**FLOOR NOTES**

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- BASF will increase prices up to $0.05 per wet pound ($0.10 per dry pound) for styrene-butadiene and styrene-acrylonitrile latex polymers sold in North America.
- Products carrying the **North American Laminate Flooring Association** Certification Seal have passed rigorous ANSI performance tests for quality and are CARB 2 compliant.
- US Floors’ Coretec engineered luxury vinyl flooring collection has expanded into the United Kingdom with the launch of Coretec Plus and Coretec One through the UK-based flooring distributor Headlam Group.
- Daltile has opened a 4,600-square-foot Design Studio in Miami.
- Mannington Mills hosted the 13th annual Art is Cool program at its headquarters on May 12, and the best of show award went to Grace Carpenter of A.P. Schall High School for her work, Best Friends.
- The Flooring Contractors Association has created the Bruce Newbrough Memorial Scholarship in support of its CIM Program, a certification program for floorcovering installation managers, which will support three floorcovering installation managers annually for the next five years.
- The DeGraaf Interiors location in Hudsonville, Michigan is now an Armstrong Elite Retailer.
- J&J Flooring Group is partnering with The Center for Health Design to hold two professional networking and educational events this year: Boston on June 25 and New York City on September 16.
- The American Institute of Architects convention, held in Atlanta May 14 to 16, was attended by between 18,000 and 19,000 architects and members of the A&D community.
- CBC Americas Corporation will invest $3.5 million to relocate its headquarters and East Coast warehousing to North Carolina by summer’s end.
- Valinge Group has developed a new flooring called Flexdura, based on powder technology, as an alternative to LVT and ceramic tile.
- GoodWeave is working to provide relief to its 15,000 workers and their families in Nepal after the devastating 7.9 earthquake that hit the country on April 25. GoodWeave’s field staff are distributing tents, mattresses, food and water, and providing critical healthcare. Disease from tainted water is a growing concern.
- Nourison is making a donation of $10,000 to Nepal through the ORIA Charitable Fund, which has been supporting the needs of children and their families in carpet weaving regions for over a decade.
- Surya has made a donation of $20,000 to the American Red Cross in support of the organization’s relief efforts in Nepal in the wake of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the country last week.

Editor’s Note: Get the complete story on the briefs listed here at www.floordaily.net.

**PEOPLE**

Emily Morrow, director of styling at Shaw Industries, retired on May 4 to pursue personal interests.

**Starna**

Starna elected four new board members at its annual meeting in Tucson, Arizona: Chuck Bode, CB Flooring in Columbia, Maryland; Pete Lamore, Bonitz Flooring Group, Charlotte, North Carolina; Les Lippert, Lippert Tile Company, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin; and Dan Ulfigt, Master Craft Floors, Plymouth, Michigan. Elected as board officers were: chairman, Cheryl Acerno with Acerno & Company, Denver, Colorado; vice chairperson, Paul White with Paul G White, Portland, Maine; treasurer, Leonard Zmiwalski with Mr. David’s Flooring, Itasca, Illinois; and secretary, Ralph Grove with CCA Floors and Interiors, Alexandria, Virginia.

**Surya**

Surya president Satya Tiwari has been selected as a finalist in the Family Business Category for the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year 2015 Award in the Southeast region, marking the second consecutive year that he has been recognized with this honor.

**Lumber Liquidators’ CFO Dan Terrell**

will be replaced on June 1. Gregory Whirley, a senior manager with Ernst & Young, has been named interim CFO.

The National Wood Flooring Association announced its 2015 leadership team at its Wood Flooring Expo in St. Louis:

- Executive Committee: chairman, Jeff Fairbanks with Palo Duro Hardwoods, Denver, CO; vice chairman, Tommy Maxwell with Maxwell Hardwood Flooring, Monticello, Arkansas; treasurer, Chris Zizza with C&R Flooring, Westwood, Maine; secretary, Craig Dupra with Installers Warehouse, Rochester, New York; past chairman, John Lessick with Apex Wood Floors, Downers Grove, Illinois.
- Board of Directors: Kevin Murphy with Trinity Hardwood Dist., Austin, Texas; John Wooten with CMH Space Flooring Products, Wadesboro, North Carolina; Julie Russell with Glinha, a division of Rudd Company, Seattle, Washington; Scott Sandlin with Shaw Industries, Dalton, Georgia; and Brenda Cashion with Pinchetti Interior Elements, Carrollton, Texas.


**Green Notes**

Crossville recycled 14,255,082 pounds of fired porcelain in 2014, bringing the company’s cumulative recycling total to nearly 53.5 million pounds since the 2009 launch of the Tile Take-Back program and subsequent Toto USA recycling partnership.

