



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT: Lauren Estep  
Karen McNeill  
American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame  
336.882.5900**

**AMERICAN HOME FURNISHINGS HALL OF FAME ANNOUNCES  
INNAUGURAL CLASS OF THE HOME FURNISHINGS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**

**HIGH POINT, N.C., Jan. 28, 2022**– The American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame announces its inaugural class of emerging leaders who will participate in the prestigious Home Furnishings Leadership Institute at High Point University, Feb. 20 to 24, 2022. The 25 participants from across the industry were selected from a nominated pool of candidates. Fashioned after the prestigious Harvard Business School Seminar for the Young President’s Organization and Chief Executives Organization – attended by many leaders in our industry – the Leadership Institute is founded on the power and impact of peer learning gained through focused tutorials.

“The response to this first Institute has exceeded our expectations and we found ourselves with difficult decisions in choosing who would attend,” says Caroline Hipple, president of the Hall of Fame Board of Directors and president of Norwalk Furniture. “This inaugural class is made up of proven leaders, innovators and achievers who aspire to greater achievement. Each will be challenged by four inducted members of the Hall of Fame to think differently in candid exchanges. The lessons they learn, and the relationships that they forge, will help build a strong foundation among peers serving different roles.”

The Leadership Institute will focus on the four pillars of leadership skills as agents of change: Vision, given by Ron Wanek, Ashley Furniture Industries; Communication, given by Bob Maricich, International Market Centers; Execution, given by John Bray, Vanguard Furniture; and Culture, given by Irv Blumkin, Nebraska Furniture Mart. Select faculty from the university’s Phillips School of Business and the Nido R. Qubein School of Communications will lead a combination of lectures and discussions.

“A critical element of the mission of the Hall of Fame is to inspire a new class of leaders,” says Karen McNeill, CEO of the Hall of Fame. “We are impressed with what each of these leaders has already achieved and look forward to seeing where they will lead the industry – as individuals and collectively – in the future.”

The members of the inaugural class of the Home Furnishings Institute are: Alice Anderson, Accessory Buyer, Haverty’s Furniture; Ryan Blumkin, Executive Vice President, Nebraska Furniture Mart; Tan Cheeranont, Director of Planning and Purchasing, Hooker Furnishings Company; Alex Cihak, Vice President of Business Development, Elements International; Bo Coconis, Vice President/General Manager, Coconis Furniture; Ryan Fitzpatrick, Head of Furniture, Décor and Textiles, Wayfair; Anderson Gibbons, CMO, STI/Revolution; Sydney Harris, Director of Organizational Development, Furnitureland South; Kyle Heikes, Senior Client Strategist, FurnitureDealer.net; Jill Johnson, vice president of marketing, Tempur Sealy International, Inc.; Alex Kirsch, President of Dealer Services, FurnitureDealer.Net; Mike Korzin, Director of Retail Operations, La-Z-Boy, Inc.; Ryan Mahoney, Senior Vice President – Leasing, International Market Centers; Damian Pherigo, Vice President, C. S. Wo & Sons LLC; Jason

Phillips, Vice President, Phillips Collection; Troy Pittenger, Vice President of Finance, Norwalk Furniture; Shane Pohlman, Director of Furniture, Nebraska Furniture Mart; Bennett Rasmussen, Controller, RC Willey; Patrick Shelton, Vice President of Sales, Valdese Weavers; Patrick Spaugh, attorney, Womble Bond Dickinson LLP; Garland Turner, Vice President New Projects, 1915 South; Travis Wagner, Senior Vice President of Global Manufacturing, Ashley Furniture Industries; Cameron Wanek, Senior Vice President of Supply Chain Planning and Business Analytics, Ashley Furniture Industries; Erin Weir, Vice President and Cofounder, Gail Doby Coaching; and Jared Worrall, National Sales Manager, Classic Home.

# # #

The American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame Foundation, Inc., is an industry-wide organization founded to preserve its history, to celebrate exceptional individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to the U.S. home furnishings industry, and to inspire the next generation of innovative leaders. Membership includes eligibility to nominate candidates for consideration by the Selection Committee, and the opportunity to help preserve the history and heritage of the industry. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, funds support our history and leadership programming. The organization currently is based in High Point, North Carolina, at 202 Neal Place, Suite 101, and can be reached at 336.882.5900. Watch for ongoing developments and details about the grand opening of a new permanent home, which is targeted for 2023.

# # #