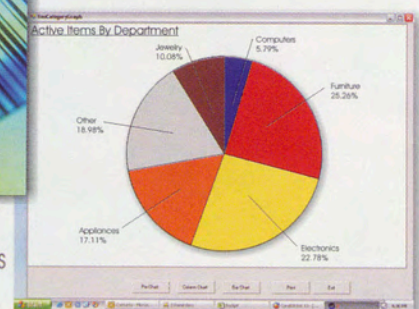
Powerful new software from a trusted name.....

- Simple Data Access From **Microsoft®** Applications
- Complete Customer Tracking
- Complete Inventory Tracking, Including Depreciation
- Purchase Order System
- Powerful Reporting
- Easy To Train New Employees
- Laser Printed Rental Agreements



- Wireless Handheld Barcode Readers

- Graphical Reporting Tools



Rental Information Systems, Inc.®

Trusted by rental-purchase dealers since 1985

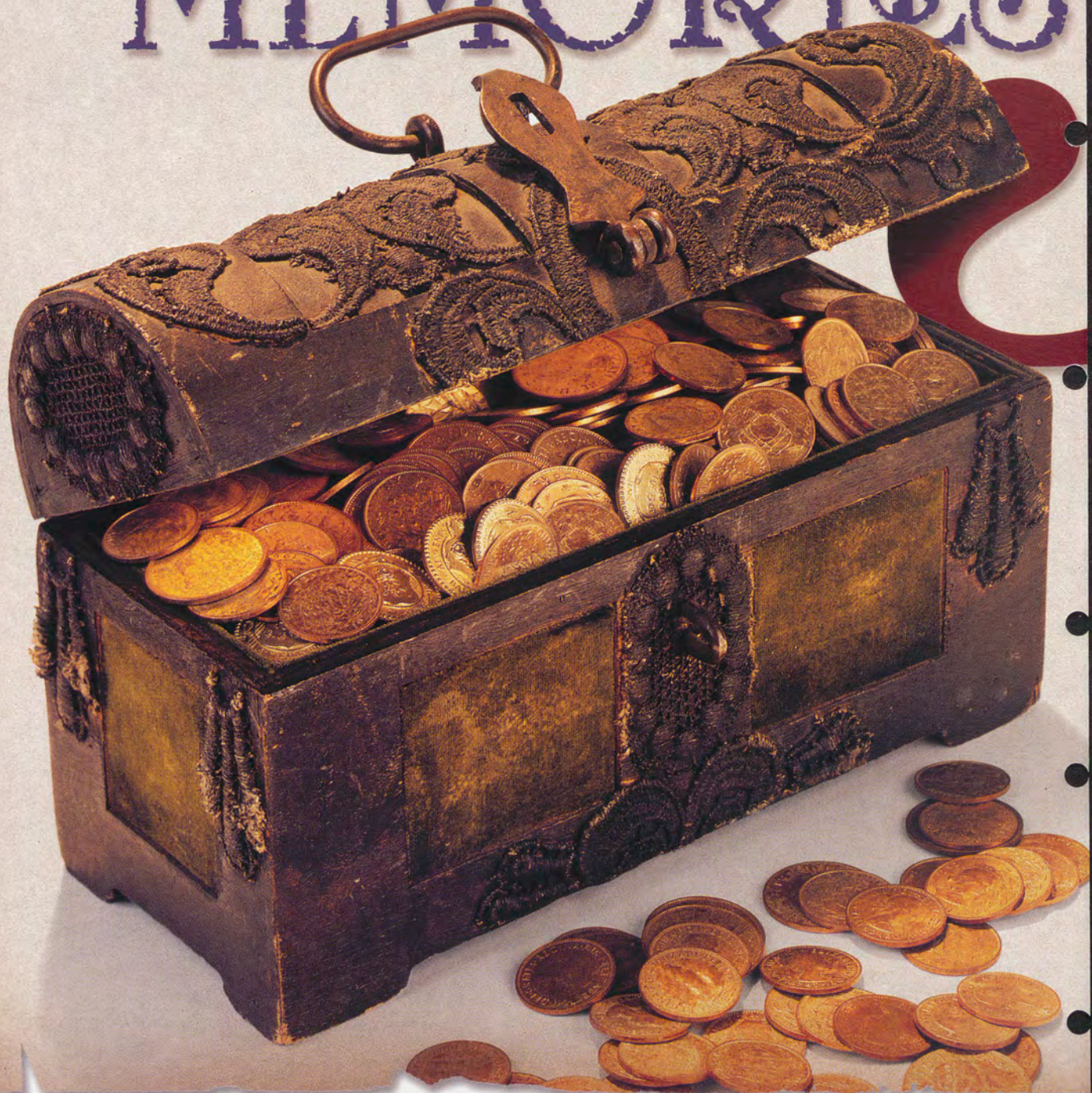
800-863-7394
<http://www.rentinfo.com>

APRS Associate Member since 1987

APRO in TAMPA: *Convention review*

TREASURE MEMORIES

THE

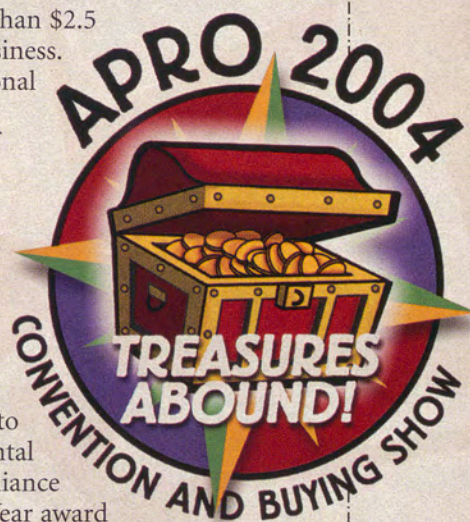


he biggest highlight of the 2004 APRO Convention and Buying Show, held August 4-7 in Tampa, FL, was the very successful transition of the annual trade show into a buying show. With free buyer registration, show specials offered by vendors and cash-giveaway inducements to attendees to place orders on the buying show floor, the first annual Buying Show netted exhibitors more than **\$13 million in purchase orders**. "There was a feeling of purpose in the air," says Denis Rosen of Florida State Games, a regular exhibitor at the APRO show. "I was very pleased at the orders we received. APRO definitely got the word out. We are proud to be an APRO vendor," says Rosen.

"It was apparent to me, after hearing from so many of you, that the convention needed a buying show rather than a trade show," says 2003-04 APRO President Lyn Leach. "I had set a modest goal in mind of achieving perhaps \$8 million in sales and it blows my mind that we got as far as \$13.2 million. I expect that next year we will even exceed that amount as this was only our first try. I am proud of everyone who participated in the event, both buyers and sellers, for making this such a successful show."

