

# Get to know the 2023 NEWH ICON of Industry

**L**ee Blair is a beloved industry veteran known for his ability to form long-lasting personal relationships and for the passion he has for mentoring others. His accomplished hospitality career spans almost four decades and is filled with clients, mentees and peers who have positively impacted his professional life while also transforming his personal life along the way.



**LEE BLAIR**



General Manager of the  
Commercial Americas  
Milliken Hospitality



Lee began his career in 1983 working in one of Milliken's manufacturing plants where he gained invaluable experience in the production of textile fabrics. In 1985, he joined the newly formed Hospitality business, was Rookie of the Year by 1986, and was on the cross-functional product development team responsible for the first in-register carpet tile at the Marriott World Center in Orlando in 1988. By 1997 he ascended to the position of Vice President, Milliken Hospitality, managing the team that led the industry in volume and innovation. In 2004, Lee joined Mohawk Industries and led the Durkan business for a decade before moving to a global position in sales and business development. He returned to his roots at Milliken Hospitality in 2019 and was promoted to General

Manager of the Commercial Americas in 2023. Throughout his career, he has practiced servant leadership at every organization.

A world-class storyteller, Lee believes in the power of immersing himself in a subject until he finds a way to capture the true essence of what could be and what should be. His open nature and sharp wit draw others to him and create a culture centered on working hard, winning, and having fun. As the industry knows well, there's always an abundance of laughter with Lee, often in the form of dry wit or self-deprecating humor. That's because Lee truly believes that laughter has the power to transcend cultures and individual differences, and is the medium upon which we can all find common ground.

From 1986 until 2019, Lee hosted hundreds of Hospitality leaders in design, ownership and purchasing at the Masters golf tournament in Augusta, GA and is most proud of the bonds created and the resulting impacts felt throughout the world of Hospitality.

When not inspiring his team at work, Lee can be found at home or at the beach in South Carolina with his wife, and often, his children who are of utmost importance to him. He considers himself blessed beyond measure to have found a home in the Hospitality industry and with NEWH.

"At the end of the day, it's really all about people. I hope my legacy lives on through the connections I have made and the networks I have created with the amazing folks in our industry."



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Each year NEWH gives out its most prestigious award, the **ICON of Industry**. The award celebrates the leaders of the manufacturing side of hospitality, those who have uniquely impacted the industry through their innovative work, consistently dedicated their time and efforts to community or industry outreach through education and/or corporate giving, and been doing business in hospitality for more than 30 years. In addition, a \$7,500 annual scholarship is awarded to an exemplary student in the recipient's honor. The scholarship recipient's travel and lodging to the award gala is paid by NEWH, Inc.