

Hickory Springs celebrates 50 years in foam

Governor calls it an 'impressive achievement'

By David Perry -- *Furniture Today*, April 27, 2010

HICKORY, N.C. — Hickory Springs celebrated half a century of foam production with a gala party here last week that brought praise for the company from city, county and state officials.

Dozens of company employees mingled with dignitaries at the party, which featured a cake and an ice sculpture saluting the company's first 50 years as a foam maker. What began as a modest operation at one facility has grown into a business with six foam-pouring facilities plus a seventh that is a joint venture with a Canadian foam maker, company officials said.

Officials from across the state saluted Hickory Springs for its 50 years as a foam producer. North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue hailed the company's "impressive achievement" in a letter that was read aloud by a state official, while a county official declared: "The future is bright because you have a vision for the future." Hickory Mayor Rudy Wright said the meeting room should be the "Hickory Hall of Foam."

Dwayne Welch, executive vice president of Hickory Springs, was the master of ceremonies for speeches by government and company officials. He thanked the company's vendors and customers, and paid tribute to its employees.

"They bring their A-game to the company every day," he said. "There is no way we could be celebrating 50 years in foam without them."

Welch said the company's first foam-making facility was in Brookford, N.C., where flexible polyurethane foam was produced in boxes.



A cake celebrates Hickory Springs' 50 years as a foam producer.

The party was held on Earth Day, a fact that Welch noted in discussing the company's longstanding commitment to sustainability. A new sustainability project is about to be launched at a Hickory Springs plant in Conover, N.C., he said.

Hickory Springs' eco-friendly foam, Preserve, which is produced with a soy-based polyol, has earned "a great reception" in the market and gives its customers "a great marketing advantage at retail," Welch said.

Also addressing the group was Bobby Bush, son of Bob Bush Sr., one of the architects of the company, who died earlier this year. Bush, who oversees the company's foam efforts, said that product has a strong future. "

Bush said Hickory Springs has grown its foam business to a portfolio that includes 150 products, including Preserve, which debuted in 2005. The company's research and development team works to keep Hickory Springs a leader in the market, he said.

Hickory Springs CEO Don Coleman wrapped up the speeches by noting that the company is a global player that remains domestically based.

"We are a very fortunate company," he said. "Our company continues to grow."



Hickory Mayor Rudy Wright, left, presents a city proclamation honoring Hickory Springs to the company's Neil Underdown and Don Coleman.