Mohawk Group received the Manufacturing Visionary Award from the International Living Future Institute (ILFI) for its commitment to manufacturing products that contribute to a healthy environment.
This year, the National Wood Flooring Association brought its Wood Flooring Expo to St. Louis, Missouri, where the NWFA was founded 30 years ago and where it is currently headquartered. The expo was held April 28 to May 1 at the Edward Jones Dome, home field for the Rams since 1995, and exhibit space was sold out by February.

The show grew 15% in exhibitor space this year, and there were 264 exhibitors all together, including 60 that were new to the show. And virtually all the major hardwood producers were on hand. Attendance of 2,858 was down 4% from last year, when it was held in Nashville, but up 24% from 2013. Next year’s expo takes place in Charlotte, North Carolina, April 27 to 30, and that should be another big one.

This year’s theme was “Play It Forward,” emphasizing how members can grow their businesses through community involvement and service to others. Central to the theme was “cause marketing,” which most commonly refers to when a business partners with a non-profit to advance the mission of the nonprofit and at the same time elevate the profile of the business.

It’s seen as a mutually beneficial system, and one that is increasingly relevant to today’s new consumers, like Millennials, according to Michael Martin, president and CEO of the NWFA. Martin introduced the theme during the Kickoff General Session, followed by the official launch of the partnership between the NWFA and the Gary Sinise Foundation, which helps wounded veterans.

The keynote speaker was Bill Courtney, owner of Memphis based Classic Hardwoods and the subject of “Undefeated,” an Oscar winning documentary on Courtney’s role as coach of a high school football team. Courtney captivated the crowd with his story, as he discussed his own journey of “playing it forward” and encouraged attendees to find ways to build relationships with their communities. And Ozzie Smith, Hall of Famer and dynamic Cardinals shortstop from 1982 to 1996, was on hand to announce the NWFA’s partnership with the Gateway PGA Reach Foundation.

Education was a key initiative this year. The education sessions were well attended and covered timely topics, and most offered CEU credits. The NWFA offered more than 20 hours of teaching and instruction, broken into six categories: management, design, technical skills, marketing and sales, and legislative. In addition, the NWFA Certified Professionals (NWFCAP) Symposium, held the day before the show, offered more instruction and included the opportunity for hardwood flooring salespeople to become NWFCAP Certified Sales Advisors.

Unlike the Surfaces and Coverings shows, the NWFA Expo is not as focused on new product introductions. The exhibitors all
have product in their booths, but their main mission is to reinforce their existing relationships with distributors, contractors and some of the big retailers that come to the event. New relationships are also forged at the show. And it also reinforcess the sense of com-

munity in the hardwood flooring industry and gives everyone a chance to see first-hand where the industry is headed.

Exhibitors included significant domestic hardwood producers like Armstrong, Maxwell, Mannington, Harris Wood, Mulli-
can, Somerset and Linden Lumber. Hardwood producers from Quebec were also well represented, with Mirage, Prerocco and Merici all exhibiting. Undertakings and accessories were on exhibit through firms like MP Global, Bona US, DriTac, Taylor Adhesives, Mapei and many more.

mineral streaks and cracks to closed and open knots and milling marks. The line comes in maple and white oak, with a low gloss finish that creates the look of oiled hardwood.

Hasko, the equipment manufacturer best known for its side matching manufacturing equipment, was also at the show, along with other equipment suppliers. Hasko showcased its 2500 Process Solid Wood Flooring system, which scans wood and chops out defects to optimize yield.

The NWFA's Wood Floor of the Year winners were announced at the show, eight in total. Best Commercial and Best Residential both went to Ourada Designs, based in Nine Mile Falls, Washington; Best Reclaimed went to Archetypal Imagery Corp. in the Bronx, New York; Best Limited Species and Member's Choice were awarded to Real Antique Wood in Irvington, New Jersey. Gaylord Hardwood Flooring, based in Ontario, Canada, received the award for Best Manufacturer Factory Finished; Best CNC/Laser Cut went to Woodwright Hardwood Floor in Dallas, Texas; and Best Restoration went to a Russian firm, Yantamaya Pryad-Parquet.

At the expo, the NWFA also awarded 43 recipients with NWFA degrees, including Honorary Vanguard, which went to Kevin Mullany of New Mexico's Benchmark Wood Floors. In addition, the association handed out 13 Vanguard degrees, five Ambassador degrees, four Master Craftsman degrees, two Advanced Master Craftsman degrees and 18 Craftsman degrees.

