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Twenty-One Students Begin a Career in the Hardwood Industry

MEMPHIS, TENN. – The National Hardwood Lumber Association celebrated the graduation of the 181st class of the Inspector Training School on Friday, November 18, 2016. Fourteen students completed the 12-week traditional program with an additional seven students completing the Progressive Program for a total of twenty-one graduates.

The commencement program was filled with celebration, reflection and several guest speakers. Acting as Master of Ceremonies Dana Spessert, NHLA Chief Inspector welcomed the families who had supported the students during their time away from home and traveled so far to celebrate the accomplishments of the 181st Class. Executive Director Lorna Christie also welcomed the students and families and made special recognition of the legacy of the School and the alumni in the room including special guest Mr. Jack Vaughn, himself a graduate of the 4th Class.

Nick Thompson of Thompson Appalachian Hardwoods, Inc. delivered an inspirational address to an attentive room of novice lumber inspectors. Nick remarked on his time at the School and how instructor Rich Hascher supported and encouraged him despite the fact that he “acted like a punk.” “The School has helped me, our family company and our small community in Huntland, Tennessee. Over the last 5 years our company has grown from 30 employees to 100 employees, thanks to what this School taught me and my family,” said Nick. “You are following in the footsteps of great men and women, welcome to the club.”

In a speech filled with lumber grading antidotes, many of them seasoned with humor, class president Kyle Dash had a multi-layered message for graduates. “We’ve done it, it’s been a stressful 12-weeks of memorization, quizzes and board runs but we did it,” exclaimed Dash. “We are the future of the hardwood industry, and I can’t wait to see you all in 15 years as leaders of your companies and the industry. The future is bright and it’s literally in your hands.”

Veteran Instructor Rich Hascher, also had a few stories to recount and inspirational thoughts to send with these men as they embark on a career in the hardwood industry. “Today is not the end all,” stated Hascher. “Instead it is the beginning all. And where that leads is up to you.”

Graduates were:

- Kyle Gordon Blough – Blough Lumber Sales, Inc. of Alto, MI
- Silas Blough – Blough Hardwoods of Clarksville, MI
- Kevin Collinsworth – Hughes Hardwood International, Inc of Collinwood, TN
- Danny J. Crone – Crone Lumber Company of Martinsville, IN
- Kyle N. Dash – Gutches Lumber Company, Inc. of Java Village, NY
- John Robert Dudley III – Dudley Hardwoods of Opelika, AL
- James A. Farmer – Lewis Brothers Lumber Co. Inc. of Northport, AL
- Chase Gibson - Millwood Lumber, Inc. of Port Washington, OH
- Andrew Hollis – McClain Forest Products, LLC of Alton, MO
- James R. Lee – Thompson Appalachian Hardwoods, Inc. of Huntland, TN
- Michael Lee Lewis, Jr. – Lewis Lumber and Milling of Nashville, TN

- Brooks Murphy – Tompkinsville, KY
- James Robert Baird Murray, Jr. – Creative Woodworks, Inc. of Dallas, GA
- Nick Nehls – Dorchester, WI
- Patrick Pacaud Nelson – Hanafee Brothers Sawmill Co of Jackson, TN
- Chad F. Niman – University of Kentucky of Cynthiana, KY
- Jacob Randolph – Landmark Wood Products, Inc. of Paoli, IN
- LaMont Rogers – Atlanta Hardwoods of Clarksville, TN
- Caleb L. Schlager – Trackside Hardwoods of Marquand, MO
- Jared Staley – Pike Lumber Co., Inc. of Brazil, IN
- John Floyd Swearingin – Big River Cypress & Hardwood, Inc. of Blountstown, FL

Nathan Hascher president elect of the Lumbermen’s Club of Memphis, with assistance from Mr. Jack Vaughn presented the individual achievement awards.

Outstanding individual awards recipients were as follows:

- James R. Lee – John Thomson Award for Highest Overall Average
- Kyle Dash – Howard Hanlon Award for Second Highest Overall Average
- James R. Lee – Westside Hardwood Club Award for Highest Board Run Average
- Kevin Collinsworth – J.P. Hamer Award for Most Improved Student
- Jacob Randolph – South Central Lumbermen’s Award for Best Attitude/Citizenship
- Kyle Nash – Lumbermen’s Club of Memphis Leadership Award
- Brooks Murphy – Willard Scholarship Award
- Brooks Murphy and Nick Nehls – Inspector Training School Educational Foundation Scholarship

The NHLA Inspector Training School has a proud and rich 68-year history; graduating more than 7,200 students since its conception. The Program teaches the rules and applications of the NHLA grading system and prepares students for a career in the hardwood industry. This unique program has earned worldwide respect, consequently attracting students from throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Africa, South America and Asia.

Enrollment is now open Block 1 of the Progressive Program which begins November 28, 2016 and for the 182nd class, which begins on January 4, 2017 in Memphis, Tennessee. To enroll or learn more about the program please visit www.nhla.com/school.

The world’s largest and oldest hardwood industry association, NHLA represents companies and individuals that produce, use and sell North American hardwood lumber, or provide equipment, supplies or services to the hardwood industry. It was founded in 1898 to establish a uniform system of grading rules for the measurement and inspection of hardwood lumber. Since 1979, its headquarters have been in Memphis. To learn more about NHLA, please visit www.nhla.com.

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