

# The Link

Newsletter | September 2024



## A Message from HMA's President

by Matthew Netterville  
President, HMA



Fellow HMA Members, I hope that your summer has gone well.

As I sit at my desk and write this article, my mind goes wild thinking about our industry as a whole. This year definitely has been an interesting one for the hardwood industry. We have seen different sectors of our industry do well and we have seen many staples of the industry not do well at all. I believe

that everyone—in most manufacturing sectors, worldwide—is feeling the crunch of the American economy not being where we want it to be.

Interest rates have affected us all—whether you owe money or you don't. They seem to be one of the driving forces behind the economic downturn we are all facing. I do believe better days are on the horizon, and sometimes, downturns make us all tighten our belt and run leaner/meaner operations. But in my opinion, this is not the time to stick your head in the sand and keep the attitude that, "What's always worked will continue to work."

Looking at our businesses in downturns, we think to ourselves, "Where can we cut costs? What can we do better?" These are the times that our Associations can shine for us.

In good times, we all want to join together and have a cocktail, and our biggest concern is where we are going to go to dinner with our association buddies. But in bad times, it gives us the opportunity to talk real shop. This is when you can discuss what you're doing compared to what others are doing, and the casual brainstorming that happens makes you open your eyes and think outside the box. Large corporations call it "think tanks." I call it "social hour."

Why do you think that most hardwood business that don't participate in associations go out of business more often than the ones that do? I feel that they don't think outside the box because of their lack of association participation. Now I know this isn't always the case, but more often than not it is.

In saying all of this, I invite and welcome you to join us at the **HMA Fall Regional Meeting** in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, **October 15-17**, and not only enjoy the beauty of Iowa and hopefully the cooler weather, but the comradery of our great industry. Book your rooms and register now before we run out of availability. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Remember we're stronger together!

## Fall Regional Meeting Sponsors

Thank you to the following companies for going the extra mile to support HMA's Fall Regional Meeting.



There's still time to add your company to the list! Contact Ian Faight at [ian@hardwood.org](mailto:ian@hardwood.org) for details. Available opportunities include:

- **\$1,000 Gold Sponsor** | Choice of co-hosting Wednesday's bus transportation, lunch, cocktail reception, or dinner. *This sponsorship includes a complimentary registration valued at \$275!*
- **\$500 Silver Sponsor** | Choice of co-hosting the registration gift bags, Wednesday's bus refreshments, or Thursday's bus transportation!

## Road Trip Across the Hawkeye State

In just over a month, we'll be off to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. HMA's Fall Regional Meeting is set to take place **Tuesday–Thursday, October 15–17**. And if you have yet to register, secure hotel accommodations, and/or make your travel arrangements, now is the time to take care of business. You won't want to miss these exciting tours and the comradery that comes along with them. All the details can be found at [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org).

### Registration Costs

Please note, rates increase by \$25 on October 1.

- **\$275** | HMA Members, Promotion Contributors, and 2024 National Conference Exhibitors
- **\$600** | Non-Members

### Hotel Accommodations

Our home away from home will be the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Cedar Rapids Convention Center (350 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401).

Book your room **online** or by calling **319.731.4444** (press 0). Be sure to mention the Hardwood Manufacturers Association to secure our discounted room rate of \$179 plus taxes and fees. The hotel reservation deadline is **Wednesday, September 25**.

A hot breakfast will be available on Wednesday and Thursday, October 16 and 17.

### Air Travelers

If you're planning on flying into Cedar Rapids, look for flights into and out of Eastern Iowa Airport (CID).

### Schedule of Events

Our event will kick off with HMA's Fall Board of Directors Meeting on **Tuesday, October 15**. HMA members arriving early may attend, but participation is reserved for current Officers and Board members.

Over the following two days, attendees will tour a variety of facilities and get a scenic peek at the Hawkeye State's fall foliage.

On Wednesday, our first tour stop will take us to Edgewood, Iowa, home of **Kendrick, Inc.** Tim and Rhonda Kendrick started their family business more than 40 years ago with a sawmill and logging company. Now, they manufacture a variety of wood products—including cabinetry and home décor.

In Edgewood, we'll tour their Kendrick Forest Products sawmill, which produces 9 million board feet of lumber each year. We'll also tour their 36,000-square-foot, cabinet plant, Forever Cabinets by Kendrick; as well as their Kendrick Home and Shimlee operations, which print designs onto wooden signs that are sold across the country.



Our next stop will be in the town of Dyersville, Iowa, to walk the bases at the Field of Dreams movie site and sit down for lunch.