Houzz, the online platform for home improvement and interior design, also showed at the Expo. And there were specialty firms, like Oshkosh Designs, along with well established firms with overseas production or established partnerships, like PanTim, Pinnacle and Ark Floors.

American OEM, launched last year by Don Finkell, a 30-year industry veteran and former head of both Anderson and Shaw Hardwood, along with former NWFA chairman Wayne Cotton, was also at the show with its engineered hardwood program. Finkell's daughter, Allie Finkell, recently left her position with Mohawk to manage American OEM's product development.

Mirage showed new product, including the Flair collection, which features two character grade lines with everything from

FOUN DING TH E NWFA

In July 1985, 11 hardwood industry executives—Johnny Austin, Steve Brown, Jack Coates, Albert Duke, Jim Duke, Virgil Hendricks, Roland Holder, Al Pollard, Harold Reid, Gary Reynolds and Jack Wilcox—met in Dallas, Texas to develop the idea for a nationwide group. At a meeting in St. Louis in December, the National Wood Flooring Association was officially created, and Virgil Hendricks of Mid-West Floor Company was elected president.

Most in that first group were distributors whose goal was to come together to grow the market, and part of the association's primary mission was to create and educate an installer base. The first convention, held in St. Louis in April 1986, drew 170 attendees. At that time, NWFA membership stood at 109. Today's membership is around 3,000.
This past April in an education session at the NWFA’s 2015 Expo in St. Louis, Missouri, Emily Morrow, the recently retired director of color, style and design at Shaw Industries, identified the current hot trends in wood flooring, including wider boards, random widths, rich character, rustic species, texturing techniques and new finish hues. These trends were on full display on the show floor as well.

According to many of the exhibitors, the biggest trend for the past several years has been a movement away from traditional strip flooring in favor of longer and wider boards. This trend was made possible by the shift to engineered construction, which provides more stability to wider width boards. Warping can be an issue even with fairly narrow solid hardwood, but engineered hardwood goes as wide as 12” and will retain its form, even in below grade installations.

Wayne Lee, business development representative and technical advisor with Middle Tennessee Lumber in Burns, Tennessee, says his company historically has not manufactured strip flooring, but has seen a significant increase in sales of wider and longer flooring. Middle Tennessee specializes in long plank flooring, ranging from about 6’ to 10’ lengths, with huge demand for widths of about 6”. Lee postulates that the trend is driven primarily by the style of new homes, which have “wide open floor plans and tall ceilings. Remodel sales are up because homeowners are trying to bring a new rustic look to their homes.” Lee says the rustic look includes techniques like wirebrushing and handscraping. “Strip flooring does not offer that look,” he adds.

At Galleher Hardwood Company in Santa Fe Springs, California, Dan Harrington agrees, adding, “It’s gotten to the point where, in our market, 7” is the new 3”. And with the desire for wider boards comes the need for longer material, since wide, short boards create a blocky look that most consumers don’t want.” According to Harrington, Galleher has been investing in wider and wider products, “and it seems that each time we do, people demand the next width up. We are now stocking products as wide as 16”, and we have standard prefinished collections as wide as 12”.

Designers have been the primary drivers of this demand, according to Don Finkell, CEO of South Carolina’s American OEM. “Starting as early as 2009, larger and wider boards started to make their presence known,” he says. “As is often the case, the upper end of specified design projects sets the trend for the masses to follow as they aspired for the look.”

In Europe, demand for longer and wider flooring has been the norm for many years, according to Ulrich Stöhr, flooring export manager with Berg & Berg in Södra, Sweden. “Wider and longer boards are becoming more and more fashionable,” says Stöhr, adding that Swedish species “are very stable because they are slow growing. They will stand every kind of climate without showing gaps and are very suitable for subfloor heated floors, which are becoming more and more popular in the United States.”

Barbara Titus, vice president of Middlefield, Ohio based Sheoga Hardwood Flooring and Paneling, says that her company has always manufactured a random mix of widths ranging from 2/4” to 5 1/4” to utilize the entire log with as little waste as possible. Sheoga often has requests for up to 18” widths, but the firm increasingly struggles with having an outlet for its 2 1/4” width in any of the domestic species, and frequently needs to moderately discount these items in order to keep them from building up in inventory. Whether or not there is high demand for these smaller profiles, they are a necessary byproduct, according to Titus. “In order to achieve those longer lengths and wider boards,” she states, “2 1/4” flooring is generated to utilize the full log and eliminate waste.”

Demand may be down for traditional strip flooring, but many exhibitors at the NWFA Expo contend that there is still significant appetite for wood flooring in all widths and lengths.

