

WTC 'Never Forget Your Message' with Alicia Huey

[00:00:00] **Christi Powell:** Thanks everybody for joining Women's Talk Construction. I'm here with Angela. Hey Angela. What's going on today?

[00:00:06] **Angela Gardner:** Hey, Christi. It's a beautiful day.

[00:00:08] **Christi Powell:** It is beautiful today, and it's Friday, thank goodness. Yes, it is. And Alicia Huey, and she's our guest today, and she's gonna be talking about some things.

[00:00:17] Alicia, how's everything going for you? Are you, um, resting? From last week. I

[00:00:21] **Alicia Huey:** have recuperated from last week. Yeah. So this is a great opportunity to catch up with y'all and we really, I really appreciate you having me on today.

[00:00:29] **Christi Powell:** Aw, thank you. We're so happy. Thanks. Coming on to get you on. So, a little bit about Alicia.

[00:00:33] She is the president of a G h Holmes. She's also the N A H B P W B Woman of the Year at, at some point in her career. She is now currently the 2023 N A H B Chairman of the Board for the National Association of Home Builders. And we are so thankful to have her with us today because, um, her journey is not familiar to a lot of folks and we can't wait to hear.

[00:00:59] Um, a little bit about what's going on in your life. I know last week you were at, uh, leadership for the National Association of Home Builders, and during that time we get to make visits to the Hill. I know Judy was probably there with you. She was, yes. And I would love to hear a little bit about, you know, what is that week and why is it so important to our industry for, um, the National Association of Home Builders and those that are in construction.

[00:01:26] Um,

[00:01:26] **Alicia Huey:** it is extremely important that we are given the opportunity. This is during our spring leadership meeting. So we have the legislative conference, which we call Leg Con. That happens on Wednesday, which is when we all converge on the hill and have conversations with our elected officials about what's happening in our industry.

[00:01:43] You know, we do sometimes have the opportunity to thank them for

what they've done, but then we really are there to talk to 'em about the challenges that we're seeing. And every year there's, there's something new that this industry is facing and, you know, to, to really sit down and have that conversation and explain to them what we are facing.

[00:02:02] Because ultimately that's what the American dream is facing. Right. You know, the, the, mm-hmm. Um, obstacles to home ownership for a lot of people and the cost of home ownership for a lot of people. So those are the conversations that we are able to have when we have the hill visits.

[00:02:20] **Christi Powell:** So can you share a couple of the topics?

[00:02:21] I know some of them are probably not something you can share, but maybe some of them are. Can you share some of the topics that you discussed with them that are challenges for us this year?

[00:02:30] **Alicia Huey:** Oh, absolutely. The three main ones that we prepared everyone for, because we had a breakfast before everybody departed for the hill.

[00:02:36] Cause we had shuttle buses, you know, going back and forth, taking people. The three that we, um, we talked to everyone about that were our three top priorities were, um, of course workforce development. Which has been ongoing for a long time in our industry. And then the transformer issue, transformer shortages that we are facing, which I think that we've had a success already this week because there is a transformer bill that came out, um, um, this week.

[00:03:01] Yay. Yes. Yay. And then the other one was, um, the energy codes and electrification, which are big ones for us too. Energy codes. Yes. Yeah. And the, the thing that we pushed with that was, We're not against electrification. Mm-hmm. We want it to be affordable for homeowners, and we want it to be a homeowner's choice.

[00:03:22] I don't wanna have to put a car charging station in somebody's house or a car, car charging plug in their garage. If they're not gonna, if they're not gonna need it for years, we can always go back and add it. But don't make it mandatory that we add it right now, which just adds, you know, a couple thousand dollars to the cost of house is not necessary.

[00:03:39] **Christi Powell:** Right, and the housing affordable housing's been so tough anyway. Adding additional things is not really helpful, is it? So thanks for expanding on the energy codes. I appreciate that. That was something I did not realize was in the work. So we, and I'm sure some of our listeners don't either.

[00:03:57] **Alicia Huey:** Well, and even to the, I'm sorry, even to the multifamily, they want a car charging station at every parking spot Oh, wow.

