

Wickes Furniture, Samson Marketing Executives To Receive Top Honors

Furniture World Magazine

July 11, 2007

Members of City of Hope's Home Furnishings Industry group have named Wickes Furniture president and chief executive officer John Disa and **Samson Marketing president and chief executive officer Kevin O'Connor as the recipients of City of Hope's Spirit of Life Award.** More than 700 industry leaders are expected to attend the October 3 dinner honoring the two executives at the Showplace Tent in High Point, N.C. The Spirit of Life Award is City of Hope's most prestigious honor and recognizes outstanding philanthropic commitment.

"I believe strongly in City of Hope and its mission of scientific discovery," said Disa. "The dedication of City of Hope's physicians and scientists mirrors that of our industry members, who share City of Hope's commitment to improving the lives of patients with serious diseases. I am proud to be a part of such a tenacious group."

"I'm honored to be able to help lead this effort in support of the innovative research programs at City of Hope," said O'Connor. "The campaign and dinner will celebrate the hard work and dedication of the physicians and scientists at City of Hope, who are redefining the future of medicine."

The annual Spirit of Life Award Dinner will once again feature the industry's most talented – or exceptionally brave – members, as the fourth annual "American Furniture Idol" returns as the highlight of the gala. Spots fill up quickly in this one-of-a-kind contest in which competitors belt out their favorite tune in front of a panel of three judges. Prospective crooners can contact City of Hope to sign up. To volunteer your song stylings for "American Furniture Idol," or for more information about City of Hope's Home Furnishings Industry and The Spirit of Life Award, contact Monique Miranda at 800-272-2310 or at mmiranda@coh.org.

John Disa was appointed president and CEO of Wickes Furniture in March 2004, by owners Sun Capital Partners. With over 20 years of experience in retail, Wickes was his first venture into the furniture business. Grounded in the retail principles of "putting the customer first," Disa set Wickes on an aggressive growth path focused on market leadership in the mid-tier furniture segment. Wickes is the dominant furniture retailer in Chicago, Los Angeles and Portland, Ore., and will be entering the Las Vegas market soon. Prior to joining Wickes, he spent the majority of his career in the apparel and athletic shoe businesses, with 14 years at the Casual Corner Group and then moving on to Foot Locker for five years.

Disa holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration and a master's in business administration from Western New England College, as well as an associates degree in business administration from Springfield Technical Community College. He was also an adjunct professor in marketing at Western New England College. Disa has been married to his wife, Paula, for 30 years. They have two sons, Christopher and Andrew, who both reside in Boston.

In October 2006, Kevin O'Connor was appointed president and CEO of Samson Marketing, the U.S. holding company of the Lacquercraft U.S. case goods companies – Universal Furniture and Legacy Classic Furniture. O'Connor partnered in 1999 with Samuel and Grace Kuo of Lacquercraft Manufacturing to create Legacy Classic Furniture, which pioneered the concept of consolidated direct container sales in 1999. Prior to joining forces with Lacquercraft, O'Connor served as president of Master Design and, previously, Hyundai Furniture, and in management positions at Singer Furniture, Burlington Furniture and Lea Industries. He began his career in 1969 with Ethan Allen, where he started as a sales rep and ultimately became director of product development.

O'Connor has a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Seton Hall University, and a master's in business administration from Columbia University. He lives in Greensboro, N.C. with his wife of 38 years, Madeline. They have three children and four grandchildren.

The Spirit of Life Award is presented annually to individuals who have made a notable contribution to both their community and profession. City of Hope's National Home Furnishings Industry fundraising group selects honorees for its Spirit of Life Award who have fundamentally influenced the direction of the industry.