More than 1,000 attended this year's show. Here are some highlights:

- ✘ 2004-05 APRO President **Shannon Strunk** took over the helm from **Lyn Leach**, who served as president for the 2003-04 year.
- ✘ There were 233 booths in the exhibit hall representing 118 companies. The biggest order-takers during the show were electronics vendors, who captured more than **\$8 million of business**. Furniture vendors wrote more than \$2.5 million and appliance vendors did close to \$1 million in business. Other big sellers included truck and advertising/promotional vendors.
- ✘ The **APRO Education Foundation** held an auction of some wonderful trips donated by APRO members, which garnered almost \$25,000 that will go toward the APRO Education Foundation. The foundation is a non-profit arm of APRO that will award scholarships to those in the industry once the foundation contributions hit the \$1 million mark.
- ✘ The Ernie Talley Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to **Darrell Tissot** of Countryside Rentals in Bainbridge, OH. The President's Award of Excellence was presented to **Jim Brown** of ABC Rent-To-Own in Wichita, KS. The Rental Dealer of the Year was awarded to **Martin Auble** of Appliance Furniture & RentAll in Sioux Falls, SD. The Vendor of the Year award went to **Ashley Furniture**, based in Arcadia, WI, and the 2004 State Association of the Year was presented to the **Arkansas Rental Dealers Association**.
- ✘ The 2004 Rental-Purchase Employee of the Year winner was **Jody Katz** of Buddy's Home Furnishing in Tampa, FL. The 2004 Rental-Purchase Customer(s) of the Year went to **Patrick and Marianna Head** of Dorsey, MS, who are customers of Baber's Leasing.