[00:04:04] In multifamily too. So that's, that's, that's part of what, what we're going really, you know, and we're not against electric cars. We're not, I actually have considered buying one. Yeah, me too. But I can't add a plug in my garage easily for it. I don't have to, don't make us put it in when we. New construction was our ask.

[00:04:22] **Christi Powell:** Ah, very good. So what was your ask about the transformers? Obviously that worked.

[00:04:27] **Alicia Huey:** Um, yes. Well, we've had a shortage of transformers. Like we've had a shortage of a lot of things since the pandemic. And then the Department of Energy wanted to make transformers more energy efficient. They're already 97% energy efficient.

[00:04:42] Mm. So while we were already having a backlog of transformer production, we kind of had to pause the production so that we could, we could train the people and, and figure out how to make them two or three more, two, you know, one or two or 3% more efficient. So our ask was, Just put the energy efficiency on hold right now.

[00:05:01] Let's just produce transformers and when we get back up to the, to normal production, then we can go back and look at the energy efficiency of it. So thankful. Yeah. That you

[00:05:11] **Christi Powell:** all are, are really doing something that's needed in our industry so that we can just keep building affordable housing, um, and, and keep it going.

[00:05:21] Right. And they're not waiting for six months to. To complete a Co.

[00:05:29] **Angela Gardner:** Hill Electric was founded in 1954 in Anderson, South Carolina. Rooted in the upstate of South Carolina. Hill Electric has garnered a reputation as the region's most innovative industrial electrical contractor providing machinery, installations and facility power to countless companies in the area committed to quality, performance, valued service, and.

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[00:06:12] **Christi Powell:** Workforce development. Tell me what's on the front for that in the future. I know we're all focused on it, like the whole world is focused on workforce development right now. But what is the N A H B doing to what, what's the future of that for the N A H B and for your ask on the Hill?

[00:06:28] **Alicia Huey:** Well, as you may or may not know, we have the home builders, um, home builders, uh, institute, and, um, those sort of things.

[00:06:35] Our, uh, philanthropic arm that certainly helps with the awareness and training of, of kids. I think that we've realized in the last maybe five years, could possibly 10 years. That it's not the high school kids we need to be talking to. It's younger kids. Mm-hmm. Almost, almost middle school aged kids. Yes. To make them aware of the opportunities that are, that are available.

[00:06:56] But I also think we have to change the mindset of the parents. Mm-hmm. So one of our asks that we've had conversations with our elected officials is Help us. To make the public and the parents understand that a certificate or, you know, to work in the trades, some sort of a certificate or, or that, that should be on the same footing as a four year college.

[00:07:17] Mm-hmm. Yeah. Right. The outlook of that. So changing the parents' mindset I think is, is really a big one. And then, um, and then we've also partnered, the association has partnered with the Boys and Girls Club. Nice parts of America. So we have quite a few associations throughout the country that are doing activities with them and, and again, exposing them to what all is available in the construction industry.

[00:07:38] Because as, as you both know, it is so vast. It is the things that are, you know, people, you, you say new construction and they think you've either got a bri of brick masons, I know electrician or plumber, but there's so many more opportunities. Yes.

[00:07:51] **Christi Powell:** And that's the reason we have podcasts. So it is so that these young people will know that they have so many options, right.

[00:07:58] They can be the, uh, chairman of the board of the N A H B and they can be the Pwb Woman of the year. Yeah, yeah. They can, they're trying

[00:08:06] **Angela Gardner:** to get in schools, right?

[00:08:08] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. Right. Yeah. We're trying to get our podcast into schools right now, so Oh, nice. Yes. Nice. We think it's really important for these kids to listen to stories, right?

[00:08:16] Stories are what sells. Stories are what, um, inspires people to think, oh, I could do that too. So yeah, for awareness. That awareness.

[00:08:24] **Angela Gardner:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

[00:08:25] **Christi Powell:** With your story. Yeah. Yes, and we're probably gonna switch to another gear. I think Angela's got a couple of questions that she'd like

to ask you. She thinks the audience would love to hear.

[00:08:35] **Angela Gardner:** Yeah. So we're talking about, you know, somewhat young leadership in a way, but you know, you've been a part of, it sounds like some really awesome boards and you're on the N A H B board currently. What would you share pieces of advice for the younger generation, younger leaders, the next generation of leaders, what do they need to do?

