

Welcoming a New Year

By Michael Riva – SSA Board Chairman

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The New Year brings new goals, renewed hope and a time to reflect. As I enter into 2011 and take over as chairman of the SSA, I find myself considering my time in the self storage industry and the role the SSA has played in the success of our family business.

In the late '80s my father became interested in building a self storage facility. In 1988 he and my mother went to their first SSA conference and trade show. One year later he opened up his first 46 units. Over the past two decades his business has steadily grown and today we operate as midsize operators with eight facilities and over 2,500 units. The one thing that has not changed is the fact that we continue to operate as a small, independent, family-owned business.

Unlike the measured growth of our business, the self storage industry has grown exponentially, especially between 1998 and 2006. This incredible growth has created an even more fragmented group of owner/operators. As an association of small and large operators, as well as many great vendors, this disparate constituency is one of the single greatest challenges for the SSA. How does the Association cater to the demands of the ever growing large operator sector of our industry, not lose touch with the demands of the smaller operators, and satisfy our vendor member needs?

One of the ways the SSA has reached out to smaller operators is through the Team One and Team One-Plus membership options. These programs enable small operators to take advantage of those benefits that are particularly useful to smaller companies. It's an equitable way for all operators, large or small, to get the most out of the SSA.

Another benefit to the small operators is through the ongoing work of the Legislative & Regulatory Advisory Committee. While this may seem beyond the scope of expertise of many operators, professionals from companies of all sizes have significantly influenced the self storage climate and will continue to do so nationwide. These initiatives not only protect all self storage businesses from threatening government intrusions (such as sales taxes), but they have already proven to save a great deal of money per-store through lien law improvements and other common sense measures.

This year for the Spring Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, the SSA has not only put together our typical excellent program, but has also created new tracks such as those designed for managers involved in day-to-day operations.

Over the past two decades, the SSA has been there for our family business, educating us as we faced the pains of expansion and lobbying to make our industry stronger. I am honored to serve as your chairman and look forward to working with this diverse group of members to meet the needs and demands of all, regardless of size.

Finally, I want to take a moment to thank my predecessor Tracy Taylor. Tracy has been a tremendous leader during a very difficult period for our industry and we are all better for it. As was the case with Tracy, my door is always open (or my email, as the case may be). Please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything I can do through my position as SSA Board chairman to help the self storage industry. ❖