

# AIWD

1st Quarter 2024

*insider*  
**NEWS**

*In this issue:*

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*Plus:*

Director's Chair by Kelly Horton  
The Boardroom by Tim Robb  
New Members  
Convention Update

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## Passing the Torch:

### *What I've learned from Being on the AIWD Board*



*Lehighton, PA* – I am sure that the people that have been on the AIWD Board of Directors have all had different experiences for lots of reasons. Here's my own story.

I came onto the Board replacing Jason Stonesifer (C&O Distributors), who was the outgoing president at the time. He promised me that it's "not a big-time commitment," and he would be there for me. That was great, until he "decided" to get COVID 19, missing the Colorado convention he was supposed to preside over! A last-minute reshuffling of board duties saved that little hiccup and we all got through it just fine. However, as soon as we returned from the show, I stepped into a board that was hustling

to find a new Executive Director. Oh, didn't I mention that? Yep. In Jason's capacity as President, he had the unfortunate task of letting our current E.D. go just 2 months prior to the show, leaving Diane and the board with an additional set of big responsibilities to juggle. The board was already working extra hours to keep the AIWD running smoothly during the post-covid chaos, while simultaneously trying to maintain our own businesses. "Not a big-time commitment" would have been an accurate statement, had it only included "...as long as you don't count *THIS* year." Thanks, Jason!!!

The hunt for a new E.D. was challenging, and we stumbled upon a great candidate that was one of our own. Kelly Horton was on the AIWD Board of Directors as our SW Region Representative and was fully involved in our hiring process & struggles. We knew that he was on the same page as us as to what we were looking for. So, when he proposed applying for the job, we had a meeting, and I think we all felt that this was going to be a great option for us. He interviewed well, and I think years from now, the board at the time of his hiring will be able to look back on the decision we made and know we did a great thing for the AIWD.

Since hiring Kelly, it has been an entirely different experience for me from the first 8 months I served. Most of the stress is on Kelly and Diane. Our role now being that of a voting member on their ideas and the decisions they have to make. Kelly & Diane seem to be working great together. The meetings, which were primarily about hiring an E.D., are now well planned, organized & to the point. Kelly is constantly exploring new members, and vendors. He updates us on any vendor or member issues. He has worked on a few programs with vendors that will solidify the financial stability of the company for the future. Diane is always embroiled in our annual convention, and is usually working two or three years ahead, to get us the best deals.

I do think that both of our executives really care about the AIWD, and it shows. It's not just a job to them. They aren't just collecting a check. They both are constantly working to make the company and the annual convention the best they can be for us. The friends & connections I have made by being on AIWD Board of Directors have been great for my company, and for my life. I would recommend it to all of you.

Oh, and by the way, I do want to sincerely thank Jason Stonesifer for getting me to participate as a board member. He has become a good friend and (like he promised) has been there to help guide me through my three years on the board and my final year as the President.

In conclusion, I will say, ***"The State of the AIWD is strong and the future is bright!!!"*** (my chance to sound "presidential!")



# DEPEND ON



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## CONTACT INFORMATION:

**ADAM STROUSE**  
Director of Channel Marketing  
[astrouse@kalaswire.com](mailto:astrouse@kalaswire.com)

**KENDALL HEAGY**  
Welding Account Manager  
[kheagy@kalaswire.com](mailto:kheagy@kalaswire.com)  
717-355-0186

**KYM CALABRETTA**  
VP of Sales & Marketing  
[kcalabretta@kalaswire.com](mailto:kcalabretta@kalaswire.com)

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# MEET THE FACES BEHIND EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE:

## Introducing Our Customer Service and Welding Division Team

In today's fast-paced business landscape, customer service plays a pivotal role in shaping a company's reputation. At Uniweld, we take pride in our commitment to providing exceptional customer service. Our customer service team is composed of passionate professionals who are not just experts in their roles but are driven by a genuine passion for helping others. With over 100+ years of experience combined they are here to help you.

### THE TEAM:

**Ray Blew - V.P. of Welding** — 38 Years total in the business, with 25 of those years with Uniweld. "What I love the most is working with the family-owned independent welding distributors."

