

# HICKORY CHAIR



## HICKORY CHAIR FURTHER EXPANDS ITS ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP JOURNEY

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**High Point, NC – (October 15, 2010)** – The journey of environmental stewardship has proven to be rewarding not only to the employees of Hickory Chair, but also to its vendors and customers. The final products made to order by Hickory Chair are a reflection of the value of craftsmanship and the wise use of natural materials. The unique synergy between fashion forward design, frequent product cuttings, employee empowerment and frugal use of resources has resulted in products with untold flexibility made at a higher quality standard, in just a few weeks resulting in only one price increase in the past eight years – all in the name of continuous improvement. In 1997, the employees named their focused effort EDGE – *Employees Dedicated to Growth and Excellence* –and their results have transformed the product line as well as the way in which the products are made. One important outcome has been a commitment to improving the environment through a series of initiatives to reduce Hickory Chair’s environmental footprint through the implementation of sustainable business practices.

In 2008 Hickory Chair earned EFEC – Effecting Furniture’s Environmental Culture, registration by the AHFA - American Home Furnishings Alliance. EFEC was created to assist furniture companies in evaluating their operations to ensure continuous improvement of their environmental stewardship. Hickory Chair is one of a small group of furniture companies that are now EFEC registered. EFEC is a voluntary environmental management system for furniture manufacturers. The registration requires companies to use management tools that help the company integrate environmental concerns into daily business practices resulting in better environmental performance and improved profitability for the company. EFEC companies enjoy the benefits of recognition as an environmental leader in the furniture industry, improved manufacturing performance and efficiency as well as improved regulatory compliance with an enhanced ability to track environmental costs. In addition, financial savings benefit from better management of resources and raw materials results in less waste and recycling.

In 2008 the company was awarded the first ever prestigious Sage Award by the AHFA and Cargill. The purpose of the Sage Award is to seek out, discover, and recognize true industry innovators from whom others can learn. Winners will have demonstrated wisdom, experience and leadership within the home furnishings industry in the areas of sustainable business practices, social responsibility and profitable growth.

In April 2010 Hickory Chair earned SBD - Sustainable by Design registration by the AHFA. SBD is providing a roadmap for home furnishings companies to create a corporate culture of conservation and environmental stewardship by integrating socio-economic policies and sustainable business practices into their manufacturing operations and sourcing strategies. In Hickory Chair's case, Sustainability by Design is an extension of the EDGE culture and not a new thought process for the company.

As the October 2010 International Home Furnishings Market opens, Hickory Chair will debut its new showroom which is located on the first floor of 330 N. Hamilton. Donna Musick, the company's Environmental Coordinator, states "the new showroom can focus a spotlight on our environmental stewardship. What I love about it is that it was done, not because it was regulated or someone was mandating that it be done a certain way, but because Ron Fiore and everyone else involved saw the value to the company in doing the right thing." Environmental Stewardship is very much in evidence in the renovation of the new showroom.

- During the process of moving from the showroom in the IHFC building and opening the new showroom at 330 N. Hamilton, obsolete and excess paint was donated to disaster relief agencies in the High Point area. Not only did our donation directly help with disaster relief, but it set a precedent in the showroom complex. Relief agencies have approached other companies in the building and arranged to accept future donations from them not only of paint, but also furniture, carpeting, and home accessories.
- Where possible, low VOC emitting paints were used on the walls and water based finishes were used on the natural wood floors.
- Sisal carpeting was installed. In addition to being made from natural plant fibers that are farmed for this purpose, sisal carpeting resists stains and can be cleaned with water thereby eliminating the need to use chemical carpet cleaners. Sisal improves the indoor environment by acting to regulate mild changes in humidity by absorbing excess moisture in the air and releasing it during drier days.
- Energy efficient appliances were installed.
- Many areas have natural light reducing the need for artificial lighting.

- Water filter stations have been installed so that the distribution of bottled water can be eliminated. While recycling plastic drink bottles is good, eliminating the waste stream from being generated in the first place is better.

