



# Education Insider

## Education or Bust! The Custom-Built Experience at CBANJ

People come from all over the country to take courses at the Community Builders & Remodelers Association of New Jersey (CBANJ).

At first, they're attracted by the un-cancel-able courses—that's right, CBANJ won't cancel a course unless no one shows up—but they keep coming back for the above-and-beyond hospitality that is the association's signature.

"It starts with our education committee and its Chair, Phil Calinda," says instructor Bill Asdal, CGP, CGR, GMB, and owner of [Asdal Builders](#). "They have a commitment to every single member getting better and they believe in the adage 'the more you learn, the more you earn.'"

That commitment means never cancelling a course, even if only one person is signed up. CBANJ has also put on courses by request. "We'll do classes for one," explains Asdal. "If Sharon (Barkauskas, CBANJ administrative assistant) finds that there's a hole in someone's schedule for something like the OSHA class, or if someone can't make a [Business Management for Building Professionals](#) class and they're ready to finish their [Certified Green Professional](#) (CGP), we'll put on a class for them. It really is custom education at that point."

And it means a rigorous schedule of reaching out and following up for Barkauskas, whose responsibilities—and enthusiasm—extend way beyond her title. "I send emails to everyone who's taken a class, letting them know that we're here if they need anything. I email them to remind them what courses they need and tell them when the courses are. I email them their graduation forms and I send out the [Designation Guide](#)."

"We're real hands-on," she explains. "Phil Calinda attends every single class to meet everyone and tell them everything that's going on at our association."

Calinda's—and Community Builders'—hospitality extends much further than that. As Barkauskas recalls, they recently hosted a one-person course for a builder who came all the way from Oregon. He emailed her and told her he needed to take Profitable Business Through Quality Practices, because it had been cancelled every time he tried in his area. "Could we guarantee? Of course," said Barkauskas. "So he flew out and Phil picked him up from the airport." When the builder's stay was over, Asdal gave him a ride back to the airport!

CBANJ holds almost all their courses at the [Raritan Inn](#) in Califon, NJ, an historic property owned by Asdal, who renovated it into a green bed-and-breakfast. The Inn has a conference room, Wi-Fi and other modern conveniences, and it's also where CBANJ holds its social events. Holding courses at the Inn benefits everyone involved, says Asdal. "It changes the dynamics of what otherwise might be a mildly sterile environment. Here we've got a very relaxed informal setting, all the AV we need, and we have an excellent innkeeper who does an outstanding job making everyone feel at home."

Another CBANJ difference is in their course scheduling. Instead of the usual 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, most courses are held from 3:00 PM to 10:00 PM. "So people don't have to lose a whole day of work," explains Barkauskas. Asdal says it's part of CBANJ's "student-sensitive" philosophy. "(The courses are) a supplement to their day, not the dominant feature." Students are welcome to have dinner at the Inn during the course break.



To build on this foundation of success, Barkauskas plans to amp up the education presence on CBANJ's website. "I'm going to expand it and put the Builder Assessment Review (BAR) and Professional Remodeler Experience Profile (PREP) forms up there, as well as the NAHB Education Guide." She also makes education a focus of CBANJ's [newsletter](#) with designee Q & As, profiles and testimonials.

CBANJ has been a licensed distributor of NAHB education since 2003, and this year they'll hold about 30 courses.

For more information, visit [www.cbanj.org](http://www.cbanj.org).