



2023 Year in Review

IMPACT



Table of Contents

ADVOCACY

1-6

CALENDAR

7-11

AWARDS & HONORS

12-15

LOOKING FORWARD

16-17



AHFA 2023 Chair Joe Johnston with CEO Andy Counts and Vice President of Regulatory Affairs Bill Perdue at the May Board of Directors meeting in Washington, D.C.

American Home Furnishings Alliance is often described as the “voice of the industry.” In 2023, we were reminded that the power of that voice is derived from hundreds of individual companies combining resources, expertise and influence to achieve shared goals.

AHFA began 2023 buoyed by the December 2022 passage of the Stop Tip-overs of Unstable, Risky Dressers on Youth Act, more widely known as STURDY. Despite this hard-fought win, the year ahead would hold new battles, not only in the quest for an enforceable furniture stability standard, but also for rational solutions to a host of other state and federal initiatives in the regulatory pipeline.

The impact of our Alliance was evident in April when the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission adopted ASTM F2057-23 as the new mandatory stability standard required under STURDY. The victory showcased AHFA’s influence on Capitol Hill, its willingness to challenge regulatory overreach in the courts if necessary, and its ability to nurture collaborative relationships to achieve positive results for the industry and its customers.



AHFA’s impact in 2023 was not limited to our advocacy efforts. Our outdoor division, the International Casual Furnishings Association, experienced one of its strongest years ever, hosting over 200 attendees at the Annual Educational Conference and successfully relocating the Casual Market from Chicago to AmericasMart in Atlanta. And the Solution Partners and Specialized Furniture Carriers divisions both grew in size and scope.

AHFA’s successes in 2023 showcased the true meaning of “Alliance.” Without the support and engagement of executives within our 300-plus individual member companies, AHFA’s 2023 achievements would not have been possible.



On the heels of an exuberant victory – passage of the Stop Tip-overs of Unstable Risky Dressers on Youth Act, or STURDY, in December 2022 – AHFA entered 2023 with a full plate of legislative and regulatory challenges, including finishing the work to have ASTM F2057 accepted as the mandatory stability standard under STURDY, addressing new efforts to regulate so-called “forever chemicals,” and more.

Above: AHFA’s Bill Perdue (second row, first on left) with members of Parents Against Tip-overs after passage of the STURDY Act. The bill’s sponsors included Senator Robert Casey and Representative Jan Schakowsky (back row, far left) and Senator Amy Klobachar (second row, third from right).

Pushing F2057-23 Over the Finish Line

In a timeline negotiated by AHFA and included in the STURDY Act passed on December 23, 2022, ASTM's Furniture Safety Subcommittee opened 2023 with 60 days to publish revisions to the F2057 voluntary stability standard. The updates officially aligned the voluntary standard with the requirements outlined in STURDY, triggering a mandatory review by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

ASTM acted promptly, adopting the updated standard and publishing it on February 6. The revisions focused on three prescribed tests for clothing storage units: one with drawers loaded; one simulating the impact on stability when the unit is placed on carpeting; and a third simulating the dynamic force of a toddler grabbing onto the highest drawer or knob while climbing or playing on the unit. These three tests were crafted by AHFA and its member companies at a UL testing lab in 2021 and refined in 2022 by the ASTM subcommittee. They were designed not only to meet STURDY's requirements but also to ensure a clear pathway for compliance and, ultimately, clear parameters for CPSC to enforce the final rule.

But the plan met an unanticipated roadblock: STURDY contained no deadline for CPSC to complete its review of the now updated F2057-23. The commission refused to reveal any planned timeline for its evaluation, forcing the industry to continue preparing to comply with the ambiguous testing requirements within the CPSC's original rule, still slated to take effect May 24.

AHFA had no alternative but to continue its costly legal battle seeking to secure a court-ordered delay in the May effective date until the agency completed the required review and determined whether it would adopt F2057 in whole or in part ... or not at all. To support its case against the CPSC rule, AHFA commissioned consumer research focused on the "stability rating" that was central to the CPSC's approach to performance testing. Results showed most parents failed to understand the meaning of the rating and were not likely to rely on it when making a purchase decision.



Mark Suddreth, La-Z-Boy, and Kyle Richards, Verified Testing Services, demonstrate required stability tests in ASTM F2057-23 at the August Regulatory Summit.



Jacob Nedergaard, CEO of Qarma, explained his company's quality control and compliance tracking software at the 2023 Regulatory Summit.

Former CPSC Commissioner Joseph Mohorovic advised Regulatory Summit attendees on how to handle interactions with a more aggressive Consumer Product Safety Commission.



In tandem with these legal and research efforts, AHFA intensified its negotiations with Parents Against Tip-Overs (PAT), emphasizing the likelihood that the CPSC’s rule would be challenged in court and delay meaningful changes in CSU testing procedures. After lengthy dialog, PAT agreed to join AHFA in urging CPSC to swiftly review the updated ASTM standard and render its opinion.

