

Industry News

AICO awards White, Salman, other sales reps

LAS VEGAS — Don White, who has managed the north Texas and Oklahoma sales territory for AICO/Amini Innovation

Corp. for more than 11 years, was named the company's Sales Professional of the Year 2008 at an appreciation awards

banquet during the recent Las Vegas Market.

In addition to a trophy, White received a diamond-studded sapphire ring.

"Don is extremely dedicated to AICO and is always thinking about new ways to bring AICO to his dealers," said Mike Genrich, vice president of sales. "He is always there for his customers who count on him for product, service and advice, and his reputation precedes him in his territory."

The furniture resource also honored Jake Salman as Rising Star for 2008. He joined AICO to assist with the Southern California territory and over the years has created the international territory for the



AICO executives and sales award winners gather at an awards banquet in Las Vegas.



Michael Amini, left, and Mike Genrich, right, of AICO present Don White with the company's Sales Professional of the Year award.

company, spending most of his time overseas successfully developing new accounts.

Genrich also presented the President's Club award to Jonathan Brancati, Hank Butler, Jake Gray, Joshua Kauffman, Jeff Linsley, Keith Linsley, Frank Lorenzo, Jim Sanders, Natalie Smith, Rob Wester and Don White. The award honors representatives with the highest volume of sales.

Rob Wester and his associates also were honored for opening the most new ac-

counts in 2008.

"Over the years, AICO has always been fortunate in having a strong team backing our company," said Michael Amini, AICO founder and CEO, "and I couldn't think of anyone more deserving than Don White to receive this prestigious award this year. He has worked very hard, and his successes showcase that commitment to the company. I also want to give a sincere congratulations and thank-you to all our award winners."

► Universal

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The Paula Deen Home collection will launch at the March 23-24 premarket with more than 50 SKUs of bedroom, dining room, home office, home entertainment, accent furniture and upholstery.

Deen is the host of "Paula's Best Dishes" on TV's Food Network and also publishes a

magazine called *Cooking with Paula Deen*, which claims a readership of 7.5 million.

The wood portion of the furniture line will be available in dark wood and whitewash finishes and will be in two style segments — relaxed traditional and casual.

Universal sister company Craftmaster Furniture is producing the upholstery, which will have 25 fabrics exclusive to the Paula Deen line. Customers also can special order

from the thousands of other fabrics available through Craftmaster.

The company said styles are geared toward a wide audience who appreciate relaxed, casual furnishings.

Set to ship by early August, the line will hit retail floors before Labor Day, he said. Four-piece bedrooms and eight-piece dining sets — including a table and six chairs and a buffet hutch unit — are targeted to retail from \$2,799

to \$3,299.

Realizing the broad reach of her TV program and cooking magazine, Universal approached the Paula Deen organization last fall. As talks progressed, the Universal team then visited Deen's home in Savannah, Ga., to learn more about her sense of style.

Over about eight visits, the team found a broad mix of pieces she had collected over the years. These ultimately inspired the Paula Deen Home collection.

The agreement was finalized earlier this year. Officials did not reveal the length of the partnership other than to say that it is long-term.

A native of Albany, Ga., Deen said in an interview with *Furniture/Today* that she has lived in Savannah for 21 years and that her cooking show has completed its ninth season.

"My audience is everybody who was raised where there is a lot of food and love," she said.

According to her organization, 87% of the readers of her magazine are female, have a median household income of \$63,407, and a median home value of \$182,827.

Deen also has a licensing partnership for area rugs with Kaleen.

She described herself as having eclectic tastes, ranging from Asian-inspired to shabby chic. Those tastes, she said, help define the nature of Paula Deen Home.

"I like so many things, and if they are put together properly, it is stunning," she said. "Some of the furniture is shabby chic and has a distressed, casual look. We also have pieces that are solid wood that have more of a formal look. These pieces can be mixed and matched."

She said she has enjoyed working alongside the team at Universal in developing the line.

"We saw this as a great opportunity to have Universal come through my house and look at all my furniture," she said. "They looked at everything I have been collecting over the years and duplicated those in an affordable way."

"The team at Universal is just unbelievable," she added. "You show them something and they get it."

The line can be seen at premarket and at the spring High Point Market, which opens April 25, at Universal's showroom at 2622 Uwharrie Road in High Point.

Deen plans to visit the showroom during the April market.

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