

# Taking Construction Issues to Washington

By Claudia Deakins  
Special to The Madill Record

Herndon Construction helped build a memorial to Marshall County war heroes. Both of Michael Herndon's sons served in the military and his youngest was injured on his second tour in Iraq. Patriotism and pride for those who have served the United States have touched Herndon's life, making his first trip to the nation's Capitol and his meeting with the congressional leaders especially meaningful.

In that visit, Herndon was providing a greater service—to his statewide trade industry.

The co-owner of Herndon Construction is vice president and treasurer of the Oklahoma State Home Builders Association. The Kingston resident recently accompanied top leaders of the association on a trip to Washington, D.C., where the group met with Oklahoma's legislators, about issues of importance to the association's members.

A top issue for the association is the Environmental Protection Agency's lead-based paint regulation. The EPA rule, which was effective last month (April), requires builders to have lead-based paint certification to renovate or remodel homes built before 1978.

"Our issue was that we did not have time to get the certification for enough builders to be able to remodel their homes (under an energy efficiency

stimulus program)," explained Herndon. "There were not enough people trained to do the certification before the rule went into effect."

Builders are encouraging homeowners to take advantage of the Home Star Program when remodeling homes. Home Star, also known as Cash for Caulkers, is a stimulus program of incentives for homeowners who make energy-efficiency investments in their homes, said Herndon, who last year was the first homebuilder in the area to earn the Certified Green Professional designation from the National Association of Home Builders.

The delegation asked for more time for the certification process, and EPA refused to delay the rule until enough certified contractors could be trained, said Herndon. However, as a result of the association's leadership push, members of the House have decided to introduce their own legislation to delay the rule and opt-out until the EPA can demonstrate that classes have been held in the state for at least a full year. And Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma has indicated interest in introducing a Senate version.

"Some of the bigger cities probably have enough certifiers but the rural areas did not. I don't know that the regulators understand the position of rural communities."

"As a rural builder, I see that situation daily," he said.



**HOMEBUILDER MICHAEL** Herndon and the state contingent lobbied in several areas for the construction industry, including EPA regulations.

"However the state association does a very good job of allowing us to participate, be in leader-

ship and represent the unique interests of the rural areas." EPA regulators have the

authority to impact the issues, but the Oklahoma legislators did understand and sympathize with the OSHBA's concerns.

"(OSHBA) Executive Vice President Mike Means does an excellent job of staying in contact with our legislators," he said. "Our representatives understand that it is important to keep the home-building business in the U.S. strong to help the economy."

Economic conditions have had some effect on Herndon's business, as he has not hired as many employees as they typically would this time of year.

The company recently was named the 2010 Large Business of the Year by the Marshall County Chamber of Commerce. Being a local employer and community partner is important to Herndon Construction, a family business that was founded in 1950 by Herndon and his brother, Tom.

"I have always felt like we have been very blessed with the friends and neighbors and rural community that seem to work so well together. It is important that we give back to our community," said Herndon, who has served the Southern Oklahoma Home Builders Association for several years, including serving as its president.

That commitment to community was evidenced when Michael's brother and the company's co-owner, Thomas Herndon, wanted to honor those from Marshall County who lost their lives in service to their

country.

"Thomas joined with the local VFW to help raise the money for a beautiful memorial on the courthouse lawn. We did all of the construction and legwork to put everything in place," Herndon said.

The memorials, museums and galleries in the nation's capital made an impression on Herndon and his wife, who joined him on the six-day trip. They visited the Portrait Gallery where they saw the original paintings of the early presidents.

"The portraits allow you to see what they looked like because, of course, there was no photography at that time."

The Herndons also toured the Capitol, and visited the Smithsonian and the National Air and Space Museum.

"The overall feeling of being in the same city that our forefathers were in, seeing the location where Abraham Lincoln was when he was shot, was overwhelming to me," Herndon said. "I imagined our early government leaders being in that city. I imagined their thoughts, goals and concerns for our nation and its people."

"I am almost ashamed that I haven't spent time to do this previously in my life. I've always been busy. I always had to work."

It is fitting that it was work for the OSHBA that led Michael Herndon to make his first visit to the city at the center of U.S. history.