**Frank Vargas - Regional Sales Manager** — 13 Years with Uniweld, total of 25 years in management and sales. "I stumbled into this industry 13 years ago. I love the industry, love the people in it."

**Jaime Hernandez - Welding Administrator** — 17 years with Uniweld. "Uniweld has been a true second family to me. We put our thoughts and experiences together to give our customers the highest service and quality products out there today."

**Senia - Customer Service Manager** — 27 Years with Uniweld. "I have a great customer service team. They make my job easier."

**Rena - Customer Service Rep for AR, CO, IL, KS, LA, MO, MS, NM, OK, TX, WI** — 34 consecutive years, 39 total years with Uniweld. "I enjoy talking with people and working with my co-workers."

**Petrea - Customer Service Rep for AK, AZ, CA, HI, IA, ID, MN, MT, ND, NE, NV, OR, SD, UT, WA, WY & Canada** — 10 Years with Uniweld. "I have been with Uniweld Products for a decade as a CSR. It is an exciting, fast paced position at Uniweld. Our team has a great manager and group of CSR's, doing our best to provide exceptional customer service assisting our distributors and end users."

**Meredith - Customer Service Rep for CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, DC** — 2 Years with Uniweld. "Uniweld's customer service team is more than a work team, they are more like a work family. Uniweld is family to me."

**Acia - Customer Service Rep for AL, FL, GA, IN, KY, MI, NC, OH, SC, TN, VA, WV** — 1 Year with Uniweld. "Working with my co-workers at Uniweld has been a very family oriented experience. I love it!"

In conclusion, our customer service department is more than just a support function; it's a cornerstone of our commitment to excellence. By prioritizing customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, and transparent communication, we aim to not only meet but exceed the expectations of our valued customers. At Uniweld, exceptional customer service is not just a goal — it's a promise we proudly uphold.

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## ARTICLE

# Winter Driving Safety: Trucking & Transportation Tips

Author: Will Cray ([will.cray@thehortongroup.com](mailto:will.cray@thehortongroup.com)) // Wednesday, October 11, 2023 // Welding & Gas Distribution

Driving in winter weather can be dangerous for all vehicles but especially for truck drivers. The inclement weather can create a flurry of emotions from frustration to panic. The best way to have control over winter driving is simply to be prepared for all circumstances. It is the best way to ensure that all drivers and passengers on the road arrive at their destination safely. A few driver safety tips will make the winter driving experience much more bearable and improve capability.

## Loss Prevention Tips

### Pre-Trip Safety

- Check Conditions: Check the upcoming weather before heading out
- Prepare For The Cold: Carry extra blankets, coats, warm clothes, shovels, salt, windshield wipers, and flashlights
- Revise Route: Consider using back roads in dangerous weather, these routes may have fewer intersections and less traffic to contend with.

### Vehicle Safety

- Anti-gel Additive: Diesel gels when it gets extremely cold – put an anti-gel additive in tanks before fueling up
- Maintain Visual: Keeps views of other vehicles clear at all times. Consider purchasing heated mirrors, this could aid in keeping mirrors useable.

### Driving Safety

- 7 Second Rule: To keep a safe distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you, maintain at least a 7 second following distance
- Monitor Fuel Levels: Keep the tank at least half-full when entering hazardous weather conditions
- Avoidance can be the best loss prevention strategy at times
- Icy Roads: If ice built-up on your windshield means that there is ice on the road. Proceed with extra caution.

### Most Importantly Remain Calm:

It is natural to panic, remain calm, keep a clear head is the most successful way to deal with the situation.

