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# Gerber Plumbing Named AIM/R Golden Eagle Award Recipient

Ila Lewis, chairman of the board for Gerber Plumbing Fixtures Corp., Lincolnwood, Illinois, was the recipient of this year's Golden Eagle Award. The award was presented during AIM/R's Principal Appreciation Reception at this year's ISH North America trade show in Las Vegas. Lewis heads the Lincolnwood, Illinois-based plumbing fixture company.



**A**IM/R, the Association of Independent Manufacturers/Representatives, Inc., is the association for independent sales representatives engaged in the plumbing, heating, cooling and piping industries.

According to Jay Schechter, AIM/R president, "presentation of the Golden Eagle Award is AIM/R's opportunity to honor an individual from a manufacturing firm that exemplifies our organization's view of the perfect principal. We poll our agent members and ask them to identify manufacturers that:

- only go to market through manufacturers' representatives.
- work closely with their manufacturers' representatives to bring their products to market.
- have a positive influence on our industry by providing quality products and quality assurance.
- establish and maintain an efficient information network for their manufacturers' reps to give them the tools to do their job well.
- facilitate the rep's job by working with their manufacturers' reps

to assure customer satisfaction.

- support AIM/R by switching several successful direct sales territories into rep territories.

Gerber Plumbing, which met all of those criteria, was founded in 1932 and operates four manufacturing plants within the United States. The \$400 million manufacturer has more than 900 employees and offers a full line of plumbing fixtures to the marketplace.

In her comments upon receiving the Golden Eagle Award, Gerber's Lewis noted that "there was a time when part of our sales force included in-house reps. However, for many, many years, Gerber has had independent manufacturers' reps out in the field selling its products. I am happy to say that just as Gerber has been a multi-generational business, so are a number of our manufacturers' rep agencies. What a pleasure it has been to see the sons and daughters of our reps take their places in their parents' businesses. I think I should be taking some tips from them."

In thanking AIM/R for its rec-

ognition, she continued that "I am proud to be able to say that Gerber products continue to be:

- Professionally made.
- Professionally sold.
- Professionally installed.

"Our products are professionally made both domestically and globally, professionally sold through independent manufacturers' reps and professionally installed by licensed plumbing contractors. I hope to be able to continue to say this for many years to come."

In addition to the Principal Appreciation Reception, other highlights of AIM/R's participation in the ISH North America trade show included:

- More than 150 AIM/R members visited the association's new booth display, met with a director and received a copy of the 2004 Management Conference brochure. Prospective members, including agents and manufacturers, learned about the value of joining AIM/R. The booth was manned by AIM/R board members, Joe Miller and Helen Degli-Angeli.

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• Over the course of the show, which attracted more than 500 manufacturer exhibitors, AIM/R's board updated the membership on the progress being made by the association. Included in that update:

✓ President-Elect Greg McLaren, identified additional sources of income that will allow AIM/R to accomplish its goals.

✓ Industry and Public Relations Chairman Mike Smith identified manufacturers that go to market through a direct sales force. He works to convert these manufacturers to working with AIM/R

manufacturers' representatives.

✓ Conference Chairman Bill Freeman provided attendees a preview of AIM/R's upcoming annual conference in San Diego.

✓ Education Chairman Paul Burke reviewed articles that have appeared in trade journals that promote the rep function.

✓ Membership Chairman Mark Snider and MANA's Jerry Leth have made a smooth transition for AIM/R manufacturers to become Associate Members, and efforts continue to bring new agent members into AIM/R.

✓ The Strategic Planning Committee, under the direction of Frank Parks and Joe Miller, has updated our Strategic Plan and identified additional goals for AIM/R.

✓ The already mentioned Principal Appreciation Reception at the close of the first day of the ISH show, was attended by more than 400 manufacturers and reps. ISH North America is the consolidated trade show for the kitchen and bath, plumbing, PVF and heating and air conditioning industries. □

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