In February, AHFA and PAT collaborated on a letter to CPSC requesting prompt agency action to review and adopt F2057-23. In March, three more letters to CPSC supported action on F2057-23. The first, from the chair of ASTM’s Consumer Products Committee, contained a detailed review of F2057-23 and deemed its tests “excellent.” The second, from Kids in Danger and *Consumer Reports*, urged the commission to adopt the performance requirements in F2057-23 as mandatory. Finally, a bipartisan letter signed by 11 key members of Congress emphasized parent support for F2057-23 and urged a swift evaluation and

determination on F2057-23. On March 22, CPSC staff released its assessment of F2057-23, which determined that the voluntary standard “meets STURDY’s requirements.” On April 19, the commission voted 3-1 to adopt ASTM F2057-23 as the mandatory safety standard for clothing storage units required under the STURDY Act. The new standard was published May 4, giving it a September 1 effective date.

AHFA’s August Regulatory Summit included a demonstration of the required stability tests, explained companion updates to the tip restraint standard, F3056-23, and reviewed all labeling requirements in the new standard.

Finally, a webinar in November reviewed the General Certificate of Conformity now required for all clothing storage furniture certifying its compliance with the new federal safety standard.

Tracking the Proliferation of PFAS Regulations

Proposed legislation in six states that would have prohibited the sale of products containing PFAS died at the end of 2022, but AHFA continued tracking state chemical policies targeting PFAS – per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances – throughout 2023. A law in Maine originally required reporting from companies selling products containing PFAS beginning in January 2023. However, without a clear plan for managing the data it proposed to collect, the state pushed its reporting deadline to 2025.



An April article in Forbes alerted Americans that many performance fabrics contain PFAS “forever chemicals.” (Illustration by Yunjia Yuan)

Unlike the state regulations, the federal PFAS reporting requirement under the Toxic Substances Control Act was finalized in 2023 and applies to any company that has manufactured or imported home furnishings containing PFAS any time since January 1, 2011. The federal rule was the topic of a detailed session at AHFA’s Regulatory Summit in August and a follow-up webinar in October. The effective date of the federal rule was November 2023 and the reporting period will run from November 2024 to May 2025.



Preparing Laminated Product Producers

On March 22, 2024, the seven-year exemption will expire for laminated products covered by the federal formaldehyde rule for composite wood products. To help prepare impacted member companies, AHFA hosted a formaldehyde workshop in February, covered the testing and certification requirements again during the Regulatory Summit in August, and reviewed it all one more time for members during a webinar in November.

Reining in Runaway State Regs

In April the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) revised the state's labeling law for bedding, upholstered furniture and quilted clothing to require an online law label for any covered products sold on ecommerce sites. This digital label was required to be visible to consumers prior to completing their purchase. The state announced a January 1, 2024, effective date for the new rule, and two states – Washington and California – indicated they were considering similar measures.

Chaos ensued. Companies offering custom upholstery wondered how they would generate law labels reflecting customer-selected options in real time. Companies with multiple factories noted that an accurate label could not be generated until after the order is placed and assigned to a production facility.

In response to concerns voiced by AHFA and its member companies, UDAF announced in September it would implement a six-month “soft enforcement” period for its online law label requirement from January to June 2024. AHFA then invited Utah officials to visit several member company upholstery plants in North Carolina in mid-December, allowing industry executives to explain in person how the industry's upholstery sector operates. By the end of the year, AHFA had persuaded Utah officials to rethink the new online labeling law.



During December plant tours arranged by AHFA, Century's Keith Nichols explains cushion filling options to Utah officials Camille Knudson and Melissa Ure.



Deven Wisner of Global Registration Services discusses new online law labels at AHFA's Regulatory Summit.



Andy Bray of Vanguard confers with Sean O'Connor, Universal Furniture, at AHFA's Washington, D.C., board meeting.



Above: Erin Otto, national policy manager for the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), alerted AHFA board members to the declaration furniture importers will need to file under Lacey Act Phase VII implementation in 2024.

Below: The Virginia contingent attending AHFA's May board meeting included Jeremy Hoff, Hooker Furnishings; Jeb Bassett, Bassett Furniture; Representative Morgan Griffith (R-VA); and Doug Bassett, Vaughan-Bassett.



Preparing for Issues on the Horizon

AHFA received a preview of battles to come when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) released its human health assessment of formaldehyde in April 2022. The assessment concluded the chemical is carcinogenic to humans and pointed to significantly reduced permissible levels of exposure.