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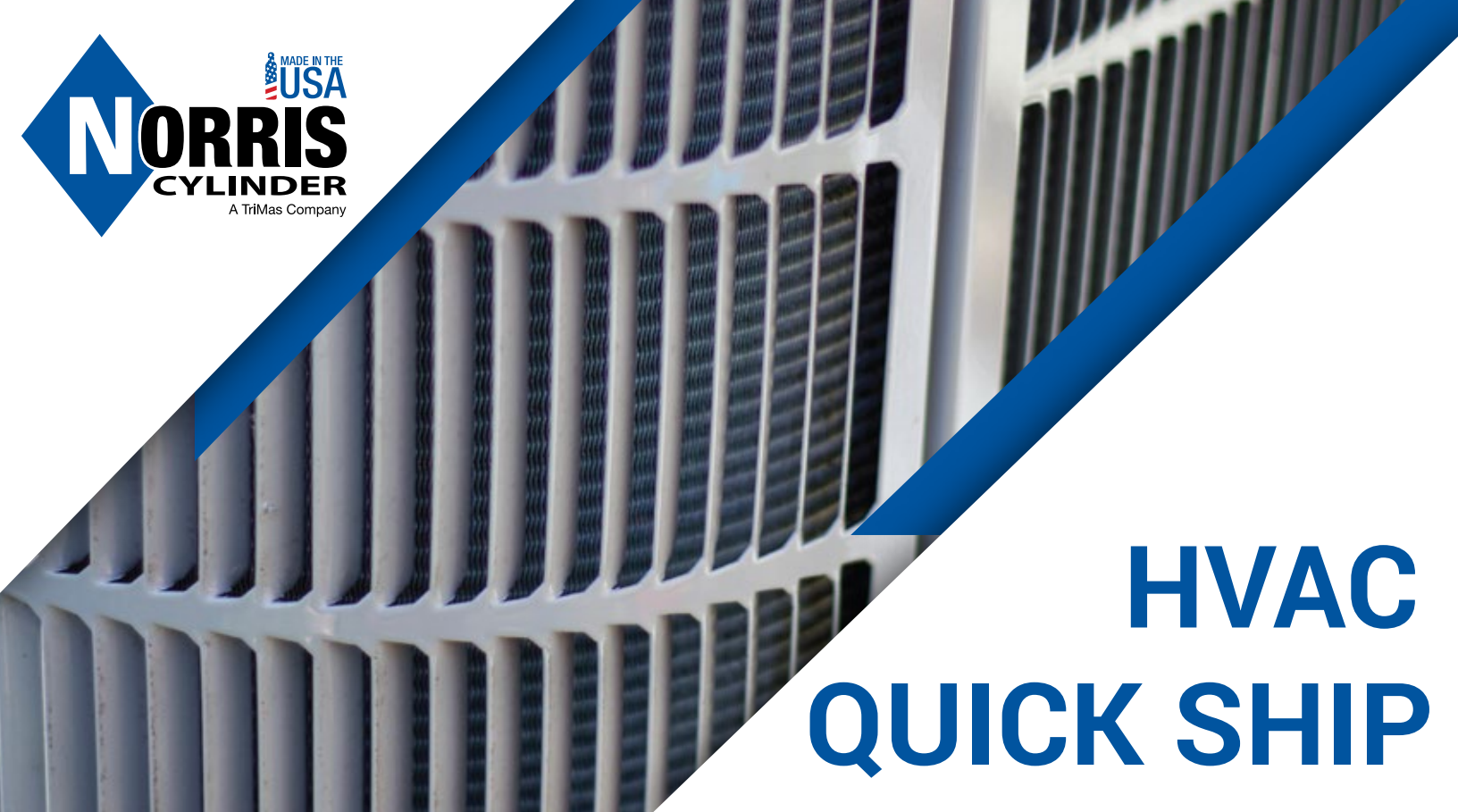
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NC20-540-GRN	20 Cu.Ft.,DOT3AA/TC,CGA540-CAV	Green
NC40-540-GRN	40 Cu.Ft.,DOT3AA/TC,CGA540-CAV	Green
NC40-580-BLK	40 Cu.Ft.,DOT3AA/TC,CGA580-CAV	Black
NC55-540-GRN	55 Cu.Ft.,DOT3AA/TC,CGA580-CAV	Green
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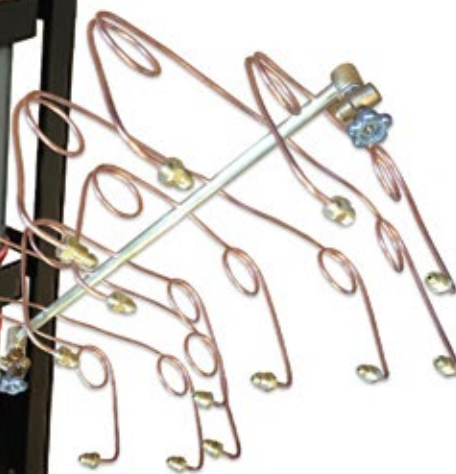
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## PURCHASING HABITS and Potential Vendors

Lumberton, TX – It's hard to believe that Diane, her team and I are already so far into prepping for the next show in May. I really look forward to seeing you all there!