BY JULIE SHERRIER



APRO in TAMPA: *Treasures abound!*

General session



Above: 2004 Employee of the Year recipient Jody Katz of Buddy's Home Furnishings (second left) receives the honor from APRO Public Relations chairman Shannon Strunk. Buddy's Jamie Slatton and Joe Gazzo also pictured. Right: Customers of the Year Patrick and Marianna Head with Strunk.

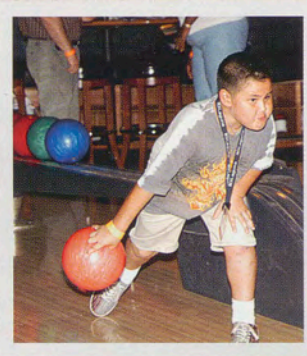


APRO 2003-04 President Lyn Leach and APRO Executive Director Bill Keese open the all-new Buying Show.



Golf

This year's Tom Kitchens/Joe Eason Golf Tournament's first-place team: Bruce Ford, Don Smith, Jeff Lebakken and Kevin Venner. The tournament was held at the Tampa Tournament Players Club.





The New Buying Show



APRO's first Buying Show netted exhibitors more than \$13.2 million in business.

Special thanks to our Convention sponsors!

- Alliance Computing Technologies
- Ashley Furniture
- BDI Laguna
- Benefit Marketing Solutions
- ColorTyme
- DPI Teleconnect
- Florida State Games
- Foresight
- GE Appliances
- High Touch
- Imagery Marketing Consultants
- Inform Business Services
- Klaussner Furniture
- Philips Consumer Electronics
- Rental Information Systems
- RentSmart by Nationwide
- Rental and Sales Software Systems
- RES Accessories
- Sears Contract Sales
- Strategic Marketing Associates
- Ther.A.Pedic
- Thomson
- TRIB Group
- Whirlpool
- Zenith



Parties

Social events included a bowling party at Splitsville. Among the great "eats" at Splitsville was a fountain of chocolate (above left). At the Awards Banquet there was napkin-waving (above) encouraged by the soul Food and Salsa singing waiters, who serenaded Natalie Leach, wife of 2003-04 President Lyn Leach (left).





APRO in TAMPA: Treasures abound!

2004 BUDDY AWARD WINNERS

The APRO "Buddy" awards are presented every year to those outstanding individuals and organizations that have raised the level of what can be done to better the industry for everyone. At the annual APRO awards banquet, held August 7 at the Tampa Marriott Waterside, the recipients of the Ernie Talley Lifetime Achievement Award, the President's Award of Excellence, the Rental Dealer of the Year and the Norm Smith Vendor of the Year were named.

**Ernie Talley Lifetime Achievement Award:
Darrell Tissot,
Countryside Rentals,
Bainbridge, OH**

The 2004 Ernie Talley Lifetime Achievement Award is presented only to those individuals in the rent-to-own business who have dedicated a lifetime to the industry and who have served the industry as a role model for others.

This year, the award was presented to Darrell Tissot of Countryside Rentals. Tis-

sot began his RTO business in 1985 and today runs his 17-store Rent-2-Own company with his son, Mike Tissot. Darrell Tissot served as APRO president in 1997 and helped the industry during its battle with the Internal Revenue Service to define the RTO transaction as a lease rather than a sale. The industry ultimately won the battle, saving the industry more than \$1 billion in potential taxes.

Also during his tenure, Tissot assisted the Association and the industry as it



was bombarded with media requests from news shows such as *20/20*, Bryant Gumbel and *NBC Nightly News*." Tissot has also served as a mentor not only to his son, but to rental dealers across the country. He traveled frequently to speak to rental dealers about their business and always was there to lend a helping hand when asked. In 2000, he was awarded the President's Award of Excellence.

He is a charter member of the Ohio Rental Dealers Association and served on the board of directors for

TRIB Group and also as TRIB Group president.

**President's Award of Excellence:
JIM BROWN,
ABC Rent-To-Own,
Wichita, KS**

One of the highest honors an APRO member can achieve is the President's Award of Excellence. This is presented to the person who exemplifies the best in the

industry through involvement and support of industry goals. This award can go to anyone who represents what the industry strives to be as a whole.