The home furnishings industry was among stakeholders anticipating an independent peer review of the IRIS assessment. It came in August 2023 from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM). But the NASEM report and its recommendations to EPA were promptly challenged by the American Chemistry Council, which filed a lawsuit claiming NASEM failed to follow "basic standards for scientific integrity." Although members heard little about this issue in 2023, by the end of the year AHFA was preparing to endorse the ACC's position and add its voice to those calling for qualified peer reviews.

Also on the horizon for 2024 is implementation of Phase VII of the Lacey Act, which will require importers of wood furniture to file Lacey Act declarations. A session at AHFA's May Board of Directors meeting reviewed the Phase VII requirements. Additional compliance guidance in collaboration with the International Wood Products Association is anticipated in 2024.



This monthly recap of 2023 spotlights AHFA's ongoing advocacy, programs and planning on behalf of its member companies. But the photos and commentary reveal more than just a schedule of events. Behind every program, every Capitol Hill visit, every advocacy campaign and every award presented are hundreds of member company executives participating in the work of the Alliance. Staff thanks you for your support and dedication. You helped make AHFA and its affiliates valuable and effective resources for all our member companies throughout 2023.

Above: Scott Buehrer, president of B. Walter & Company, shares a fist bump with team member Gat Caperton, Gat Creek Furniture, at the Solution Partners Education Golf Tournament in September.

January

The May effective date for the CPSC's onerous Safety Standard for Clothing Storage Units is top of mind as 2023 begins. The U.S. District Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit reaffirms its December 2022 denial of AHFA's request to delay the implementation date.

AHFA posts a "best practices" document on its website, sharing the advice of the industry's leading engineers on how best to modify clothing storage units to meet the CPSC's rigid standard.

AHFA staff and member company executives attend a one-hour meeting at CPSC's National Product Testing and Evaluation Center in Maryland seeking clarity on the test methods outlined in the CPSC's Safety Standard for Clothing Storage Units. Despite submitting dozens of questions in advance, they leave with no new guidance.

Erik Mueller, CEO of Cincinnati-based Watson's and Founder/CEO of Plank & Hide Co. steps up as Chair of the ICFA Board of Directors.

At a "soft launch" of the new Casual Market Atlanta, ICFA Executive Director Jackie Hirschhaut cuts the ribbon on a new member lounge at AmericasMart.



February

ICFA holds its Educational Conference in Nashville, with American Ninja Warrior competitor and motivational speaker Alex Weber delivering the keynote address.

ICFA launches its Casual 100 Club and invites members to contribute \$100 or more to City of Hope and choose their preferred area of medical research and care. The initiative immediately raises \$11,500 to support a cure for cancer.

AHFA continues its legal opposition to the CPSC furniture stability rule, filing a detailed brief outlining the rule's "arbitrary and capricious" requirements. The Alliance also releases results of consumer research showing 85 percent of parents surveyed do not understand the stability rating on the CPSC's proposed clothing storage unit hangtag.

AHFA hosts an all-day workshop to help member companies understand requirements of the last milestone in Title VI of the Toxic Substances Control Act, otherwise known as the formaldehyde rule. That milestone is the March 22, 2024, deadline for laminated product producers to switch to a no-added formaldehyde or phenol resin.

ASTM publishes an updated F2057-23 voluntary stability standard for clothing storage furniture. New stability tests are designed to meet the requirements spelled out in the STURDY Act passed by Congress in December 2022. CPSC must now review the updated voluntary standard and, if it is found to meet STURDY's requirements, it will supersede the CPSC rule adopted in October 2022.

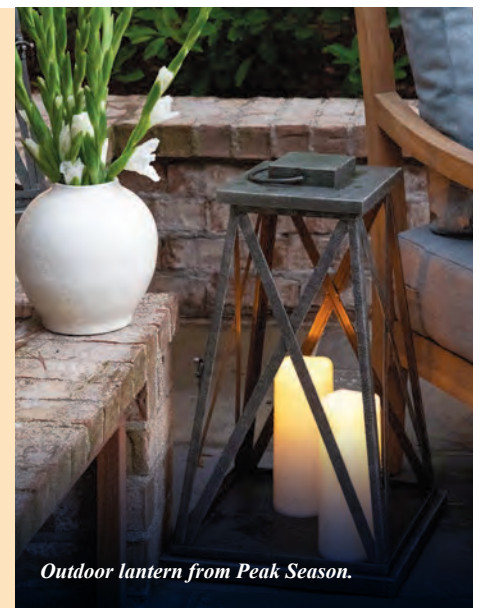


March

AHFA and Parents Against Tip-overs send a joint letter to CPSC requesting "prompt agency action" in reviewing F2057-23. Kids in Danger, *Consumer Reports* magazine, the chair of ASTM's Consumer Products Committee, the retail Home Furnishings Association and a bipartisan group of 11 leading legislators all draft subsequent letters urging the CPSC to swiftly review F2057-23 and adopt it as the furniture safety standard required by STURDY.

