

Nomination for  
**Business Conservationist of the Year**

*Outstanding effort by any firm, business or industry that has displayed an unwavering commitment to conservation or the public's ability to enjoy natural resources.*

## **Kellex Seating**



*Kellex Seating Volunteer Workday at 2018 Valdese Lakeside Park*

Whether in their community, in their factory or in their industry, Kellex Seating goes above and beyond to conserve and protect our natural resources and reduce waste.

### **In their community**

It only took Kellex Seating about 2 minutes to decide that **donating \$100K to conserve 300 acres of land** was the right thing to do.

The Town of Valdese hosted executives from the largest companies in Valdese to update them on town processes and strategies. At that time, the effort to acquire 300 acres on Lake Rhodhiss for a passive park was revealed and that \$100K was needed to complete the land purchase. Immediately, Chris Rice, President of



Kellex Seating, stood up and pledged the needed amount. This pledge kicked off an ongoing commitment to the success of Valdese Lakeside Park.

After the ribbon cutting at the property in March 2018, Kellex wanted to do more to ensure visitors had a positive experience at the park. The idea was born for a series of 8-hour workdays at the park with Kellex employees from different departments and different skill sets to spend the day together volunteering and enjoying the outdoors.

For the first workday, in October 2018, 10 employees of Kellex Seating arrived at Valdese Lakeside Park –

complete with chain saws and a chipper shredder! The cove that community volunteers cleared of trash in March, now needed to be cleared of dead wood. Members of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation attended to share their expertise. Kellex family members spent the day hauling, sawing, chipping and loading wood from an area that eventually will become the kayak launch and fishing pier area of the park. Mulch from chipper was spread at park to fill in low areas on the greenway trail. **(Workday at park - 10 employees - 80 hours)**

At the second work session, thirteen employees spent the day at the park again cutting and hauling down and dead trees from the cove. They also started working on the park's future picnic area where a recent ice storm had left trees in dangerous positions. This time, the debris (5 dump truck loads) was taken to the Valdese Wastewater Treatment Plant where it was shredded into mulch for free pickup from members of the community. **(Workday at park - 13 employees - 104 hours)**

In addition to cleaning and clearing, Kellex also creates.

They created a 30 x 7-foot pollinator garden that is a part of the NC Butterfly Highway with native plants that will attract butterflies, bees and birds. Settlemyre Nursery, a local family owned business designed the Butterfly Garden using native pollinator plants.

Catawba River Wildlife Coalition (a new NCWF chapter), Friends of the Valdese Rec and Kellex Seating worked together for cost of the plants, mulch and volunteer labor. Upon completion, a NCWF Butterfly Garden sign was installed along with labels for the plants to help educate those coming to Valdese Lakeside Park. **(Create Butterfly Garden - 2 employees, 2 volunteers – 16 hours; plus continuing to water, weed, maintain)**



Each week since the garden creation, Settlemyre Nursery has been getting requests for pollinator plants from home gardeners. Because of that, Settlemyre's is adding more pollinator plants to their inventory. Thus, the garden is a gift that keeps on giving as more bee and butterfly pit stops are planted.

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Continuing to create, Kellex Seating family members built four 8-foot picnic tables from kiln dried sustainable wood for Valdese Lakeside Park. During a past workday, employees had cut down several large leaning dead trees to get the picnic area ready. The tables were delivered and setup on July 3 – just in time for Independence Day celebrations. Also, perfect timing for the State of NC's July 4<sup>th</sup> exemption from a fishing license. As with any project, Kellex goes above and beyond. The tables blend beautifully with the surroundings. And, for a park that only has existing trails from select cutting this really enables the community to enjoy the natural resources at the park. **(Build, deliver and setup picnic tables at park - 12 employees, 60 hours)**



*Chris Rice and Kellex Family at 2018 Ribbon Cutting for 300-acre Valdese Lakeside Park Property*

*We pledged to the Valdese Lakeside Park because Public parks and greenways enable ALL of us to enjoy the natural beauty of North Carolina! The opportunity to secure large tracts of land for the public has become increasingly challenging with development and growth of our population. We, at Kellex, are active members of our community and are honored to have the opportunity to help secure a BEAUTIFUL park for ALL of us to enjoy. My family and I enjoy parks throughout the state and are thankful to have the Lakeside Park so close to home. Chris Rice, President, Kellex Seating.*

With the company's commitment to parks and wildlife habitats, employees have gotten more involved.

Kellex Executive Quez Little joined the Friends of the Valdese Rec (FVR) board in 2018 and serves as their Treasurer. FVR is the organization that led the charge in the Town of Valdese acquiring the Valdese Lakeside Park property.

Kellex family member Pam Beam is a charter member of the Catawba River Wildlife Coalition (chapter of NCWF) in 2018. She is a Master Gardener and was instrumental in installing the Butterfly Garden.

## **In their factory**

Sound environmental practices are the foundation of Kellex's manufacturing process. Their products are made of renewable and/or recyclable materials, and they're built to last. A few examples are:

## Exposed Woods



- They use sustainable hardwoods certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Appalachian Hardwoods Manufacturing Inc. (AHMI) and/or Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI).
- They only use woods that are resourced, handcrafted and hand-finished in the USA by local artisans in North Carolina.
- They only use water-based dyes, not petroleum or chemically based products, because they are biodegradable and safe for our employees.

## Frames

- They only use frame wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Appalachian Hardwoods Manufacturing Inc. (AHMI) and/or Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI).
- Frame padding materials are made of 100% recycled polyester fibers.
- Metal springs and bases are made of lead-free steel that is at least 90% recycled material.
- Their wood glues are water based.
- They reuse all our run-off and scrap material.

## In the factory

- They heat the entire 354,000-square foot factory with scrap wood and sawdust generated by our onsite sawmill.
- They ensure that our factory releases only steam, not any negative emissions.

## In their industry

Kellex is an early adopter in a new social enterprise being launched in Burke County called Material Return. This is an initiative to recycle material and Kellex has been working with Burke Development Inc and the Industrial Commons. Kellex has created a sorting and aggregation site to collect industrial textile waste from the region's textile and furniture manufacturers. The waste is processed at a nearby fabric reclamation facility.



It is then brought back to the region to be spun into a new yarn and eventually a new fabric. This is a “circular economy” project where waste is seen as a raw material and transformed back into the same material it started as. Material Return will be able to collect waste and turn it back into a new product all within 75 miles. The project is the first of its kind being done with such a low carbon footprint in the United States. Kellex has supported the project from its inception and participated in the planning team throughout 2018 as the concept came together and sought funding. The company has also donated use of a tractor trailer – a critical piece in making the project possible. Kellex has been at the forefront of finding a long term and sustainable solution for the region's industrial waste.

## **Summary**

Kellex Seating is an American Manufacturer who refuses to send jobs overseas. They make their products in the US with local partners. They care about their employees, their customers and their community. Many companies will say that, but if you ask anyone in Valdese about Kellex – the response will be “it is a great place to work, they respect their employees” or “that company has done so much for our town.”

With their substantial commitment to Valdese Lakeside Park, responsible practices within their factory and leading the way as an early adopter of a recycling program in their industry, Kellex Seating has shown a true commitment to conservation (conserving land and materials) and the public’s ability to enjoy natural resources (conserving park land, bettering the land for the public’s enjoyment, creating a pollinator garden) by giving of their time, money and expertise. Doing the right thing just comes natural to the Kellex family.