In Mickeys, Florida, Goodwin Heart Pine Company’s CEO, Carol Goodwin, observes that demand for longer and wider boards is up, but that “the true antique wood” is that still mostly 4” and 6”, while exhibitor Tim Elrich with Lewis Lumber & Milling in Dickson, Tennessee believes that “more people are demanding wood flooring in general,” no matter what the size.

Tommy Maxwell in Monticello, Arkansas states that his company has not experienced a decline in marketshare for traditional strip flooring. Maxwell does confirm, however, that his company has experienced an increase in demand for the wider and longer boards. “Maxwell Hardwood Flooring has been in a position for many years now to service our customers who need this...
material,” says Maxwell. “Our unfinished Townsend Additions engineered line offers a 2’ to 10’ product that has been popular with many of our distributors. We have seen a positive impact with this trend as it helps us diversify our offerings and ultimately move more mixed truckloads of product.”

That increasing demand means that suppliers are turning inventory as fast as they can make it. Donna Millard, director of sales for Tennessee based McMinnville Manufacturing Company, says that “the amount of 4” and 5” products we produce are sold right away. We do not carry an inventory.”

In Cortez, Colorado, co-owner Karen Harbaugh says that Muscanell has worked on procuring material for wide formats for many years. She says, “It is a challenge to get what we need, but we accomplish this through long-term relationships with trusted suppliers.”

Like many manufacturers, Galleher’s Harrington believes that raw material supplies are adequate, but that the issue becomes a question of price. “Wider and longer equals more expensive,” he says.

Richard Poirier, director of sales for Ashland, Maine based Moosewood Flooring, agrees. “There is much more interest in wider boards, no question, but there is still a market for traditional widths,” he says. “As footprints of houses increase, wider boards have their place. However, narrow boards can make smaller rooms look much larger, and there is a always the price, which still leaves demand for narrow floors.”

Despite their growing popularity, wider and longer boards present some manufacturing challenges. American OEM’s Finkell explains, “It is not that easy to make long boards if your plant is set up for short boards. Wider is not a big problem, but long can be a real issue, especially if you are highly automated.”

Middle Tennessee’s Lee adds, “Longer boards can be a challenge for grading. We cannot run it out of lower grades for rough lumber. It is harder to keep the wider boards tighter to the specifications and maintain the NWFA/NORMA standards.”

Peter Connor, president of WD Flooring in Laona, Wisconsin, says, “For solid manufacturers, the challenges are plenty. You have to use a different lumber specification than you would for strip flooring, so your costs go up. What’s more, you cannot keep these items in a warehouse very long—it’s not fine wine—and it will start to move as it acclimates to different climates and seasons, even in a warehouse.”

Additional challenges include drying, according to Kris Young, director of sales at Olde Wood Limited in Magnolia, Ohio. “The most important thing is to make sure that the wood is properly dried and milled correctly,” she says. Olde Wood uses state-of-the-art drying and manufacturing equipment and thorough quality control measures to ensure that all of its products are milled to precise specifications.

Acclimation is another important consideration. Muscanell’s Harbaugh explains that with wider floors comes more movement across the width of the floor. She adds, “It takes contractors who understand the movement issues and know when to say wide flooring is not the right thing for this application. We have great relationships with craftsmen in very dramatic climate conditions who install wide plank floors every day and understand that with the proper acclimation and installation, a wide plank floor can live anywhere.”

Galleher’s Harrington agrees. “Some contractors aren’t aware of how much more important acclimation can be, even with some engineered products,” he says. “Contractors need to understand that wide plank solid flooring can pose special challenges, as some planks will bend a bit during acclimation and by their sheer size are difficult to straighten during installation.”

Proper education for the owner of the floor is critical as well, according to Sheoga’s Titus. “There seems to be an uptick in jobsite issues with the wider plank if humidity factors are not discussed and controlled,” she says. “Much of this responsibility must fall on the installer as he is the last person to have direct contact with the homeowner or end user.”

While all the manufacturers we spoke to agree that the trend toward longer and wider flooring will continue for quite some time, several warn that like all trends, this one will evolve over time.

Olde Wood’s Young says that fads are like bell-bottoms and “they will come and go,” while Moosewood’s Poirier says that trends are trends. “They are very fluid and can change quickly,” Poirier adds. “We may argue that the consumer can have too many choices and generally gets confused. The 20/80 rule still applies, meaning that 20% of your products will result in 80% of your sales.”

THE AUTHOR

Brett Miller is vice president of education and certification for the National Wood Flooring Association, and he has over 21 years of experience in the hardwood flooring industry, most recently as regional manager at Basic Coatings. The NWFA is an international not-for-profit trade association of nearly 3,000 wood flooring companies, dedicated to advancing and promoting the wood flooring industry.