The March letter-writing campaign tips the scales, and on March 22, CPSC staff advises the Commissioners that ASTM F2057-23 **meets** the requirements of STURDY and should be adopted.

ICFA's annual consumer survey reports that 80 percent of Americans consider their outdoor living space more valuable to them than ever. More than half of the respondents say they intend to upgrade their porches, decks and patios with new furnishings and décor in 2023. At the top of the list of planned purchases: outdoor lighting, shade products and fire pits.



Outdoor lantern from Peak Season.

April

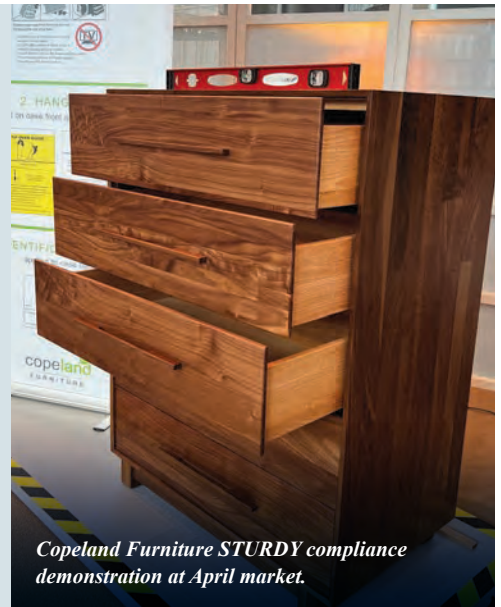
CPSC notifies the ASTM Furniture Safety Subcommittee that it has 13 incident reports, including seven fatalities, involving reclining furniture. AHFA member companies step up to serve on the subcommittee to develop a new recliner safety standard.

AHFA announces 13 recipients of the 2023 Solution Partners Scholarships. Recipients are all children of full-time employees working at member companies.

CPSC votes 3-1 to adopt ASTM F2057-23 as the new mandatory safety standard for clothing storage furniture required under the STURDY Act. This, at last, brings a successful close to the complex plan AHFA unveiled in January 2022 to replace the CPSC's onerous stability rating scheme with the concrete performance tests outlined in F2057-23.

In member company showrooms throughout the April High Point market, companies demonstrate product modifications to meet the anticipated new federal stability standard.

The State of Utah adopts an online labeling requirement for upholstered furniture and then seeks input from the industry on how to implement it. Confusion ensues.



Copeland Furniture STURDY compliance demonstration at April market.



Jesse Ebben and Cole Bawek of Ashley Furniture with Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL, second from right) and his senior policy advisor, Chris Jones (far left).

May

The new federal safety standard for clothing storage units, based on the ASTM F2057-23 voluntary standard, is published in the Federal Register, establishing a September effective date for the new rule.

AHFA's Board of Directors convenes in Washington, D.C. In addition to visits from four U.S. Representatives, board members hear from an official from the U.S. Treasury and the national policy manager for the Lacey Act Program.

AHFA announces it is reviving the annual Marketing/ PR Conference and sets a February 2024 date for the event.

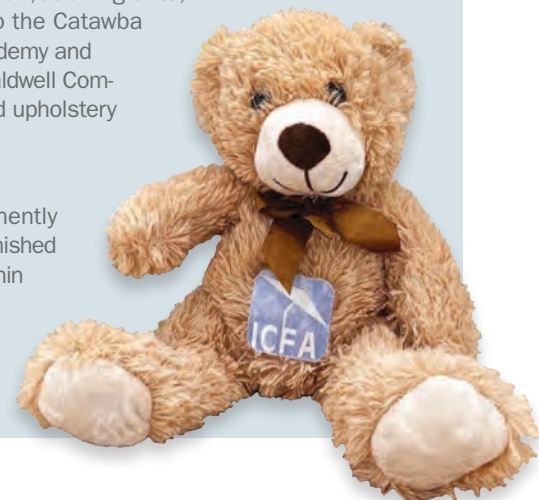
June

Olympic luge competitor Ruben Gonzalez inspires an audience of transportation and logistics executives as the keynote speaker for the 2023 Logistics Conference in Charleston, South Carolina.

AHFA's Furniture Foundation awards \$64,000 in grants, including \$22,000 for scholarships to the Catawba Valley Community College Furniture Academy and \$20,000 for equipment and program outreach for the Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute industrial sewing and upholstery training programs.

AHFA files a petition with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requesting the agency to permanently exempt all laminated wood component parts used in finished furniture from testing and certification requirements within the formaldehyde emission standard.

Sunny the Bear, ICFA's official mascot introduced at the February Educational Conference, begins a road tour with stops at various member companies.