Jim Brown received the APRO President's Award for his role as one of the pioneers of the rent-to-own industry and founding member of APRO. He was one of the first rent-to-own employees in the nation working for the grandfather of the rent-to-own concept, Ernie Talley, in Wichita in 1965. One year later, Brown went to work for George

and John Parsons and, in 1972, became business partners with George Parsons. Brown and Parsons grew their three-store local Wichita small business for the past 30 years. Parsons recently passed away, leaving Brown as the sole proprietor of their business.

Brown was one of the original rent-to-own businessmen to form the national trade association for the rent-to-own industry. Since then, APRO has flourished as the voice for the rent-to-own industry representing the industry before Congress, the IRS, state legislatures, the media and the public for 25 years.

"Jim Brown is one of the founders and pioneers of the rent-to-own industry and the industry owes him a big thank you. The APRO President's Award is just the beginning," says APRO Executive Director Bill Keese.

Rental Dealer of the Year: MARTIN AUBLE, Appliance & Furniture RentAll

APRO's Rental Dealer of the Year award is presented annually to one individual in the industry who has contributed in a positive and outstanding manner to the industry and APRO. This year, the Rental Dealer of the Year was awarded to Martin Auble of Appliance & Furniture RentAll in Sioux Falls, SD. Auble received the award for his role representing the RTO industry before the U.S. Congress.



Auble is responsible for overseeing the rent-to-own division of Elmen Enterprises, dba Appliance & Furniture RentAll. As company vice president, Auble oversees the company's 43 stores and more than 200 employees throughout the Dakotas and five Midwestern states. In his spare time, Auble has been indispensable in helping garner support from legislators across the United States for the industry's federal bills.

In particular, Auble was personally responsible for getting S 884 co-sponsorship from Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), one of the most powerful leaders in Senate. "When the Democratic Senate leader believes in business-supported legislation, you know have a good and balanced piece of legislation," says Auble.

Senate Bill 884, the Consumer Rental-Purchase Agreement Act, currently has 27 Senate co-sponsors. Without the involvement of persons such as Auble, the

industry would not have experienced the success it has received in garnering the support from so many senators.

Norm Smith Vendor of the Year: ASHLEY FURNITURE

The Norm Smith Vendor of the Year award is given to an outstanding associate member who has supported the Association and its activities. This year, APRO recognized one of the

leaders in the furniture business and a real friend of the RTO industry, Ashley Furniture Industries Inc., based in Arcadia, WI.

As one of the largest employers in Wisconsin, when Ashley talks, the politicians usually listen. As many of you know, Wisconsin is one of two states without rental-purchase legislation. However, due to Ashley's education efforts, state legislators have been learning about the importance and validity of RTO in Wisconsin. Facing one of the most hostile legal and political environments the industry has ever faced, Ashley has come proudly forward to explain the company's place in the industry and the RTO industry's place in the American economy.

Ashley's efforts have already turned several noteworthy opponents around on the RTO issue. As a result, the industry expects good things out of the Wisconsin Legislature in the near future.





APRO *in* TAMPA: *Treasures abound!*

APRO'S EDUCATION FOUNDATION AUCTION NETS \$24,775



The second annual APRO Education Foundation auction netted more than \$24,000 by the close of the 2004 APRO Convention and Buying Show. Augmented this year with an online auction followed by a live auction during the awards banquet on August 7 (graciously performed by Al Benson of Central File), the funds raised will go toward scholarships for deserving students affiliated with the RTO industry. The hottest bidding occurred over presidential memorabilia, donated by APRO's lobbying team The Washington Group. The bipartisan items—sold separately by party, of course—together netted \$4,950. Other popular items included a bird hunting and fishing trips in Washington, a week stay on a Florida island home and fishing trips with “Tiger” John Cleek.

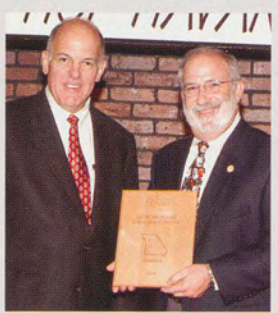
APRO President Shannon Strunk spearheaded the diverse marketing efforts of this year's auction. “I am very pleased with the participation—both the folks who donated to the auction and those who bid on the items. I want to extend a warm ‘thank you’ to all who helped us build the foundation this year,” says Strunk.