[00:08:57] What's that path look like to be on a board and participate and even chair a board.

[00:09:04] **Alicia Huey:** Don't take no for an answer. Okay. You know, just on my, just my local level, of course, I was in leadership from a professional women and building group on my local level, and of course, as you mentioned at the national level and my state as well.

[00:09:15] But then the next step was for me to, um, I wanted to be president of my local home builders association. Mm-hmm. I had to interview three times mm-hmm. For, for that position. But that's okay. It's, mm-hmm. Just, and I, and I, I see now that I wasn't ready mm mm-hmm. The other times that I interviewed for it. So I really, you know, the, the times that I was told, no, it's not your time.

[00:09:37] Then I would go and talk to people, you know, seek out more mentors and other people to get their opinion and, and what other steps they felt like I needed to take. And then the same thing with the National Association. I considered it for a long time before I actually ran, um, for chairman of the board and.

[00:09:52] And then, and then you also have people that will come and ask you, you know, and, and then come to you and tell you it's time now. Do you need time? Uh, yeah. You need to, you need to raise your hand again and volunteer for this position. So, so a good,

[00:10:04] **Christi Powell:** a good piece of advice is, um, seeking wise counsel and listening to wise counsel, correct?

[00:10:11] **Alicia Huey:** Yes. Yes.

[00:10:12] **Angela Gardner:** Yeah. And you were probably pretty active on the boards too, when you got on them, right? Oh, I was within a committee Oh. Or something. Mm-hmm. And so that showed your like support and that also brings awareness. Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Cool. Yeah. That's wonder, yeah.

[00:10:24] **Alicia Huey:** Get involved in all aspects of it because it's the home building industry and, and even the local state and national associations, it is all so rewarding.

[00:10:33] Mm-hmm. You know, my mom worries about me when I travel cuz I do a lot of traveling. And I've told her, I said, there is not anywhere in the United States I can't go, that I couldn't pick up the phone and call somebody that's a home builder or that's involved in a local association there that wouldn't come and help me.

[00:10:48] It is the, to me, it is almost the strangest industry. There are other businesses that are so extremely competitive that the competitors don't talk. In this industry? We do, yes. As builders. That's great. It's a brother and sisterhood that we talk with each other. And I mean, I, if I've got a challenge on a, on a job that I'm doing, I can pick up and call somebody locally, or I can call somebody in the, in the next state or, or three or four states away.

[00:11:12] Mm-hmm. And ask their opinion. And it doesn't have to be about job site, it can be about software, you know, any, anything like that. And that's their opinion. And they're, they're also willing to help, which is great. I feel like

[00:11:23] **Christi Powell:** it's a great big family. It does feel like that, doesn't it? It, yes. Yes, it really does, and that's what probably is, is what kept me in the industry, is I got, you know, I had all this big family and there was no way I could get out.

[00:11:36] That's right. That's right. Even if I wanted to, I'd be like, oh, but I can't leave so-and-so and I can't leave, so-and-so. So I love that you said that because we are, I mean, really and truthfully, I feel like we're the biggest group of family that there is in the industry. Yeah. And, and maybe other, maybe other occupations feel the same, but I feel like we, we just have some really down to earth folks mm-hmm.

[00:11:59] That are willing to do anything

[00:12:00] **Alicia Huey:** to help each other. Yeah. We all wanna see each other succeed. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Absolutely. That's a

[00:12:05] **Angela Gardner:** great mindset. We, my other. My other question for you is a little bit taken, you know, taken back a few years and kind of when you got started was you, because there are a lot of people out there that trans are transitioning into our industry.

[00:12:19] But 20 years ago you were in title insurance and then you decided to go help out volunteer at a habitat event. And that Got you. That did. Did you fall in love with it? Is that how it all

[00:12:32] **Alicia Huey:** started? I did. I did. I actually, my husband owns the title insurance company, so I worked with him. Okay. Loved that. But that gave me

the exposure to home builders and you know, that sort of thing.