July

ICFA manufacturer members welcome buyers to newly relocated showrooms at Casual Market Atlanta. The reinvigorated market includes a bright and comfortable new ICFA member lounge, an expanded educational program and a stunning new backdrop for the annual Awards Gala: the Georgia Aquarium. Designer and TV personality Vern Yip serves as host.

Bernhardt Exteriors receives the Lillian B. Winchester “Best of Show” award for its Milos-Cyprus Table Group, which also receives the “Lilly” award for outdoor furniture. Sunvilla’s Powered Market Umbrella receives the “Lilly” award for outdoor accents.

ICFA hosts six home writers and editors on a tour of Casual Market Atlanta. Additional highlights at the inaugural market include a Pink Out fundraiser for City of Hope and ICFA’s 65th Birthday Bash.



Production begins on a video for AHFA members demonstrating the stability tests within the federal safety standard for clothing storage units. Additional compliance tools are posted on AHFA’s website.



August

AHFA notifies the membership that there are errors in the labeling section of the new federal stability standard for clothing storage units due to an editing oversight at ASTM. One CPSC official declares that repeating any of the errors on a product label will render the product “noncompliant.” AHFA seeks clarification on this finding and eventually receives assurance that the minor differences in wording will not impact a product’s compliance status.

More than 150 executives from 80 member companies attend the 2023 Regulatory Summit to gain insights into a broad range of regulatory issues. A demonstration of test methods for confirming compliance with the new stability standard is a program highlight.

AHFA is notified by CPSC that plastic tip restraints manufactured in Vietnam by New Age Industries will be the subject of a widespread recall, potentially involving many AHFA member companies. AHFA agrees to make its “Alliance4Safety” the consumer contact for replacement tip kits. Alliance4Safety was created by AHFA in 2020 to convey COVID-related protocols to the public. Now, its broader purpose will be to provide insights and educational resources to help Americans maintain safer, healthier homes.



September

The CPSC’s new federal stability standard for clothing storage units takes effect, impacting all units manufactured after September 1.

With companies still uncertain how to execute online law labels required for upholstered furniture, Utah officials announce they will implement a six-month “soft enforcement” period from January 1 to June 1, 2024. AHFA sends state officials a lengthy list of concerns.

Outdoor Design Days, a new three-day trade show at AmericasMart in Atlanta, attracts professional designers to manufacturer showrooms this month. Several lunch-and-learn seminars and social activities provide networking opportunities for participants.

The Annual Solution Partners Education Golf Tournament raises over \$30,000 for the education fund that supports the Solution Partners Scholarship Program.



Solution Partners Chair Greg Van Dyke with AHFA’s Mike Padjen.

Over 100 golfers and 34 sponsoring companies contribute to the event’s success.

October

ICFA's Annual Membership Meeting is held in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, at Hotel West & Main. The event offers all members the opportunity to take an active role in planning for the coming year. To cap off the work agenda, the attendees enjoy a retail dine-around evening featuring hors d'oeuvres and cocktails at Gasper Home & Garden Showplace, dinner at Bucks Country Gardens and dessert at Salvatore Outdoor.

AHFA introduces an online toolkit with social media graphics and a downloadable flyer for member companies to promote the Solution Partners Scholarship. An online application also is added to streamline the process for students.

A webinar is slated to review a new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rule requiring companies to report the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) imported into the United States since 2011.



Sherry Cai and Christy Dase of Gensun with Eli Hymer, Gasper Home & Garden Showplace.



Kevin Sauder kayaking the Cumberland River at AHFA's 2023 Annual Meeting.

November

In response to mounting concerns and questions from members related to a fast-approaching deadline in the federal formaldehyde regulation, AHFA offers a webinar to once again review details of the requirements for laminated product producers.

AHFA announces it will sponsor an annual Furniture Safety Week beginning in October 2024. The new initiative is designed to engage all segments of the home furnishings industry in public conversation about furniture and home safety and to foster collaboration with parent and child safety groups.

The historic Hermitage Hotel in Nashville hosts AHFA's Annual Meeting and CEO Conference. The business program features sessions on celebrity branding, artificial intelligence and succession planning. Attendees enjoy golf on the Hermitage Golf Course, kayaking on the Cumberland River and a visit to the Country Music Museum.

Nathan Cressman, CEO of Magnussen Home, is elected chair of AHFA's 2024 Board of Directors. He is joined on the Executive Committee by Andy Bray of Vanguard Furniture, Caroline Hipple of Hooker Home Furnishings and 2023 Chair Joe Johnston of Johnston Casuals.

December

AHFA's Solution Partners division elects Eddie Massood of Massood Logistics to chair its Board of Directors in 2024.

Dan Hunt, newly named CEO of Murrow's Transfer, will serve as chair of AHFA's Specialized Furniture Carriers Board of Directors for 2024.

The last edition of the monthly *Furniture Executive* newsletter is printed and mailed. In January 2024, AHFA will begin emailing the newsletter to member companies.

