

Wow! Where did the Decade Go?

SEAO Celebrates 10 Years of Service!

By Robert C. Rogers, PE, SE

It doesn't seem like it, but SEAO has now been serving the Ohio structural engineering profession for a decade. SEAO organized as a nonprofit professional association and received its articles of incorporation from the Ohio Secretary of State Office in July of 2003. However, prior to that magical date, SEAO took nearly two years of work and effort by many people to even arrive at that point in our history. In 2001, I had the idea to create a structural engineers association that would be a place where fellow structural practitioners could gather and share their experiences and knowledge as well as provide a collective, distinct voice for our profession. In those early days I had the pleasure of working with a number of dedicated individuals to create a structural engineers association to serve Ohio's structural engineers.

Beginning in mid-2001, I sought out a small number of fellow professionals to come together and sign a letter to be sent to over 500 engineers statewide, through the help of NCSEA, asking them to express their interest in forming such an organization. Additionally, a web site was launched so that the concept of SEAO would have, at a minimum, a web presence when the letter was distributed. In November of 2001, those 500+ letters were sent out and the response was so promising that I decided to forge ahead with the creation of the association. What followed was a lot of planning, organization, and grassroots effort to pull together a cohesive group to move things forward. In early 2002, an initial statewide meeting was held in Columbus to discuss the formation of the organization and seek volunteers to assist with the effort. The first meeting was attended by 30+ engineers and consisted of presentations from Jeanne Vogelzang (NCSEA Executive Director), Marc Barter (NCSEA) and myself. The presentations focused on an overview of NCSEA, the importance of state structural engineering associations, and the need for such an organization in Ohio. The meeting resulted in a small group of individuals focusing upon creating a set of bylaws for the organization, updating and enhancing the newly launched web site, and continuing outreach efforts to spread the word about the formation of SEAO. I was elected as the Temporary Chair of the organization with Colleen Bush serving as the temporary Secretary. It was emphasized that once the association was incorporated, elections would occur and officers would be selected in accordance forthcoming bylaws of the organization.

In early 2003, the first SEAO Newsletter (Moments & Reactions) was published and the first membership applications were provided. Those who responded by the end of April in 2003 were granted a special designation as a Charter Members of the organization. A few months after the first newsletter publication, the formal articles of incorporation of the association were filed with the Secretary of State and soon thereafter, SEAO became a non-profit professional association in the State of Ohio. A special meeting was called on July 19th of 2003 and the first board of directors and officers for the association were elected. The first board and officers were mainly volunteers, some of whom had labored alongside Colleen and me to get the association up and running. Those who graciously provided their time and effort over the first year (July of 2003 to July of 2004) were:

- Sandy Martin – President
- Greg Sliger – President Elect
- Steve Schaeffer – Treasurer
- Jeff Stefani – Secretary

- Paul Granata – Director
- Halim Saab – Director
- Gretchen Bryc – Director
- Dave McGregor – Director
- Tim Butler – Director
- Tom Kostelic – Director
- Robert Rogers – Director (Past President)

Shortly after the election, the SEAO board authorized SEAO to join NCSEA as a member organization. It should be noted that many of these individuals continued to serve SEAO for years thereafter and some are still involved with the association's activities today. In that first year we had quarterly meetings in Columbus that focused upon:

- Special Inspections
- Certification / Licensing of Structural Engineers
- The Business of Structural Engineering & H1-B
- Quality and Competence of Structural Engineers – The Need to Clean-Up our Profession

Quarterly meetings continued into 2004 and early 2005 and it was not long thereafter that our first annual conference was held (September 2005) with the Structural Engineers Association of Kentucky. Gretchen Bryc was instrumental in our first annual conference effort and was involved with several annual conferences thereafter.

The countless number of individuals who step-up to make a difference continues today and the growth of SEAO over the course of the decade is a testament to the structural engineers of Ohio. We, as a group, continue to serve this state and to be faithful custodians for the safety of all those who travel across our bridges or find shelter and refuge in our buildings. What a great decade for SEAO! The future is only brighter for SEAO and its members!



First SEAO Logo