[00:12:41] And there was an opportunity to go and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. I went and I loved it. I think we were decking. The roof is what we were doing that day. And then, and I just loved it. I loved the seeing it all come together and that family mindset of, of everybody working together. So I came home that afternoon, I told my husband, I said, I'm thinking I'm gonna go back tomorrow.

[00:13:01] And then I came home that next night and I said, uh, I wanna change careers. And I thought he would look at me like I was crazy. And he said, I think that's a great idea. Go for it. And he's been my biggest cheerleader ever since then. That's awesome. It really has been awesome. It really awesome.

[00:13:15] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:13:16] Love it. So being one of the top custom home builders in Alabama. Now, I've gotta ask the funny question because I've been in the industry a while and I sold to a lot of custom home builders. What was the hardest or the funniest request you've ever had? From a homeowner or a client, like just a request for a change or a request to put in their house.

[00:13:41] Maybe it was a challenge of something you were trying to get done, but it wasn't normal for you.

[00:13:46] **Alicia Huey:** You know, I'll tell you, I, I do try to, and, and that's one of the things I get, um, some of the local builders to help me with, is to come up with some different thing, ideas and creative things. And some of the things I, I come up with, of course, on my own.

[00:13:58] I have done a loft where you had to climb, you know, go through it like either the closet and then climb up a ladder or a rock wall to get to a little loft area that was a hidden, um, hidden area for kids. That's cool. Mm-hmm. And then I put, I put a basketball goal and a vaulted ceiling of a bedroom. For this.

[00:14:15] This is, yeah, this is in the bedroom. In the bedroom. This is an ideal house that I did for our parade homes. A couple, uh, I think it's maybe five years ago. And the, the parents wanted me to take the basketball, the people that ball pass. They wanted me to take the basketball goal down. They had kids and I was like, hi, really?

[00:14:32] I put hardwood floor there so they could bounce the ball and everything. So, um, and they, they talked to me about taking the ladder down because now they were afraid that they're smaller, but like, I think they had a one or two year old might try to climb up the ladder and I understand that, but I was really shocked that they wanted the basketball go down.

[00:14:47] Yeah,

[00:14:48] **Christi Powell:** that is shocking. I mean, if nothing else, you could use it for a laundry shoot. Right. Put your laundry basket underneath. Right. Yeah.

[00:14:55] **Alicia Huey:** I do that at home. Yeah. I

[00:14:56] **Angela Gardner:** don't, I think kids like to do that too. I've heard And they like to go down the laundry

[00:15:01] **Alicia Huey:** shoes. Yeah. Oh no. I did have, um, recently I built a custom house, um, and um, single mom, and she had an eight year old daughter.

[00:15:11] That was the only thing that little girl asked for was a laundry shoot, which I thought was so funny for, for her to ask for that. That's all she wanted was the

[00:15:19] **Christi Powell:** laundry shoot. Maybe it bothered her having dirty clothes in her room. Maybe. So I have a daughter that might, she's a little, you know, Yeah, she would be like, it's not, everything's not in order when I have dirty clothes in a basket that I can see.

[00:15:35] So I get that. I kind, I kind of get that. So, um, what, what can you share with us about being, I know that I've seen you on the news. We've seen some videos of you talking about what the industry looks like for the future. What's one of the challenges you've had with just being. Having all that exposure, is that a challenge?

[00:15:56] I know sometimes when I think about being on video, I'm, I'm better about being on audio now cuz I'm learning. But you know, sometimes it's not fun for me to be on video. Was that something that you had a challenge with and, and if it was, how did you overcome it? We'd love to hear that.

[00:16:12] **Alicia Huey:** Well, I did take the National Association of Home Builders offered spokesperson training.

[00:16:17] Oh, nice. And it was really, and then we've got, we've talked about going back to that because for me it was so beneficial and it was almost a, um, if, so, if an investigative reporter got in your face with a microphone mm-hmm. How would you handle that? Yes. Mm-hmm. And there was a small group of people, maybe 10 or less, and they did video us.

[00:16:35] So that helped a lot. Cause I noticed some of the mannerisms and things that I do that I probably, you know, still haven't gotten away from. But in the, on the camera, it bothered me and I, I still think about it sometimes. And then

I also, there was a local news reporter. She was an, actually a national news reporter, and I took a training class from her, just a personal training class for her, and I mean, I would start talking and she would say, she would throw up her hand.