The Alliance hosts several officials from the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food on two North Carolina upholstery plant tours. Member company executives demonstrate the wide range of variables that impact an upholstered product's law label, including some that cannot be finalized until after the order reaches the plant.

ICFA hosts members at the Georgia Design Awards. Attendees include AmericasMart showroom managers plus sales reps and manufacturers.

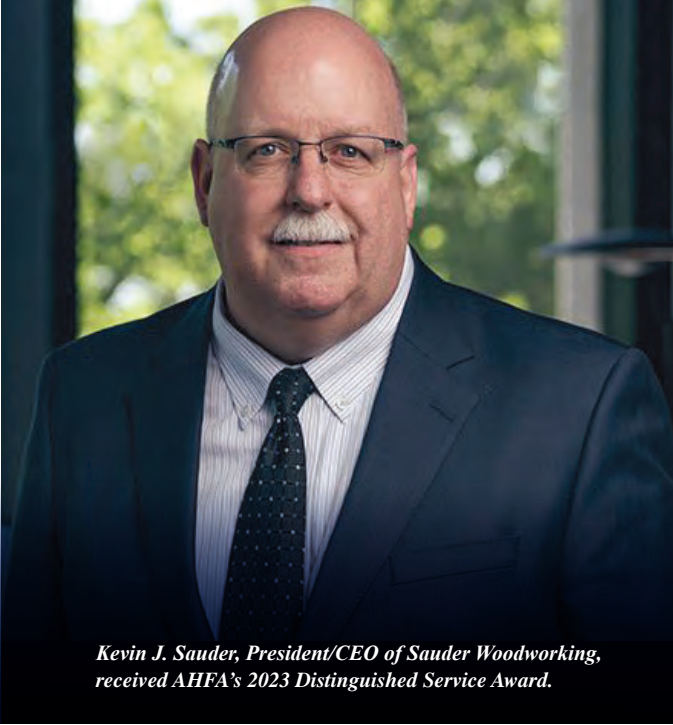


ICFA Executive Director Jackie Hirschhaut with ICFA sales rep member Todd Crandall at the Georgia Design Awards.



AFFA and its affiliates share a long tradition of honoring lifetime achievement, industry excellence and future leaders. Our awards do more than instill pride within companies and individuals. The accolades we confer each year are a way of nudging members, and our industry as a whole, toward excellence and best practices. Further, through scholarships and grant programs, we ensure young talent is nurtured and worthwhile training and development initiatives both survive and thrive.

Above: Sebastian Solloa (left) and Drew Hart, recipients of the 2023 Richard Frinier Design Scholarship, with the award's namesake and sponsor.



Kevin J. Sauder, President/CEO of Sauder Woodworking, received AHFA's 2023 Distinguished Service Award.



Kathy Juckett, CEO of Telescope Casual Furniture, received ICFA's 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Lifetime Achievement

AHFA awarded its 56th Distinguished Service Award to **Kevin J. Sauder** in 2023. He is the third generation president and CEO to lead Sauder Woodworking of Archbold, Ohio. He received the award during AHFA's Annual Meeting and CEO Conference at The Hermitage in Nashville. Sauder was recognized as an "Industry Visionary" for directing the national sales force that built the company's office superstore business, for building brand awareness through national advertising and public relations campaigns and for leading the company through continuous advancements in water and energy conservation, greenhouse gas reduction and waste and recycling improvements.

The 38th recipient of ICFA's Lifetime Achievement Award was **Kathy Juckett**, CEO of Telescope Casual

Furniture of Granville, New York. Telescope was founded by Juckett's great-grandfather, Henry J.W. Vanderminden Sr., over a century ago. His son, Henry J.W. Vanderminden Jr., led the company until his 90s when his son, Robert D. Vanderminden Sr., became CEO. Robert named his daughter, Kathy, as his successor in 2001, while her cousin, Henry Vanderminden IV, was named president in 2000. Juckett's objective has been to create a company culture that embraces change and continuous improvement. She strives to keep manufacturing operations nimble so they can maximize opportunities. Today her four daughters and son are all part of the family business. Her advice to them, and to others who seek her counsel, is to practice humility. "You don't have to know everything or pretend to have all the answers. Be humble – it's a valuable trait." She was honored during ICFA's Awards Gala at the Georgia Aquarium during Casual Market Atlanta.



The Specialized Furniture Carriers division presented its fourth Alvin W. Daughtridge Lifetime Achievement Award to Jack Hawn, now a consultant for J.B. Hunt, during the division's June Logistics Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. Hawn operated Zenith Global Logistics from 1988 until it was sold to J.B. Hunt in 2022. He built Zenith into a best-in-class furniture transportation and logistics company and was known for his strategic vision and innovative leadership that kept the firm on the cutting edge of supply chain technology.