We'll then be on our way to **Bruggeman Lumber**, for a tour of their sawmill and dry kiln operations in Hopkinton, Iowa. Their facility produces 6 million board feet of premium hardwood lumber each year. In addition to green and kiln dry lumber, the company specializes in pallet material, rail ties, compost, and custom sawing for trailer flooring and farming operations. Their species mix includes red and white oak, basswood, ash, cherry, walnut, hard and soft maple, hackberry, and elm.

Our last tour for the day will cross industry lines for an inside look at the solutions and strategies deployed by **Cornerstone Building Brands** at their Monticello, Iowa, facility. The company is a leading manufacturer of metal roofs, wall systems, and structural components for commercial and residential construction under some of the industry's most well-known brands.

Day one wraps up with an HMA-style networking reception and dinner. Tripp Pryor, international program manager for the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), also will be with us to present the latest updates on the **European Union Deforestation Regulation**, actions AHEC is taking, what it means for our industry, and steps your company should take.



On day two, we'll visit Kendrick Forest Products sawmill in Muscatine, Iowa. Opened in 2021, the mill produces 6 million board feet of lumber each year, and specializes in walnut and white oak.

Before we head to the airport and part ways, we'll have one last stop to see the solid hardwood competition up close and personal at the **HNI** manufacturing plant in Muscatine. Founded in 1947, HNI is a global manufacturer of industry-leading brands of wood and laminate furniture for the home, office, hospitality, healthcare markets.

## Band Saw Filing Training

Northcentral Technical College (NTC), HMA's partner in education, is hosting a Band Saw Filing Certificate Program at its Wood Technology Center of Excellence in Antigo, Wisconsin. The four-week program runs **September 16–October 11**, and covers all the basic skills needed to get started in the saw filing trade.

Upon successful completion, employers from qualifying states will be eligible for a \$3,000 tuition reimbursement grant through the U.S. Forest Service. Funds are limited.



**Click here** for a program flier with registration details.

Contact Sharon Ruff at [ruff@ntc.edu](mailto:ruff@ntc.edu) or **715.803.1965** to ask questions and learn more.

## Unleashing the Potential of Hardwoods for Amazing Spaces

In NWH's recent blog, *The Universal Beauty of Hardwoods*, special attention is paid to recognizing the value of wood in our homes and everyday lives. To set the stage for the piece, NWH included famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic quote: "Wood is universally beautiful to man. It is the most humanly intimate of all materials."

As the allure of heirloom-quality furniture grows, what helps identify a piece as such can be found in its craftsmanship, materials, design, and durability.

Craftsmanship is marked as an important gauge because an artisan will utilize traditional techniques passed down through generations to guide the creation of a piece that exudes personal charm. We also see how wood selection is significant. Solid hardwoods—like alder, cherry, oak, maple, and walnut—are favored for their durability, aesthetic appeal, and ability to age gracefully.

Heirloom-quality furniture withstands the test of time. In fact, one of the defining qualities of heirloom-quality furniture is the development of a unique patina and character marks. The life around the piece of furniture is almost absorbed by the wood, creating a rich, storytelling artifact for future generations to cherish.

While many consumers may be put off by the higher initial investment of these pieces, they are a testament to the idea of investing in the future—while also investing in value.

Read the full article at [nwh.com](http://nwh.com).



## Manufacturing Day is Set for October 4



Manufacturing Day (MFG Day) is celebrated nationally on the first Friday in October. It is recognized as the manufacturing industry's best opportunity to inspire the next generation,

positively shift perceptions, and build the foundation for the manufacturing workforce of the future.

You can participate in this nationwide day of celebration by hosting an MFG Day event! By opening your doors to your community leaders, teachers, parents, and students, you are providing insight into the available careers in the hardwood industry. Not sure how to begin? Not to worry. MFG Day resources are available at [MFGday.com](http://MFGday.com).



# Staying Social with Real American Hardwood

by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA | Digital Community Manager, RAHC

In August, the Real American Hardwood Coalition (RAHC) took to social media to share our industry's stories. From providing maintenance tips to showcasing a stunning project to visiting a national food retailer's stores to sharing cost-saving tips, there was a lot of Real American Hardwood® chatter to consume across social platforms.

And the RAHC is closing in on 5,000 Instagram followers. If you're not one of them, consider this your personal invitation to follow [@realamericanhardwood](https://www.instagram.com/realamericanhardwood). Here's a brief recap for now.