Prize	Donated by	Winner	Final bid
Fishing trip in Washington	Kevin Quinn	Gary Hughes	\$1,400
Little Gasparilla Club	John Foster	“Tiger” John Cleek	\$2,550
Royal Sonesta Hotel	Shannon and Cynthia Strunk	Gary Ferriman	\$1,250
Fishing With “Tiger”	“Tiger” John Cleek	Kevin Quinn	\$2,100
Fishing With “Tiger”	“Tiger” John Cleek	John Foster	\$2,100
Bill Clinton cufflinks	John Raffaelli	Bill Keese	\$650
Bill Clinton cufflinks	John Raffaelli	John Miller	\$650
Bill Clinton cufflinks	John Raffaelli	Sidney Burton	\$650
San Francisco weekend	Karen Greenwald	Larry Sutton	\$650
Sunlight Ski Resort	Bill White	Larry Sutton	\$1,000
Fishing trip in the Gulf of Mexico	Charlie Cadrechia	Wayne Sutton	\$450
Monteleone Hotel	Shannon and Cynthia Strunk	Ernie Lewallen	\$1,000
Bird hunting in Washington	Kevin Quinn	Ernie Lewallen	\$2,200
Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas	Mandalay Bay Hotel/Resort	Larry Carrico	\$900
Fun Florida vacation for two	Tampa Marriott Waterside	Wayne Sutton	\$900
Paradise in southern Illinois	Larry Carrico	Shannon Strunk	\$750
Buccaneers tickets	Terry Beville	Cynthia Baber Strunk	\$350
2005 Indy 500 tickets	David P. David	Kevin Quinn	\$1,300
Cincinnati weekend	Ernie Lewallen	Mark Windsor	\$925
Presidential memorabilia	John Raffaelli	Kerry Lesenberger	\$3,000

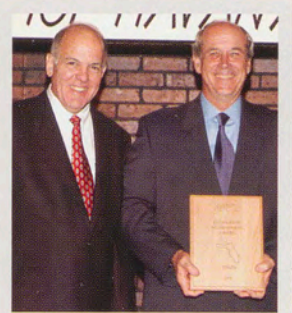
2004 STATE ASSOCIATION AWARDS



State Association of the Year was awarded to Arkansas, with RentWay's Alan Frazier (right) accepting from "Tiger" John Cleek.



Most Improved State Association: Missouri—Chuck Kuluva (right) accepts from Cleek.



State Legislative Achievement Award: Florida—Terry Beville (right) accepts from Cleek.



Continued Excellence: Florida (Terry Beville), Ohio (Ernie Lewallen), Alabama/Mississippi (Shannon Strunk), California (Paul and May Davis), Indiana (David P. David), Illinois (Jim Sobieralski), Texas (Robert Briley), Wisconsin (Jeff Lebakken) and Oregon (not pictured).

Meet the Board

Every year during the APRO Convention, APRO members elect eight candidates to fill positions on the board of directors. The board has a total of 16 directors—plus a vendor member and an immediate past president. Board members serve staggered, two-year terms and half of the positions become open each year at the convention, in addition to any vacancies that need to be filled.

APRO's 2003–04 President Lyn Leach handed over the gavel to Shannon Strunk of Baber's Leasing in Pascagoula, MS, who will serve as APRO president for the 2004–05 term. The new executive committee is as follows:

- President: Shannon Strunk, Baber's, Pascagoula, MS
- First Vice President: "Tiger" John Cleek, Cleek's Rent-To-Own, Columbia, MO
- Second Vice President: Larry Carrico, SKC Enterprises, Mt. Vernon, IL
- Secretary: Kevin Quinn, KLQ Enterprises, Tacoma, WA
- Treasurer: David P. David, Full-O-Pep Appliances, Bloomington, IN
- Immediate Past President: Lyn Leach, Ace Furniture & TV, Lincoln, NE

The remaining 2004–05 APRO board of directors is as follows:

