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### **TLS BY DESIGN NAMED 2010 SAGE AWARD FINALIST**

HIGH POINT, N.C. – TLS by Design, a Portland, Ind.-based manufacturer of residential and commercial furnishings, was named a 2010 finalist in the prestigious Sage Award competition, a program recognizing environmental innovators from whom others in the residential furniture industry can learn.

The Sage Awards are sponsored by the American Home Furnishings Alliance and Cargill's BiOH® polyols business unit. The competition was open to retail, manufacturing and supplier companies in both the furniture and bedding industries.

The finalists were recognized during the industry's 2010 Sustainability Summit held in Asheville, N.C., in December.

In business only five years, TLS by Design is the youngest and smallest company to be named a finalist in the three years of the Sage Award competition. Located in a small community surrounded by a rural area, TLS is an innovative, family-run business striving to follow an environmentally-responsible path.

Seventy percent of the company's products are produced and sourced within a 75-mile radius of Portland. When the company's upholstery source went out of business, TLS hired some of the displaced factory workers and moved them into a nearby pole barn. They outgrew the pole barn in six months, but, instead of building a new facility, they purchased a local factory that had housed brush and broom production for most of the last century. They have repurposed the building section by section, equipping it with materials and machinery purchased at auction, including old bowling alley lanes recycled into a "new" 60-foot long cutting table.

The company and its founders, Elizabeth Updike and her husband, Jeff Day, now have their eyes trained on more eco-friendly products. They are using foam made with a soy-based ingredient to replace a portion of the petroleum-based ingredients normally found in seat cushion foam. Chairs and sofas include springs that are made of recycled steel purchased from a nearby, fifth generation spring-making firm.

TLS is also transitioning to more recycled content in its products where possible. On the case goods side, they source wood from local forests and mills and have completed development of new water-based stains that they are now testing.

The Sage Award is judged by a panel of furniture and bedding industry leaders, environmental journalists, sustainability experts and furniture industry journalists. They included Ray Allegrezza, editor-in-chief of *Furniture Today*; Mary Frye, president of the Home Furnishings Independents Association; Heather Gadonniex, managing partner of MindClick, a San Francisco-based consultancy specializing in

sustainable business; and Leslie Guevarra, associate editor for Greener World Media, an online publishing group focused on sustainable business.

Also Susan Inglis, executive director of the Sustainable Furnishings Council; Robyn Griggs Lawrence, editor-in-chief of *Natural Home Magazine*; Jean Nayar, former editor-in-chief of *Woman's Day Special Interest Magazines* and author of "Green Living by Design;" Richard Prisco, professor of industrial design, department of technology, Appalachian State University; Ryan Trainer, president of the International Sleep Products Association; and Steve Walker, assistant director of the Furniture Manufacturing and Management Center at North Carolina State University.

The judges noted the tenacity of TLS by Design and commended its efforts to source locally, to repurpose equipment, buildings and materials and to partner with other local companies in its furniture production. These collaborative efforts set TLS apart and make it an example for other companies in the industry, the judges stated.

Flexsteel Industries of Dubuque, Iowa, also was named a finalist in the 2010 competition. Zenda Leather, an Uruguay-based leather producer with a 50,000-square-foot U.S. distribution center in Hickory, N.C., was the winner of the 2010 award.

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*The American Home Furnishings Alliance, based in High Point, N.C., is the largest association of home furnishings companies in the world and represents more than 200 leading furniture manufacturers and distributors, plus about 150 suppliers to the furniture industry worldwide. More information on the Sage Award can be found at [www.SageAward.org](http://www.SageAward.org).*

*Cargill is an international provider of food, agricultural and risk management products and services. Its BiOH® brand polyols were the first commercially successful bio-based industrial polyols used in flexible foams. Derived from natural vegetable oils such as soybean oil, BiOH polyols help flexible polyurethane manufacturers reduce their environmental footprint and market their choice to downstream customers.*