

# RTA Launches Education & Member Drive

## Major Effort Focused On Sawmills, Forest Products Associations

### From Staff Reports

*"A journey of a thousand miles is completed one step at a time. The Railway Tie Association's (RTA) journey to help build and strengthen the wood tie industry is completed one penny at a time. That one penny per tie is matched by other RTA members—and thus multiplied—to generate nearly 50 million pennies to conduct the important work of the association in promotion of the wood tie to the railroad community. So, even though they say that a dollar doesn't go as far as it used to, a 'penny a tie' goes farther than it ever did," said RTA President Gary Williams recently.*

Have you ever wondered how any association becomes enabled to create value-added programs and services for its members? The answer is simple...like-minded businesses and individuals pool modest contributions to achieve common goals."

"Of course, the execution of the mission is more complicated than that, but that simple statement pretty much sums up the reasons competitors 'associate' and work together for the common good," said RTA Executive Director Jim Gauntt.

During RTA's 90<sup>th</sup> continuous year of operation, the RTA Executive Committee decided to reinforce the message. At the same time, RTA wants to make sure that every hardwood sawmill and every like-minded forest products and forestry association in North America knows what RTA is doing to keep the markets healthy for treated wood crossties.

Thus was born the 2009 Education and Member Drive. The strategy encompasses three key elements:

1. Make sure that every direct producer member's entire procurement staff is enrolled in the RTA member database;

2. Create a contest for those procurement staff people to educate and enroll non-member hardwood sawmills; and

3. Reach out to every state forestry and forest products association and their membership to get the word out.

"The idea is to make sure everyone knows what we are doing for their businesses and then make sure we have a long-term mechanism in place to communicate with them in the future," Gauntt said. "The goal is not revenue creation but, rather, education."

A simple one-page informational sheet highlights the contest that has been announced as running from March 1 through April 30. This sheet will be given out to sawmills by procurement staff during the two-month time period and touts the primary areas of RTA's focused efforts:

**Research.** Railroads remain open to anyone claiming they can "build a better mousetrap." Your "penny a tie" provides funding for research designed to improve the wood tie and promote the engineered wood tie system to railroads.

**Crossties magazine.** *Crossties* is the industry source for the most current information affecting the sawmill, wood treating, and railroad businesses. Your "penny a tie" helps pay the costs of publishing and distributing *Crossties* and your bimonthly subscription.

**Annual field trips.** Open to all members, RTA's annual field trips offer an opportunity for mill owners, raw material procurement people, and railroad staff to visit manufacturing facilities, observe first hand, and openly discuss different solutions to common problems.

**Railroad Day-on-the-Hill.** RTA maintains a pro-active stance in Washington, D.C. As one of the sponsors for the annual Railroad Day-on-the-Hill, RTA presents its members with the opportunity to sit down with legislators to voice concerns and the chance to head off unfavorable legislation to our

industry. A "penny a tie" makes this possible.

**Website (www.rta.org).** Facts, answers to frequently asked questions, online publications, tie specifications, research reports and technical articles, and all things relating to the railroad tie industry are all funded by your "penny a tie."

**Technical conference.** RTA's annual technical conference is an industry gathering to educate and provide networking opportunities with members at every level of our industry.

**Industry statistics, economic research and forecasts.** RTA provides a wealth of business planning economic news, an econometric model for forecasting tie purchases, monthly production and inventory statistics all underwritten with a "penny a tie."

**Educational tools.** Some of RTA's educational tools include a three-day, in-depth Tie Grading Seminar, RTA Tie Guide, TieReports, CDs for teaching tie defects, video training modules, and many others—all for a "penny a tie."

**Annual railroad surveys.** RTA collects and presents exclusive info developed for and communicated to RTA members.

**Forestry scholarships.** RTA provides forestry scholarships annually to help deserving students prosper in their education and prepare them for employment in the hardwood or wood treating industries.

**Environmental research and activities.** RTA is a leader in conducting research to confirm that wood ties are the most environmentally sound choice for railroads from the "cradle to the grave."

**Membership directory.** Mailed each year to every railroad and railroad contractor in the United States and Canada, RTA's membership directory provides high visibility for all included for a "penny a tie."

"Of course there are many other things that RTA does, including coordination and work with other national rail and wood protection organizations," Gauntt said.



The sawmills' "penny a tie" goes farther than it ever did.

—RTA President Gary Williams

“But these are some of the most important points we can make.”

RTA also recommends that procurement personnel visit a non-member sawmill to encourage owners to enroll in RTA so that they can stay abreast of RTA’s efforts on their behalf. The procurement staff person who enrolls the most members within his/her own company wins prizes and could win the grand prize.

In addition to this member contest, RTA is actively contacting state forestry and forest products associations to inform them of these efforts. RTA is reminding these organizations of its policy of offering honorary memberships in RTA and links to their association on the RTA links page at [www.rta.org](http://www.rta.org).

Many state forestry and forest products associations have extensive sawmill membership. A review of association websites in Missouri and Tennessee, for example, show hundreds of sawmills that may produce crossties and that may have not heard the RTA story.

“We believe that these comprehensive efforts will go a long way to spread the word about RTA’s mission,” Gauntt said.

## RTA’s Outreach To Hardwood Sawmills

*RTA has asked state forest products associations and others to consider publishing this brief article in their newsletters to members:*

2009 marks the Railway Tie Association’s 90<sup>th</sup> year in business. More importantly, this year RTA is reaching out to all hardwood crosstie sawmills to make sure that these businesses, vital to our nation’s transportation network, know just how hard RTA is working to maintain the health of railroad markets for ties. So, if you are not already an RTA member and you’re a sawmill that currently manufactures crossties, or even if you are simply interested in what railroad markets could mean to your business, please consider doing these three things:

1. Visit our new website [www.rta.org](http://www.rta.org) for a host of resources, statistics,

market information, and other information about the wood crosstie market.

2. Call us at (770) 460.5553 or write us at [ties@rta.org](mailto:ties@rta.org) and let us tell you more about what RTA is doing in the marketplace. When you call or write, we’ll send you a free gift and important industry literature.
3. Let us help facilitate enrolling your company as a member so that you can receive regular updates about our annual events such as the Tie Grading Seminar and the Annual Conference to be held in Baltimore, Md., in 2009 and Branson, Mo., in 2010.

We look forward to hearing from you! §

“And, as our president has so eloquently stated in the pre-amble to our member education drive, ‘even though they say that a dollar doesn’t go as far as it used to, a

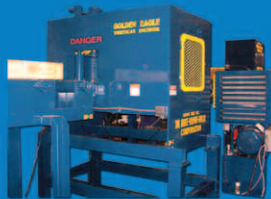
sawmill’s “penny a tie” goes farther than it ever did,’ especially when it comes to all the things RTA does to support the hardwood sawmill community.” §

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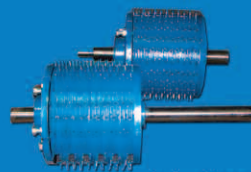
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