- Rich Bartel, Regal RTO, Vancouver, WA
- Terry Beville, Buddy's Home Furnishings, Tampa, FL
- Robert Briley, Rent City, Abilene, TX
- Sidney Burton, Hometown Ventures, Sault Sainte Marie, MI
- Chris Korst, Rent-A-Center, Plano, TX
- Ernie Lewallen, UHR Rents, Cincinnati, OH
- John Rogers, High Touch, Wichita, KS
- Gary Romine, Show-Me Rent-To-Own, Farmington, MO
- Richard Rose, RTO Inc., Norfolk, VA
- Wayne Sutton, Rent USA, Hammond, LA
- Mike Talley, Talley Rents, Southlake, TX
- Mark Windsor, National Rent-to-Own, Lebanon, MO

ADVERTISER INDEX

Aaron's Sales & Lease.....	IFC-1
Alliance Computing Technologies.....	10
APRO 2004 Convention sponsors.....	6
CES 2005.....	19
ColorTyme.....	11
Foresight.....	BC
G.E. Appliances.....	IBC
High Touch.....	23
Ideal Software.....	18
Imagery Marketing Consultants.....	14
Kirkpatrick, Sprecker & Co.....	16
Nova Lighting.....	12
Premier Rental-Purchase.....	12
Rental Information Systems.....	43
RES Accessories.....	17
RSSS.....	4
RTO Plus Software.....	15
Sandberg Furniture.....	25
SED International.....	13
Teletrack.....	5
Thomson/RCA.....	26-27
TRIB Group.....	15
Twinhead.....	21
Whirlpool.....	2

WHO'S WHO IN

Computers

The following list of computer suppliers cater to the rental-purchase industry. All are either APRO associate members (*), advertisers in APRO publications (+), APRO convention exhibitors (^) or APRO-endorsed member benefit program providers (~).

Alliance Computing Technologies Inc. *^+

Contact: John P. Foster
3105 W. Waters Ave., Ste. 215
Tampa, FL 33614
813/936-0165, ext. 312
Fax 813/769-2333

BDI Laguna *^+

Contact: Jay Nardone
3655 Atlanta Industrial Dr.,
Ste. 100
Atlanta, GA 30331
404/696-9996, ext. 137
Fax 404/696-4870

ByteSmith Inc. *

Contact: Paul A. Boucher
11104 C St. S.
Tacoma, WA 98444
253/539-1099
Fax 253/539-1045

Dell Computer Corp. *^

Contact: Linda Mosley
One Dell Way, MS 8310
Round Rock, TX 78682
877/671-3355, ext. 43382
Fax 512/283-9217

High Touch Inc. *^+

Contact: John Rogers
2020 N. Amidon St.
Wichita, KS 67203
316/832-1611
Fax 316/831-5555

Ideal Software Systems Inc. *^+

Contact: Steve Lenhart
P.O. Box 3065
Meridian, MS 39303
601/693-1673, ext. 153
Fax 601/693-2302

Rental Information Systems Inc. *^+

Contact: Larry Burns
P.O. Box 1165, 1705 E. North St.
Magnolia, AR 71754-1165
800/863-7394
Fax 870/234-3797

RSSS *^+

Contact: Ellison Crider
711 N. Carancahua St., Ste.
1500
Corpus Christi, TX 78475
361/993-1790, ext. 2119
Fax 361/993-1731

RTO PRO Software *^+

Contact: Ron Ganus
2503 Gables Dr.
Eustis, FL 32726
800/351-6299
Fax 352/385-0287

Twinhead Corp. *^+

Contact: Ray Oribello
48303 Fremont Blvd.
Fremont, CA 94538
510/492-0828
Fax 510/492-0820

Vance Baldwin Inc. *^

Contact: Robert Coolidge
7060 State Rd. 84, #12
Davie, FL 33317
954/723-9191, ext. 131
Fax 800/552-1431



