

ERA's Conference Committee hit a home run with recent event

"Best conference I have ever attended!" were the words offered up by one participant at ERA's recent 47th Management and Marketing Conference in Austin, Texas. As a longtime attendee, it was rewarding to hear that this event was being so well received.

This was truly the case on Feb. 28-March 1 as 215 representatives, distributors and manufacturers converged on the Lone Star State for a two-day program. The venue (the AT&T Conference Center and Hotel) was outstanding and more than met the needs of the attendees.

Many thanks to all our sponsors (*see the roster on page 8*) and the ERA Conference Committee, chaired by Tom Griffin, CPMR, of Catalyst Sales, Inc., for designing such a successful program. The volunteer rep committee members (Kathie Cahill, CPMR, of Net Sales Company; Tobi Cornell, CPMR, of Kruvand Associates; John Hutson, CPMR, of The MacInnis Company; Rick LaPiana of the Cain-Forlaw Company; and Holly Myers, CPMR, of Wallace Electronic Sales) plus the staff members on the committee (Walter Tobin, Tess Hill, Neda Simeonova and Stephanie Tierney) really hit a home run.

Attendees come to ERA conferences for varied reasons. Some come for the networking; some come for the programs; and some come to connect with old friends. I believe this event met or exceeded the needs of all of these folks.

The program opened with a well-attended welcome reception on an open air patio adjacent to the hotel and conference center. Also on Sunday evening, the ERA White Pin Group came together off-site for its 2016 reunion to initiate the latest class of White Pin inductees (who have served at least two years as volunteers at the national level of ERA) and to present awards for exemplary service to our association and our industry. The award recipients — Bruce Scoggin, CPMR, of Electro-Rep Associates, and Holly Myers, CPMR, of Wallace Electronic Sales — were presented with the Jess Spoons - ERA White Pin Scholarship Awards for 2014 and 2015, respectively. As part of this year's reunion, a special White Pin was awarded posthumously to Sarah Rooker of Arkco Sales in tribute to her long and courageous battle with cancer. It was an extremely moving presentation by our past chair-

man of the board, Mark Conley of O'Donnell Associates North.

Our first morning of programming kicked off with a keynote address by consultant-author Scott Klososky, founder of Future Point of View. His presentation, tied to our theme of "Smart Solutions: Navigating the Connected World," focused on "Building Relationships with Connected Customers."

After breakout seminars (there were 12 in all, each offered twice over the two days) and lunch, CEO Walter Tobin introduced three new consultants to ERA — Frederick Myers, Cesare Giammarco and Alex Gabbi — plus a returnee to our team of resources, Bob Terwall. Our next speaker was Len Jelinek of IHS who outlined his research firm's perspectives and projections for our industry.

After additional breakouts, John Mayhall of LinkedIn closed out the day with his presentation on "Unlocking Your Company's Potential in a Networked World."

At the conference theme party, the prestigious Ray Hall Spirit of ERA Award was presented (for 2014) to Bob Evans, CPMR, of EK Micro, and (for 2015) to Tom Shanahan, our recently retired CEO. Bob Terwall, former president of Cherry Electrical Products, was awarded an Honorary Membership in ERA in gratitude for his many years of service.

The second day began with a wonderful presentation by Michael Knight of TTI, Inc., on how distribution trends are impacting the electronics industry. More breakout seminars were followed by a session featuring consultant Cesare Giammarco, Mike Lasley of ION Associates and Mike Swenson, CPMR, of the Mel Foster Company. They addressed "Reps and Manufacturers: Reinforcing the Mutual Value."

Closing the conference, Walter Tobin conducted a Q and A discussion among a panel of millennials on how to work with, buy from and sell to their generation. Many of our members commented that this presentation may have been worth the price of admission alone.

All in all, this was an extremely productive two days, and I would strongly suggest that, if you did not attend, you missed a truly great opportunity to network, learn, make new contacts and catch up with old friends.



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GREAT NEWS!
ERA's next conference is coming in 2017!
Save the dates — Feb 26-28 — for a return to Austin, Texas.
Watch for details coming soon!