[00:16:58] I'm like, no, no. That was bad. I mean, she really gave me some very constructive criticism that really helped a lot. Hmm. It really made me a lot more comfortable speaking. That's great. Now, of course there are still times I get very nervous. Is it? Yeah. But after I did the, after I did the spokesperson training, I'll have to tell you, and this is no, no credit to me, it's certainly to the, to the spokesperson training class I took, I did have an investigative reporter stick their microphone in my face.

[00:17:23] Mm. And, uh, weren't too glad you were

[00:17:25] **Christi Powell:** pr or weren't you glad you were prepared for

[00:17:27] that?

[00:17:27] **Alicia Huey:** Oh, I was. And when the interview was done, she said, You handled yourself very well. She says, I haven't had anybody that's, that's handled themselves that well in a long time, so, yeah. So it made me feel really don't work, man.

[00:17:40] Yeah. And that was, you know, never forget your message was the main thing. Well, no matter where the reporter goes or the conversation goes, never forget what your message is, what you wanna say.

[00:17:56] **Angela Gardner:** Neves Construction, a general contractor and woman-owned business specializes in a. Steam construction companies with finding and creating short and long-term solutions for employee placement in areas of professional and skilled trades needs Construction further provides construction services to owners and developers, including owners', rep, interim project management, and supervision site inspections, and lending progress reporting.

[00:18:25] For more information, visit [NES construction.com](http://NESconstruction.com). That's n e. V e s construction.com.

[00:18:40] **Christi Powell:** Well, knowing your vision and your mission all the time and it being front of mind is always the best way to handle people that are trying to, you know, corner you or get you to say something that wouldn't be the norm. That I've, I've learned that too. Even, you know, just being on podcasts, people do try to trick you when you're trying, sometimes when you're trying to do really good things and mm-hmm.

[00:19:03] They wanna just see if you're real or not, you know, so they throw these questions at you. I don't know if you've had that happen before. I'm sure you have, but thanks for sharing that. That's really great. Um, it sounds like really to be a leader, you have to be a learner. You have to be doing Yeah. That's

[00:19:19] **Alicia Huey:** very good.

[00:19:20] Yeah. A

[00:19:20] **Christi Powell:** lot of training. Yeah. You know, because, I've always felt like I need to be learning to inspire to, to be where I aspire to be. Mm-hmm. You know, that's very good. Yeah. And I think that, you know, just with speaking in front of people, if you have all the tools and the knowledge, even if hard things are hard, they become easier because you have had some training.

[00:19:41] So thank you for sharing that. Sure. You've been active in the N H B Board of Directors for 15 years. That's a long time. Is it travel related? Do you have to do a lot of travel when you're on the board or you know, tell us a little bit about your duties on the board. I think, uh, folks would love to hear that.

[00:20:00] That's in our industry that might be aspiring to be on the board.

[00:20:05] **Alicia Huey:** Well, our board of directors has, has changed a little bit. Um, our board of directors now is, um, is comprised of, we have, um, state representatives and then we have national association chairman. So each state has a representative and then N H B divides the country up into five regions.

[00:20:22] Okay. We have the five, the five regions have national association chairman, and then we have associate members who are not the ones that are not builders. Um, like Judy? Yes. Who are, who are, um, associate national area Chairman. So that's the makeup of our board right now. Um, for the state reps there is travel.

[00:20:41] What we ask the state reps to do is to travel to the local associations. Okay. And have conversations with those local associations and the local presidents. Okay. And executive directors there to see what their needs are from the National Association of Home Builders. Now for myself serving as chairman, There again, NHB divides the country up into the five different regions, so each of the five senior officers have a part of the country that we're, um, we're a resource for that part of the country.

[00:21:07] And. So we do get invited to travel. Now, sometimes I'll get invited to professional women in building activities in another part that I'm, I don't have the, I, you know, I'm not the officer of resource for, but that's okay. We all love to travel. The officers do, and so we'll go wherever we to travel. And that is the most rewarding part of this job, I think, is to be able to travel and have those

conversations with the local members and make sure they understand how much they are valued at the national level.