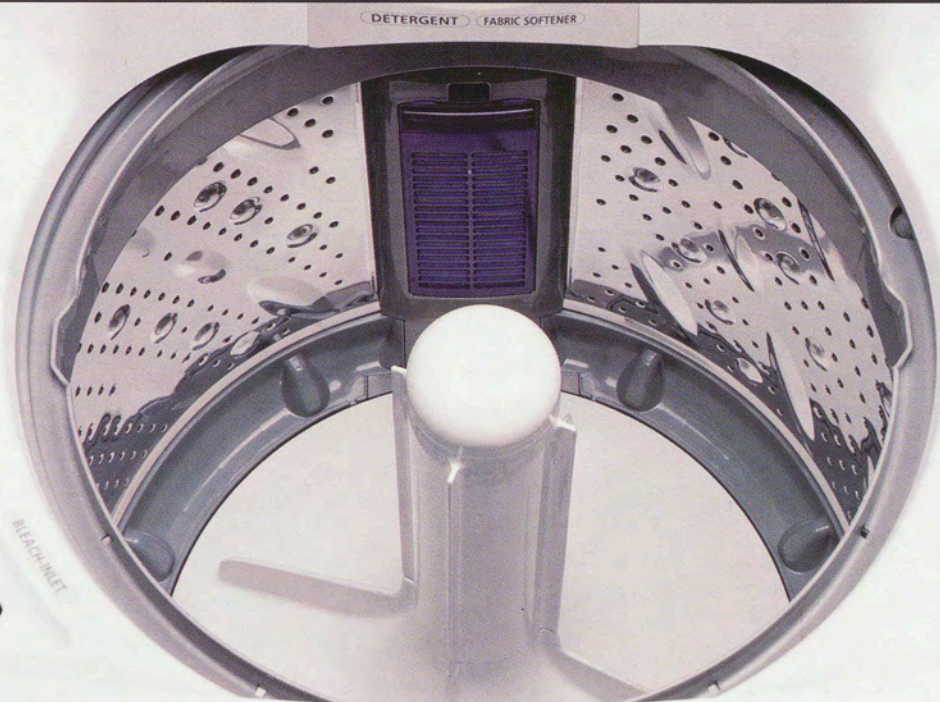
CAL LIGHTING

Great Values,
Lots of Varieties.
Please call for catalogs.

Showrooms:
Dallas: Trade Mart, 4523
High Point: IHFC. C-428
San Francisco: Mart 1, 492
3625 E. Philadelphia St. Ontario, CA 91761
Tel: 800.321.6677 Fax: 800.814.4946

Another big idea from GE.

bin speed • 24" opening • 10 cycles • 4 water levels • **Full-Size Compact Washer** • bifold lid • 4 water levels • load sensing • 4 wash/



• 2.7 cu. ft. extra-large capacity • digital countdown • **Full-Size Compact Washer** • 4 wash/rinse temperatures • uncouple connector

The GE 24" 2.7 cu. ft. extra-large capacity washer is proof that good things really do come in small packages. It not only holds a full-size load in a compact design, but offers one touch load sensing, a high-speed spin cycle as well as other popular features like: a stainless steel tub, lint filter, easy-roll rollers and 10 wash cycles.

Because each appliance is rigorously tested and retested in our Six Sigma process, GE offers a full one-year parts and labor warranty plus a five-year limited warranty on the controls with the Spacemaker® portable washer. What more proof do you need that big things really do come in small packages from GE Appliances?

GE Appliances

GEAppliances.com

imagination at work



For more information on our complete product line and services offered to the rental-purchase industry contact:

Paula Allison 800.782.8093

Ken Mushrush 877.657.5636

Paul Eichberger 800.782.8097

© 2003 GE Appliances

APRO Associate Member since 1992



Customers will Value Your Foresight

Still the leader in RTO Membership Services



Profit from more than 50% of your customers with our great lineup of services that use minimal shelf space. Taking care of your customers has never been easier than with a little foresight.*

The Foresight Preferred Customer Club is a valuable package of insurance and discount benefits that make it an easy purchase decision for more than 50% of your customers. Just take a look at what the Foresight Preferred Customer Club has to offer:

- ❖ Loss and Damage Coverage on Rental Purchases
- ❖ Accidental Death and Dismemberment Coverage
- ❖ Involuntary Unemployment Insurance
- ❖ Two-Year Extended Service Contract
- ❖ Automotive Services and Discounts
- ❖ Retail, Entertainment and Grocery Savings
- ❖ Tire and Wheel Protection
- ❖ Plus Much More!

For more information on how you can start enjoying added monthly revenues and increase value for your customers, visit our Web site at www.foresightclub.com or call **800-733-0811** to speak with a representative.



* Based on average Foresight Club Sales and margins.