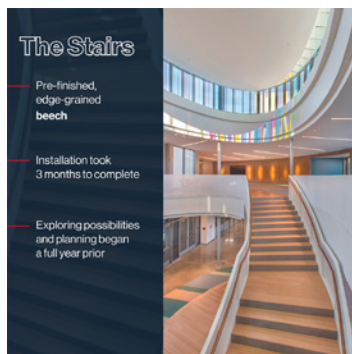
## A Timeless Investment

Real American Hardwood floors offer more than just good looks, they're easy to maintain and can increase the value of a home. The expand on these qualities, the RAHC shared a post telling followers why Real American Hardwood should be on their shortlist. See the post on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/realamericanhardwood).



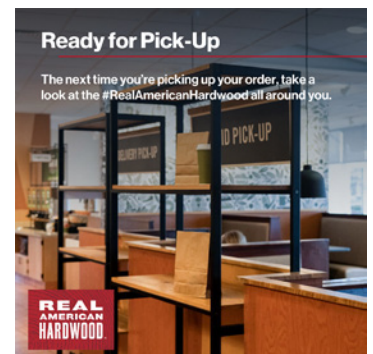
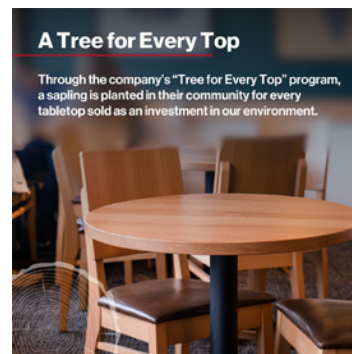
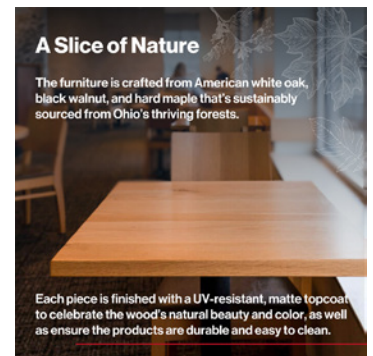
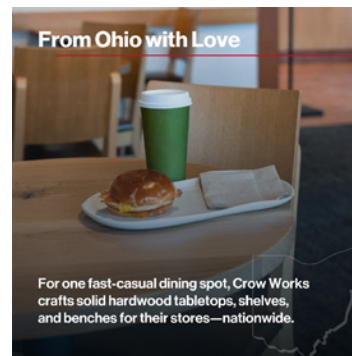
## A Diverse Mix

The RAHC's Hardwood Makeover series continued with a peek inside First Baptist Church of Arlington in Arlington, Texas. The diverse church features a diverse mix of Real American Hardwood millwork applications—including 1,700 square feet of 3-inch walnut paneling and edge-grain beech stairs. Take a look on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/realamericanhardwood).



## Nourishing with Nature

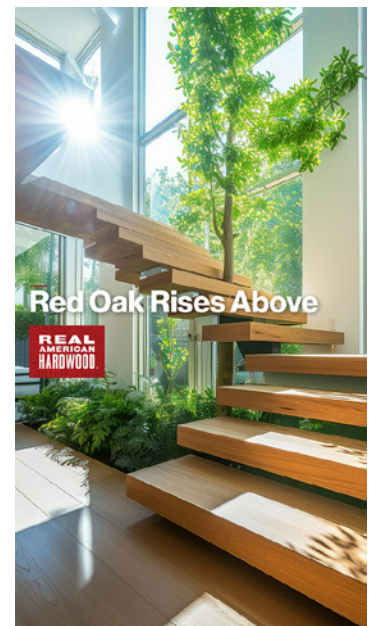
When it comes to selecting materials for high-traffic spaces in a fast-paced world, Real American Hardwood delivers excellent service. To share this story, the RAHC highlighted durable, commercial furniture crafted by Crow Works. The Ohio-based company crafts Real American Hardwood tabletops, shelves, and benches for the stores of one fast-casual dining spot—nationwide. See the post on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/realamericanhardwood).



## Red or White...Oak Floors?

Whether building a home or renovating an existing one, choosing flooring can be a stressful time—especially when it comes to setting budgets and selecting materials.

For homeowners who are attracted to the look of white oak, but not the price tag or limited availability, the RAHC shared a discussion between an interior designer and a manufacturer on why red oak is gaining popularity. See it on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/realamericanhardwood).



## The Latest from Capitol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



### HF and AHEC Advocate Trade Flexibility Before USTR

On August 8, Hardwood Federation team members Dana Lee Cole and Pat Rita, along with American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) Executive Director Mike Snow met with members of the U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) office to discuss the latest developments regarding the European Union

Deforestation Regulations (EUDR). The Federation, AHEC, and most of the wood products industry sectors, have grave concerns about the impact these rules will have on European export markets if imposed as planned in December. Mike Snow provided detailed analysis of the continued issues hardwood exporters will face, as well as some proposed strategies the U.S. government could use to level the playing field should the rules move forward. USTR staff was greatly appreciative of the industry's insight and action to date, and has requested continued communications and updates.

