

Industry News

Kidz World adds color, fun to Tupelo market

By Ray Allegrezza

CALHOUN CITY, Miss. — While Kidz World, a domestic maker of juvenile furniture, may only be a few months old, its parent, Med-Lift & Mobility, has supplied lift chairs and adjustable beds to the home furnishings industry for decades.

Both companies exhibited at this month's Tupelo Furniture Market, where Kidz World made its debut in a dedicated showroom next to Med-Lift.

Kidz World President Alison Nichols, daughter of A.D. Blount, who owns both Med-Lift and Sleep-Ezz adjustable beds, was busy in Tupelo showing buyers her line of colorful juvenile furniture.

Most of the assortment is licensed product, including well-known character licenses such as Nickelodeon's Dora the Explorer, Go Diego Go! and SpongeBob Squarepants. The company also has licensed goods from Mossy Oak, Major League Baseball, Marvel's "Spider-Man 3," the National Football League, the National Hockey League and a host of colleges.

Kidz World is using those names to spark sales of its assortment of recliners, chaise-skirted and non-skirted rockers, club chairs, sleepover sofas, chairs, headboards, futon mattresses, bunk bed mattresses, cube ottomans and video rockers.

Most of the items carry



In the midst of a sea of brown sofas, this colorful display helped entice buyers into the Kidz World showroom during the recent Tupelo Furniture Market.

suggested retails ranging from \$79 to \$149.

In addition to piggybacking product to well-established licenses, the company also is hoping to garner favor from buyers by virtue of the fact that all of the furniture is made domestically in a manufacturing plant in this Mississippi city.

In fact, a grant from the state of Mississippi helped facilitate the launch of Kidz World, according to vice president of sales Dwight Griffin.

"We are not so much selling furniture as we are the sizzle that comes from great licenses and a made-in-America story," he said.

All of the fabric, with the exception of the material used on the Mossy Oak furniture, is also domestically made by Premier Printing, a mill in Sherman, Miss.

The company has already conducted successful in-store events with a number of furniture retailers including Lynchburg, Va.-based Schewels.

"This June, Schewels had a special event that gave kids the chance to have their picture taken with SpongeBob. In addition to games and refreshments, the store also had an hourly drawing for a free SpongeBob recliner. They had a full house that day," Griffin said.

"When you've got kids in the car and they see a sign outside a store that says SpongeBob is inside, they find a way to get their parents to take them inside," he added. "And in today's market, getting the customer into the store is an obstacle. We think we can help retailers overcome that challenge."



Kidz World has obtained the rights to license a number of Nickelodeon properties, including Dora the Explorer and SpongeBob Squarepants.

Reilly to lead AICO sales

PICO RIVERA, Calif. — Case goods and upholstery resource AICO has named Chuck Reilly vice president of sales.

Reilly was most recently senior vice president of sales and marketing for futon and case goods manufacturer Lifestyle Solutions. Earlier, he was a furniture buyer for JCPenney and held sales management and executive positions for the Lane Co.



"We're fortunate to have had the opportunity to hire Chuck. With so many good candidates available, it became quickly apparent that Chuck was the right person for AICO. He will contribute to AICO's forward momentum and growth," said Larry Rinaldi, president of AICO.

Reilly will report to Martin Ploy, executive vice president of AICO. He replaces Mike Genrich, who had left the company.

Sheehan joining Lane

TUPELO, Miss. — Dan Sheehan has been named senior vice president of sales and marketing at Lane.

Sheehan, who spent 14 years in various sales, marketing and product development posts at appliance producer Whirlpool Corp., will oversee marketing, advertising and sales.



"I am pleased that Dan is joining our talented team at Lane," said Lane President Greg Roy. "His experience in sales and marketing will be a tremendous asset as we continue to develop fresh and innovative furniture to drive results for our customers."

Sheehan is assuming many of the duties handled by Roy before he was named president of April.

Affordable fills 2 new jobs

HOULKA, Miss. — Promotional upholstery manufacturer Affordable Furniture has appointed Ron Teeter vice president of marketing and merchandising and Charles Boxx vice president of administration and finance.

Both are new positions.

Teeter has over 25 years of industry experience, most recently as a sales representative for Affordable in the Northeast. He has held positions with retailer JCPenney and with manufacturers Barcalounger, BenchCraft, Washington Furniture and American Furniture.



Boxx has more than 19 years experience in manufacturing — 11 in the furniture industry. Before joining Affordable, Boxx was information technology director of Golden Chair, and he also has held positions at Washington Furniture and Kensington Furniture.



Teeter and Boxx both report to Jim Sneed, Affordable's president and CEO.

Teeter will oversee the company's marketing and product development efforts.

Boxx will direct administrative functions and coordinate operational systems and financial reporting.