

BLOCK KIDS

A Companion Handbook



*National Association of Women in Construction
NAWIC Education Foundation*

(This booklet is not intended to replace the NEF Block Kids Guidelines. It is intended to share ideas and best practices. Please refer to current guideline and forms at the NEF Website.)

What is the Block Kids Building Program? (from the NAWIC Education Website)

The Block Kids Building Program is a national building program competition that is sponsored on the local level by NAWIC chapters and other organizations. The award-winning program introduces children to the construction industry in an effort to create an awareness of and to promote an interest in future careers in one of the many facets of the industry. The program is open to all elementary school children in grades 1 - 6. The competition involves the construction of various structures with interlocking blocks and three of the following additional items: a small rock, string, foil and poster board. Local winners advance to Regional Competition and one semi-finalist from each region is entered in the National Program Competition. National prizes are awarded to the top three projects.

Block Kids is one of the best programs that NAWIC and NEF sponsor. It is a wonderful way to introduce the children to our industry. Block Kids is a fun and very rewarding experience for all – not just the children. If you have never volunteered to help your chapter with the competition, I challenge you to do so this year. You will more out it of than you put into it. The stories that you will hear will surely amaze you!

This companion handbook is not to be used in place of the forms and guidelines that are on the NEF website. This handbook is intended to help you plan your event and to share best and worst practices.

NAWIC is a volunteer organization and we all have our spare time passions. I must also add to this that we are all a “team” - within our chapters and between chapters. The participating chapters each year, organize their programs to work within their geographical areas and meet the chapter’s financial capabilities. The greatest thing about this diversity is that all of these women would be more than happy to share their experiences – good and bad – to help other chapters be successful in their own programs. All anyone ever needs to do is to reach out and ask!

With that said, let’s take a look at some helpful suggestions that may just help your chapter in planning this years event!

Happy Building,

Paula Lane, CIT

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I'd like to share the following story with all of you that I used as an example at our Regional Forum last year.....

What am I holding in my hand?

(Audience – a pen)

No, this is not just a pen....

The spring that is loaded inside of this pen came from Benjamin Franklin's pocket watch. The blue ink in this pen was used to die the blue background that our wonderful stars sit on in the first American flag that Betsy Ross sewed. The clip on this pen is actually a piece of the flap on the wing of Amelia Earhart's plane, the Red Bus that she piloted on her 1st solo Atlantic flight.

All of the items were kept at the Smithsonian for many years until an engineer at NASA retrieved them. In the late sixties, he decided to put together a commemorative pen to fly with Neil Armstrong to the moon. Mr. Armstrong had the pen on him when he took those 1st steps and it's a good thing. He was having problems with a moon rock caught in his space boots and he actually used this pen to pry out the piece.

After that flight, the pen kind of lingered at the Astronaut Hall of Fame for a quite a few years.

But in 1983, Sally Ride learned about this pen and asked permission to once again take it into space on board her Challenger flight. As flight engineer, Sally used this pen to calculate the coordinates for the orbiter re-entry.

My husband was lucky enough to win this pen in one of our famous NEF raffles and he suggested that I share it with you today. So you see – this is not just an ordinary pen!

That was quite a story about an ordinary pen wasn't it?

If I had asked you to close your eyes before I began that story, most of you would have been trying to visualize the travels of this pen – and I am sure that you would have succeeded.

When a judge looks at the pictures of a Block Kids entry, he sometimes sees just blocks. But – *when he reads that story* – the blocks have a brand new look.

So – with all of that said, this year when you host your Block Kids competition, be sure to spend some time with the winner and get *their story about their project*. Then get it all written down, don't worry about space on the page – go ahead and use the back if you need to – but get the *child's* story on paper so the judge can see it's not just an ordinary configuration of Lego blocks!