### Federation Works with Sen. Shaheen to Plug Red Oak in Annual Defense Bill

As part of this year's reauthorization of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we are pleased to report that as a result of our work with her office, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) has secured report language as part of the Senate NDAA bill to press the Department of Defense and General Services Administration on switching to red oak and away from apitong for its truck trailer beds.

### Hardwood Federation, Wood Products Allies Comment on Product Category Rule

On August 29, the Federation submitted a comment to UL Solutions, an independent certification entity, on the Product Category Rule (PCR) for structural wood products. This PCR, which outlines requirements for Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) focusing on wood, comes up for renewal every five years. The Federation has been working with industry allies, including the Hardwood Manufacturers Association, American Wood Council, Decorative Hardwood Association, the National Hardwood Lumber Association, and the National Wood Flooring Association. The Federation advocates for minimal changes to the current version to prevent an extended comment period, an exercise which could understate the carbon value of wood products within a revised PCR.

### Federation Advocates for Biomass

The Federation has been advocating for biomass on multiple fronts—both in Congress and within the Administration. On July 25, the Senate appropriations committee adopted Federation-supported language confirming biomass as "carbon neutral" within its version of the **FY 2025 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies funding bill**. This follows in the wake of House passage on July 24 of its version of the **FY 2025 Interior funding bill** that also affirms classification of forest products biomass as "carbon neutral" and moves the important definition closer to the finish line. Specifically, the provision directs EPA, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Energy to recognize forest-based biomass as carbon neutral in any environment and energy policymaking.

- On August 2, the Federation filed **comments** with the Department of the Treasury urging federal officials to classify biomass as "carbon neutral," thereby qualifying for **new tax credits** intended to promote "clean electricity," pursuant to provisions within the Inflation Reduction Act. This will benefit the industry by creating incentives to grow markets for residuals and mitigate energy costs associated with hardwood facility and mill operations.
- On August 14, the Federation co-signed a letter including 55 industry allies to USDA Secretary Vilsack, advocating for multiple "markets for the full spectrum of forest products," including biomass. The letter focuses on the importance of increasing demand for low-grade wood and residuals, which support sustainable forest management and reduce wildfire risk. The letter goes on to state that "biomass markets ... support sawmill operations and the critical markets those mills provide."

### USDA Solicits Wood Product Industry Nominations for Carbon Market Advisory Group

On August 13, USDA **announced** its intent to move forward with establishing an "advisory council" that will inform the Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Program, on which the Federation submitted comments in late June. As relayed to Federation staff in conversations this spring, USDA states that the council will include 32 members and will represent "farmers, ranchers, private forest landowners, [and] the forestry and forest products industry," among others. The notice further stipulates that the council will include "not fewer than four representatives of private forest landowners or the forestry and forest products industry." The USDA will accept nominations through October 15, 2024.



## Easy Ways to Utilize AI in Your Business

by Sara Skwaryk

Communications and Administrative Coordinator, HMA

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) has been tremendous. AI has many applications, however finding the solutions that work best for your business may leave you feeling a bit overwhelmed. If utilized thoughtfully, your business can leverage AI to streamline operations and maximize production.

In the *Forbes* article, **AI As a Growth Engine: 7 Ways Small Businesses Can Use AI to Scale**, there are several practical uses for AI in conducting operations within your business. Here are a few ideas:



### Balancing Inventory & Supply Chain Management

AI has the ability to take your supply chain and inventory data to create predictive analytics that forecast your future demand—helping you better prepare for fluctuating periods of business.

### Streamlining Business Operations

Administrative tasks can be taken on by AI to help reduce errors and allow current resources to be free for more opportunities for strategic planning.

### Improving Product & Service Recommendations

Predicting customer behavior and enhancing shopping experiences are possible with AI. The technology can recognize purchasing patterns to suggest similar products or services.

### Enhancing Security Measures

AI can enhance your cyber security by identifying and responding to any potential threats, giving your business peace of mind in safeguarding important information—like customer data.

If you aren't utilizing the capabilities of AI within your business, consider taking on one or two of the above applications to get started.

Learn more at [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com).



*The Link* is published each month exclusively for members of the Hardwood Manufacturers Association. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the HMA; HMA staff welcomes comments and questions.

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