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Hickory – the Furniture Capital of the World

HICKORY, NC - Innovative, talented, and creative artisans and entrepreneurs in the Hickory Metro have been hand crafting furniture since the early 1900s. Fast forward the clock almost 120 years to 2019 and furniture manufacturing is stronger than ever which affirms that the Hickory Metro continues to be “The Furniture Capital of the World.”

The Hickory Metro is made up of four counties including Catawba, Alexander, Burke and Caldwell, all are part of the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG). According to the last quarterly report from the WPCOG, the Hickory Metro boasts 189 furniture manufacturers that employ 14,697 people. There are also hundreds of manufactures that are suppliers to the furniture industry. Furniture manufacturing like most industries have had both good and bad times, as well as change, but the one constant for more than a century is that Hickory is synonymous with furniture.

“The Hickory Metro area is often referred to as ‘The Furniture Capital of the World’ because of the rich heritage and history of furniture manufacturing, design and craftsmanship throughout our region,” said Hickory Furniture Mart Executive Vice President & General Manager Tracey Trimble. “Hickory in particular is home to several multi-generational furniture factories and businesses that support the furniture community and produce the finest quality of furniture around.”

Trimble added that because of Hickory Furniture Mart’s strong reputation for selection, customization, quality craftsmanship and superior customer service, it continues to be one of North Carolina’s top destinations.

“Visitors from Charlotte to Dubai travel to Hickory every week to furnish their homes in an area well-known around the world for offering the highest quality of furniture handcrafted by generations of the most skilled artisans within the industry,” said Trimble.

To keep the industry strong during the next century it was imperative for furniture, government and education leaders to work together to train the next generations of employees. The Catawba Valley Furniture Academy began in 2014 at the East Campus of Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC) in a 6,000 square foot area. Lori Miller at the CVCC Workforce Development worked with five founding partners, Century, LEE, Vanguard, Lexington, and Sherrill to develop the structure of the program to meet the needs of the furniture industry as it exists today.

“The furniture academy quickly outgrew the 6,000 square feet and had a long waiting list of people who wanted to participate in the program,” said Catawba Valley Furniture Academy Project Manager Cindy Fulbright.

Two years after the academy began, CVCC, along with the Catawba County Board of Commissioners, located a 38,000 square foot building to expand the capacity of the furniture academy. The five founding partners, along with 30 supporting partners helped make the new location happen and all drive the program as it is today.

“Since 2014, there have been 239 graduates of the furniture academy with a 100% job placement said Fulbright. “The Furniture Academy strives to meet the needs of the furniture industry as it continues to grow and expand in our area.”

To learn more about the Catawba Valley Furniture Academy go to www.cvcc.edu/CCE/Workforce_Development/Furniture-Academy/.

“Furniture is why many visitors come to our area and we always enjoy talking with people from throughout the nation and world when they stop in the Visitors Center at the Hickory Metro Convention Center,” said Mandy Pitts Hildebrand, CEO of the Hickory Metro Convention Center and Visitors Bureau. “Visitors that are shopping for furniture have done their research and that is why they come to Hickory because they are ready to purchase furniture made by local craftsman that will last a lifetime and longer.”

This is the beginning of a series of articles about “Hickory – the Furniture Capital of the World.” The next story will be about the leaders in the furniture industry from the Hickory Metro. All stories will be posted on visithickorymetro.com under the “Things To Do” section under “Articles.”

To learn more about the importance of furniture in the Hickory Metro, go to HickoryFurniture.com or go to visithickorymetro.com.

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