In Hickory, our journey of environmental stewardship has broadened our reach from internal daily operations to working with our suppliers.

- Duke Power, our energy provider, offers 3 Energy Efficiency Programs for their large business customers and Hickory Chair has utilized all three. Duke Power conducted an Energy Assessment of our facility/operations in March of 2009 and identified opportunities for us to reduce energy usage and reduce operating costs. Opportunities we have or are in the process of pursuing include: (1) Utilization of the Energy Profiler tool Duke Power Offers to track our energy usage and changes in usage patterns; (2) Retrofitting T12 lighting with energy efficient T8 lighting that can use up to 30% less energy while improving lighting levels; and (3) the feasibility of replacing our current shrink wrap oven with a natural gas fired shrink wrap tunnel. Hickory Chair has taken advantage of the Duke Power Smart Saver Incentive Program to help offset the costs of installing high efficiency motors and installing high efficiency air conditioners.
- Preventive maintenance programs are still a key component to our energy reduction initiative. We continue to monitor the work schedule and leaks in the system to reduce the use of air compressors (high energy users). Whenever possible, premium efficiency motors are specified for replacements.
- Wood dust continues to be the preferred boiler fuel source for the company's manufacturing processes and facility heating. In the first six months of 2010, using wood dust as boiler fuel kept more than 500 tons of wood biomass out of the landfill. (500 tons of wood dust has the equivalent Btu value as about 54,000 gallons of #5 fuel oil)
- First Time Yield programs that are focusing on quality have had the added benefit of reducing rework and waste in the production process. More than a dozen waste streams continue to be recycled or repurposed. The following is based on tracking for the first 6 months of 2010; (1) increased cardboard recycling by 20-30%, (2) increased recycling from the upholstery, cutting and sewing areas 25-40% and (3) reduced landfill waste by 5-10%. Note that while recycling numbers are going up, the waste being generated per each hour of production is going down.
- Generation of waste has been reduced enough to eliminate the need to rent a dedicated dumpster for boiler fly ash and a trash dumpster at the lumber garage. **In 2006 Hickory Chair sent an average of 56.9 tons of waste to the landfill each month; in the first 6 months of 2010, an average of 12.5 tons was sent to**

**the landfill each month (78% reduction) despite an increase in production output.**

- Cleaning and reorganizing the maintenance shop this year will improve efficiency and prevent damage to spare parts and supplies.
- All wood finishes have been tested and comply with the Consumer Product Safety Associations limits for lead content.

“Our employees are focused upon making fine furniture that is made to last in an environmentally friendly manner. We are proud that countless pieces of Hickory Chair furniture made in our 99-year history are being passed down from one generation to the next and not going to landfills. We believe that following the guidelines of not only SBD -Sustainability by Design but also EFEC – Effecting Furniture’s Environmental Culture will help us launch our second century responsibly and simply doing the right thing for the environment, our employees and the consumer who chooses Hickory Chair personalized pieces for their home” reflects Jay Reardon, president.

“Hickory Chair has demonstrated great visionary leadership in its efforts to move beyond compliance to effective environmental stewardship,” said Bill Perdue, AHFA’s VP of Environmental Affairs. “By embracing the core values of EFEC, the company is building a corporate culture that will emphasize sustainable business practices and focus on continuous improvement that will result in a significant reduction of its environmental footprint.”

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## ABOUT HICKORY CHAIR

For almost 100 years, Hickory Chair has been crafting custom wood and upholstered furnishings in a wide range of classic styles. Inspired by such historical sites as Winterthur Country Estate and the James River Plantations, as well as by noted furniture authorities such as Thomas O’Brien, Mariette Himes Gomez, Alexa Hampton, Albert Sack and Suzanne Kasler, the company’s hallmark is luxurious yet livable furniture that’s made to order and made to last.

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Additional Hickory Chair press information and high resolution images can be found online at [www.hickorychair.com](http://www.hickorychair.com). Log into “my Hickory Chair” (for access during Market, press may use the temporary id [press@hickorychair.com](mailto:press@hickorychair.com) and password ‘hccil’). Click on Press Releases.