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE 2011-2012 YEAR

**ALL ENTRIES TO REGIONAL CHAIR NO LATER THAN
MARCH 23, 2012**

**REGIONAL CHAIR ANNOUNCES WINNER
MARCH 30, 2012**

**ALL ENTRIES TO NATIONAL CHAIR NO LATER THAN
APRIL 6, 2012**

**NATIONAL CHAIR ANNOUNCES WINNERS
APRIL 16, 2012**

Planning

Planning and delegating are two of the most important aspects of a successful competition.

Our new NAWIC year begins October 1st and incoming Presidents should be appointing their committee chairs for the upcoming year at this time. Once the chair has been selected, here are some action items to aid in your event:

Get your Block Kids committee together.

There are many different details that will need to be taken care of no matter how small or large your chapter. The Block Kids Chair should address her chapter at the monthly meeting and invite members to a “Kick Off” meeting to begin the planning stage. Each person or group should have a particular task to complete.

The Chapter President needs to keep in touch with her committee chairs to ensure that things are running smoothly and to offer assistance. Very often, chairs find themselves taking on everything because they did not delegate well or part of their group has failed to complete their task. Should this happen, you need to re-group quickly and move forward. We are a volunteer organization and many times our volunteers just get caught up with life. Pointing fingers and complaining will be counterproductive to a successful competition - so re-group and move on.

Secure your location for the competition as early as possible. Some ideas for locations could be community centers, schools, training rooms at businesses, etc. Once a location has been chosen, request a certificate of insurance. There is now a charge for the Block Kids certificate of insurance and by requesting it early, it will not slip through the cracks.

Be sure to download all current forms from the NEF website - <http://www.nawiceducation.org>

The guidelines are important to **read and follow**. In order for your chapter's entry to be considered for Regional or National level, certain forms and rules must be utilized. A couple of the major mistakes made by chapters are missing forms and pictures that do not adhere to the guidelines.

If your committee chair for Block Kids is a “first timer” it is extremely important that she visit the NEF website and read through all of the Block Kids information. “I didn't know because this is the first time that I have chaired Block Kids”, does not work! The information is available so there is no excuse. (The first things that I look for when I receive the chapter submittals: Are all of the forms enclosed and are there five pictures taken from the correct angles? No matter how good the project is, if anything is missing, it cannot be considered for Regional or National.)

Get your Block Kids brochure out there early. Places for distribution could be schools, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, churches, youth groups, super markets, etc. Local radio stations will also do public service announcements, so utilize them too!

President appoints Block Kids Chair

Block Kids Chair selects Committee Members

Kick Off Meeting

Delegate sub committees (for example)

Event location and date - give yourself enough time to put chapter submittal together to send to the Regional Chair

Certificate of Insurance - to be coordinated with Chapter President & Treasurer

Flyers, brochures and appreciation certificates - printed materials

Procure equipment (if you have area that construction equipment such as cranes, concrete trucks, dump trucks, lifts, etc. - can be displayed.)

Table & chair rental (if needed)

Prizes (to include 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awards)

Registration - which would include a Block Kids data base, registration on the day of your event and numbers for the participants. (A suggestion for student numbering - 1st grade - 101, 102, 103 etc., 2nd grade - 201, 202, 203 etc. - 1st digit will correspond to grade level)

Photographer - for event day pictures and for the 5 required views of the winning submission - **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THE PHOTOGRAPHER BE FAMILIAR WITH THE 5 REQUIRED VIEWS!**

Judges - getting judges lined up for the event and giving them directions on the day of the event. Involve the entire chapter to get judge volunteers from all aspects of construction.

Food / Drink Concessions (if needed)

Entertainment - face painters, balloon makers, DJ, etc. (a great way to keep parents and siblings busy during the competition - if needed)
(A suggestion - local radio stations may be available to come to your event and play music for free. They will very often bring goodies to give away.)

Publicity - contacting newspapers, radio stations and TV

Setting Up & Breaking Down on the day of the competition

(A suggestion - cover the tables that the children work on with old blueprints donated by member companies)

Goodie Bags - ask companies and area businesses to donate pens, hats, cups, pads, etc. from their PR departments

Chairperson - It is extremely important to keep in contact with your sub committees. You need to keep on top of progress and possible problems. This can be accomplished by email and Block Kids meetings which should be held frequently.