[00:21:34] That's awesome. What a great, and just share the value of NHB with them too, so, right. What a great

[00:21:39] **Christi Powell:** leadership track, right? Yeah. Just helping serving people. I, um, I get to go with Judy to the p new Pwb in Oklahoma next month. Oh, nice. Excuse me. Yeah, I get to go with her. So it's an honor. I've been to one and so I, after that one I was like, Judy, I wanna go every time you go.

[00:21:58] If you need me, I wanna be there. So I get to go to Oklahoma in July. I'm really excited about it. It's really inspiring, like you said, to be able to support them and serve them and make sure that they know that they're really, really important. Mm-hmm. And, um, we need them in our industry, especially the women, you know, professional women in building.

[00:22:15] I think you have 30 now in, in the nation, is that correct? I

[00:22:20] **Alicia Huey:** think that's right. I was having a conversation with somebody when we were in Las Vegas for the International Builder Show. That was the past. Chair of the Pwb and I say, can you remember when we used to think if we could just get to a thousand members, if we could just get to a thousand?

[00:22:32] And, and we are so far past that now. It's really exciting

[00:22:35] **Christi Powell:** to be, I know it's exciting. That's cool. Yeah. What you're doing for women in the professional women and building is great. And yeah, and just seeing the support from all those champ, those men, championing those women has been amazing too because, you know, it does take that eo, the executive officer of the the Home Builders Association.

[00:22:54] To be open to, to doing that and just watching all of them say, yeah, let's do it. Let's do it. Whatever we can do to support you is awesome. Well, thank you for being on today. There's one other question I wanted to ask you because I think the audience always loves to know. Um, a little bit about you personally.

[00:23:11] Do you have any hobbies or books or just things that you do in your spare time that you really love, um, that you'd like to share with us? Uh,

[00:23:18] **Alicia Huey:** I enjoy cooking a lot. Mm. Cooking for family and spending time with family. Um, I do enjoy, I'm not much of a runner anymore. I'm more of a walker, but, uh, I do just anything outside.

[00:23:29] Yes. Just

[00:23:30] **Christi Powell:** anything else outside? Well, Angela can relate to the cooking and, um, I, if there's a kitchen involved, I am not there. So we're completely

[00:23:40] **Angela Gardner:** opposite in that you'll come to socialize,

[00:23:41] **Christi Powell:** right? I do. I will come and sit around and watch you cook and talk to everybody. Yes, absolutely.

[00:23:47] **Alicia Huey:** That's, that's always very important too.

[00:23:49] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. Yeah, it is. I'm the supporter of the Cook company. Yeah. Yeah. And the taste tester always like being the taste tester. That's important too. Yes. Yes it is. Well, thank you so much for being on with us today. What you shared with us is so valuable, and I know that the women and the men that listen to our podcast are gonna really appreciate what you've had to share with us.

[00:24:10] So tell us a little bit about how to get ahold of you. If you, you know, somebody in Alabama wants to build a house. How do they find you? Um, you know, just if there are other women in the industry that need support, you know, where would you send them? Just a little bit about how we, you know, how everybody can get ahold of you.

[00:24:27] **Alicia Huey:** Yeah. Well, thank you and listen, I want you to know how much I appreciate this opportunity. Anytime I can talk about the construction industry and encourage others to get involved in it, is is a really good day. So thank you for making my Friday. Yay. Um, yeah, for me, um, alicia huey gmail.com is my email address.

[00:24:43] And, um, I'm on, um, LinkedIn and, um, Facebook and Instagram. Alicia Huey, uh, the company is a g h Homes as, as you said earlier, so, um, we'd love to encourage and have conversations with anybody that's interested in the, in the home building business or in a project too. Love it.

[00:25:00] **Christi Powell:** Thank you again, Alicia. Have

[00:25:02] **Alicia Huey:** a great day.

[00:25:02] Thanks, y'all too.

[00:25:09] Well,

[00:25:10] **Christi Powell:** that's all for this episode. Thank you so much for

listening to the Women Talk Construction podcast with your host, Kristy Powell and Angela Gardner. See you next

[00:25:18] **Alicia Huey:** time.