Jack Hawn of J.B. Hunt (center) received the Specialized Furniture Carriers Lifetime Achievement Award from AHFA's Mike Padjen (left) and Richard Tucker, J.B. Hunt.

ICFA Shines Spotlight on Industry Excellence at Awards Events

ICFA began its awards season in February with presentation of the Industry Partner and Retail Genius awards during the annual Educational Conference in Nashville. **AndMore**, previously International Market Centers, received the 2023 Industry Partner Award. AndMore is the owner and operator of AmericasMart, which hosted the inaugural Casual Market Atlanta in July. The Mary Fruehauf Retail Genius Award was presented to **O'Malia's Living** of Carmel, Indiana. The single-unit retailer was lauded for its unique hand-crafted decorative accents placed throughout the store's outdoor furnishings displays.

In July ICFA members and guests gathered again, this time at the Georgia Aquarium for the first Awards Gala held during Casual Market Atlanta. **Lloyd Flanders** was named Manufacturer of the Year – a tribute to the design and quality of the company's products, as well as its outstanding merchandising, customer service, ethics, communications and trade relations. The 2023 finalists, all of whom received Manufacturer Leadership Awards, included Castelle, Ebel Inc., POLYWOOD and Treasure Garden.

ICFA's Sales Representative of the Year, selected from six finalists and determined through online voting, was **Charlie Smith** of La Quinta, California, who represents



Enjoying the ICFA Awards Gala at the Georgia Aquarium were Jack Hicks, Joe Johnston, Andy Counts and Michael Sullivan.

O.W. Lee, Hanamint, TUUCI, Gloster and Quality Works. This award recognizes the recipient's leadership, professionalism, exceptional service, communication skills, knowledge and product training expertise.

Ana Hartman of Treasure Garden received the Mia Nault Unsung Hero Award. She was recognized for her overall professionalism, her special talent for defusing complicated situations, her skill in handling calls with a polite, friendly voice and her competent actions to resolve situations.

The first recipient of the Dudley K. Flanders Leadership Award was **Jessica Salisbury** of Village Green in Rockford, Illinois. Salisbury stepped into the CEO's role with the passing of founder, Larry Smith. She was recognized for her integrity, personal style and effective leadership.

The Apollo Awards recognize retail excellence in the sales and marketing of outdoor furnishings. Finalists must demonstrate outstanding accomplishments and commitment to customer service. Winners were selected from a group of finalists through an online ballot. The single-store recipient was **Village Green Home and Garden** of Rockford, Illinois. Winner in the multi-store category was **Gasper Home and Garden Showplace**, based in Furlong, Pennsylvania.



AndMore received ICFA's Industry Partner Award.



Steve Pulone, general manager and vice president of operations at O'Malia's Living (second from left) with Retail Genius Award judges Brian Lawrence, Mariah Maydew and Cathy Galbreath-Buzbee.



Warren Juliano, president, and Jessie Flanders, CEO/creative director, are surrounded by the Lloyd Flanders team after receiving the 2023 Manufacturer of the Year Award.

AHFA/ICFA Grants & Scholarships

Two students from the Savannah College of Art and Design were named the 2023 winners of the Richard Frinier Design Scholarship. **Sebastian Solloa** and **Drew Hart** were awarded a two-night stay in Atlanta during the inaugural Casual Market Atlanta in July. They enjoyed personal mentoring time with the award's namesake and sponsor, Richard Frinier, and his wife and business partner, Catherine Frinier. The two were selected based on original designs they submitted for innovative outdoor living spaces. Solloa submitted "Calma," an indoor/outdoor seating piece inspired by nature. Hart's submission was a collection titled "Osiris" created around the concept of bringing people together through intentional design.

In May AHFA's Solution Partners division announced the recipients of 12 \$2,500 scholarships, all awarded to students who have a parent working full-time at an AHFA member company. Companies with 2023 recipients included McCreary Modern (2), Vanguard Furniture, Intertek, Lee Industries, Hooker Furniture (2), C.R. Laine, Century Furniture, Leggett & Platt, Culp and H.M. Richards. In addition, Taylor Cotie, daughter of Tina Hinshaw, an employee at Legacy Classic, received a \$5,000 Bill Hauck Memorial Scholarship, a one-time award made possible by Deliveright Logistics, a Specialized Furniture Carrier.

AHFA's Furniture Foundation awarded \$64,000 in grants for 2023. The largest recipient was Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, North Carolina, which received \$22,000 for scholarships to its two furniture academies. The Furniture Institute at Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute in Hudson, North Carolina, received \$20,000 for equipment and program outreach. Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, received funding for four \$3,000 scholarships to its furniture design program, while the International Society of Furniture Designers received \$5,000 to help fund the new Innovation+Design competition developed to support and inspire the next generation of home furnishings designers by challenging them to design and build a piece of furniture, lighting or wall décor. Finally, \$5,000 went to WithIt, the home furnishings industry's leadership development network for women, to fund professional conference registrations.