Prior to your competition, have a Block Kids Block Counting Party. You can get all of the blocks sorted, counted and bagged. It is also a good time to put goodie bags for the children together and iron out any last minute issues.

Summary

Certificate of Insurance

can be found at www.nawic.org under the Member Section, Member Forms and then Special Event Insurance. I strongly suggest that you check this website when you are ready to request the certificate of insurance as pricing or other information may have been updated.

COI should be requested at least 3-4 weeks prior to the event.

Chapters that are utilizing schools for their event should make sure that the Block Kids Competition is covered under the school's insurance policy. Please do not assume that the event is covered because the school did not ask you to provide a certificate. It is far better to err on the side of caution.

Judging

Please know that your chapter is not the only chapter that struggles to implement this process.

The official judging criteria from the NEF Sponsor Guidelines is as follows:

Section 1, Part B: Judging of each project shall be the responsibility of the Sponsor. Judges may be NAWIC members, other association members, local business people, media people, etc. provided that no individual is permitted to judge a participant who is a relative or friend.

It also states in this section that the provided forms must be used. Other than that, how you instruct your judges is totally up to each chapter.

There were a couple of great suggestions that chapters have shared with me. The suggestion below is one that I think could be implemented successfully. Please note that this is simply my opinion and each chapter should use whatever means that works for them.



Assign judges to a grade (1 judge required for every 3 or 4 students). Sit the students at tables by grade. The 1st grade judges stand in the general area of the 1st grade contestants. As the 1st grade contestants complete their projects they hold up their hand and we get a 1st grade judge (any first grade judge) over to them. When all the first graders are done and judged, the first grade judges collaborate and choose 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place for the first grade. The same thing is going on at the same time for each of the other 5 grades. Once all the grades have been judged, all of the judges go around as a group and look at the first place projects in each grade. The judge that interviewed the first place contestant in each grade “explains” the project to the entire group of judges. We bring all the judges into a separate room, and by show of hands, the overall contest winner is selected.

Judging (Continued)

It is also suggested that your Block Kids judge coordinator prepare written directions to be read to the judges prior to the start of the event.

Whatever way your chapter decides to judge the competition, this should be conveyed to the judges in a clear and precise manner. I would also suggest that if your chapter tries something new in this area that you poll the judges to see if any of them have judged in previous years and to let them know that you have changed things up a little this year.

Also, it is extremely important to have a detailed description of the project (BK Form #2). The story that describes the project is the key factor in determining a winner. It is suggested that a NAWIC member sit with the child, (after the winner has been chosen), ask questions and really put into words the entrant's thoughts, descriptions and purpose of the project.

Project Photographs

In my past experience, this is another area that chapters struggle with. Per the guidelines, there are to be 5 color picture views - 1) front view, 2) back view, 3) top view, 4) right side view and 5) left side view. No other photographs are required and the student is not to be pictured in any of the project views.

Suggestions to make sure that this process is done smoothly and correctly:

Make sure your assigned photographer is familiar with the required views

Photographers - Please keep in mind that this is the only viewable representation of the winning project that the Regional and National judges will see. It is important to get clear, close-up views of the project. Using the back side of a sponsor board, or something similar is a great way to have a plain background in your pictures.

Appoint a chapter member to "guard" the winning project once it is announced, until the photographer can get there

Take at least 2 photos of each view so you may utilize the best photo

Remember - this is a requirement and the project will not be judged if any view is missing.

Forms

The forms are updated and I strongly suggest that you go to the NEF website, www.nawiceducation.org, K-12 Programs, Block Kids and print them.

It is also very important that all required forms are submitted with the winning entry. Check the guidelines for requirements - *this is only a companion handbook to supplement the official information.*

I hope that the information contained in this companion handbook has helped your chapter.

Any comments, questions or suggestions can be directed to me at dolfin16@bellsouth.net

Happy Building,
Paula Lane, CIT
National Block Kids Chair 2011-2012