2023 Sales Representative of the Year Charlie Smith with 2022 recipient Courtney Randolph.



Unsung Hero Award winner Ana Hartman (right), Treasure Garden, with 2022 winner Christy Dase, Gensun.



First recipient of the Dudley K. Flanders Leadership Award, Jessica Salisbury of Village Green in Rockford, Illinois, (center), with Warren Juliano and Jessie Flanders of Lloyd Flanders.



Single Store Apollo Award winner Jessica Salisbury and Jessica Knudson of Village Green Home and Garden, with last year's recipients, Maureen and Lee Recchia of American Casual Living.



Multi-Store Apollo Award winners Bob Gasper and Eli Hymer of Gasper Home and Garden Showplace with Steve Elton, Brown Jordan (center).



The landscape of High Point, North Carolina – home to AHFA's headquarters as well as to the semiannual High Point Market – is changing again in the coming year. It has been transformed by the recent additions of Truist Point Stadium, Congdon Yards, Stock+Grain Assembly and many new businesses. The evolution continues with the construction in 2024 of a new hotel across from Congdon Yards.

Like its hometown, AHFA continues evolving. To meet the changing profile of its member companies, as well as the new business, regulatory and technological challenges they face – the Alliance will develop new resources and augment existing programs in 2024.

Photo courtesy of High Point Discovered

AHFA Intensifies Guidance on Health, Safety and Environmental Issues

Throughout the first full year of STURDY Act enforcement, the Alliance will build on its compliance resources, providing members with the tools and guidance they need to meet requirements of the of the new federal stability standard for clothing storage furniture. And, with implementation of the testing and record-keeping requirements for laminated products under the federal formaldehyde emissions rule, AHFA will provide targeted guidance to impacted companies. As peer reviews of the EPA's draft formaldehyde risk evaluation are concluded in 2024, the Alliance will continue to advocate for the safe use of low levels of formaldehyde in furniture products.

Furniture Safety Week

AHFA has slated the first annual Furniture Safety Week for October 7-11, 2024.

Under the Alliance4Safety banner, this initiative will engage all segments of the industry in public conversation about furniture and home safety and will provide new opportunities for collaborative efforts with parent and child safety groups.



Monitoring State Activity

Regulatory activity impacting home furnishings manufacturing and marketing continues to accelerate on the state level, demanding increased AHFA attention. Recent initiatives focus on chemical regulation and product labeling. AHFA will step up efforts to monitor state-level regulations and will intervene as necessary to minimize unnecessary impacts on member companies and their customers.

ICFA

Firmly entrenched in its new home at AmericasMart in Atlanta, ICFA will focus on expanding the roster of programs and benefits to maximize engagement and fulfillment of all members as well as build membership across categories. To that end, the addition of a full-time Director of Programs and Engagement will generate new campaigns intended to increase value to a larger number of participants while the addition of a full-time Director of Membership will dedicate one-on-one interaction with leading retailers and designers. 2024 will mark a concentrated effort to bring a significant number of first-time buyers to both Summer Casual Market Atlanta in July and Fall Casual Market in September.

Solution Partners

After a banner year for membership growth in 2023, AHFA's Solution Partners will continue efforts to build membership, including adding global suppliers who have become important partners to member manufacturer/importers. With the rising cost of higher education, the division will also focus on building the number of applications for Solution Partners Scholarships. In addition to making it easier to apply online and easier to submit documentation, the scholarship committee will explore increasing the dollar amount of the scholarships, which currently are at \$2,500 each.

Specialized Furniture Carriers

A new Specialized Furniture Carriers certification program will be introduced in 2024. This program will be designed to vet prospective new members with requirements to verify their expertise and commitment to the furniture industry. The division also is committed to executing another successful educational conference in Charleston, South Carolina, and identifying a new venue for 2025.



Did you find your photo?

The collage background of this year's cover photo, as well as the collage of images used in each of the headlines in this report, was created by graphic designer Betsy Simmons Fraser (www.betsysimmonsfraser.com) using more than 300 individual head shots of AHFA member company executives, of course including members of ICFA, Solution Partners and Specialized Furniture Carriers. So, if you see a face that looks especially familiar, you are not mistaken; it is probably you.

Thank you for making everything we do possible.



1912 Eastchester Drive, Suite 100
High Point, North Carolina 27265
336.884.5000 www.ahfa.us

The mission of the American Home Furnishings Alliance is to promote the growth and global leadership of its member companies by:

- Providing exceptional advocacy;
- Promoting effective product and safety standards;
- Presenting relevant education; and
- Serving as the preeminent media resource on industry news and trends.