As I thought about what I could learn with you this quarter, I had so many thoughts, however two stood out to me that have drastic impacts on the success of the group, both requiring small efforts that ultimately affect how vendors view our group and motivate their efforts to provide the best programs possible. This begins during the process of approving vendors into our group.



The goal of the group and part of the promise to vendors is that we will provide some exclusivity in their product category. This is done by limiting the number of vendors in each category and by our members looking at vendors inside the group before purchasing from vendors outside of the group. The latter is what is most important. Our vendors need to know that as decisions are made of who to buy from, a serious consideration has been made to buy from a vendor in the group. We all know there are times that we need a certain brand, or your normal supplier does not have the product you need. No one will ever question these circumstances if they are the exception and not the rule.

However, I do feel there is a disconnect between the owners and member representatives that work with our group and the person that is placing the orders. I recognize this since the person that does the purchasing, is not always the person attending the show or getting email announcements of updates to the group. I fully understand this situation. I am not asking you to change things in your company. I am asking you to consider bringing that purchasing agent along to the show if possible. Even if it is only to bring them one time while they work for you. Let them understand what those vendors are doing for the group and let them get firsthand knowledge of what you see at these shows. This may be completely impossible. In this circumstance, I would ask you to make more of an effort to sit down with your purchasing agent within a day or two of your return from the show. Let them see your show book and review any notes you may have made. Help them understand what commitments have been made during your conversations with the vendors. Help that information that get to all those that participate in the purchasing process.

This small detail will have a drastic impact on what your purchasing agent thinks is important. They will be more in line with what you found most important. Along with this, share with them who you select as your 7 primary vendors when the commitment survey goes out in June. Break the habit of simply reordering what has been ordered in the past. Make sure your purchasing agent is not ordering the way he/she is because they don't want to make the changes to your system. A good purchasing agent will truly evaluate supplier options. Ask them to be open minded when a vendor of the group reaches out to meet with them. Owners, if this is you, please take time to meet with these vendors and hear what they have to say. Then verify and compare what they are offering. They want to earn your business. Give the vendors of the group a chance no matter what the history or perception has been. Purchasing can add more to the bottom line and with less effort than the increase of sales can.

I want to share a real experience that I had as a distributor. When I started working for Applied Maintenance Specialties, who was a member of the group, I took over the purchasing for them. I did that job for 17 years. I felt that I did a great job for them and was very open minded and tried to balance the needs of the company and actively supporting the vendors in the AIWD. One vendor made a lot of effort to do business with us. That vendor was Washington Alloys. The owner of Applied Maintenance Specialties at the time had a burr under his saddle with them. His prejudice rubbed off onto me and I never gave them a chance. After becoming the Executive Director for the group, I had the opportunity to work with them on several matters. Every time, they responded quickly and with professionalism. I soon recognized the mistake I had made by not utilizing them as a vendor. We lost sales trying not to use them. This is not a plug to use Washington Alloy or to say they don't make mistakes. But it is to say that things may be different or even different than what someone else may say there is. If their product or program will not work, so be it. But give the vendors in the group a chance to surprise you.

I am off my soap box now. Sorry if that felt preachy. But our purchasing is so important to the success of this group. Along the same lines, my second topic is about approving new vendors at our shows. Members voting on which vendors to approve into the group is a very important aspect to the group. These approvals are used to estimate the participation that members will have with the new vendors of the group. I can usually tell which vendors will be more successful based on the approval percentage that they receive during the voting process. However, it is not an exact match since the success of the vendor does depend on their efforts with earning business from the members.

## PURCHASING HABITS and Potential Vendors (cont'd)



I would ask that at this next show and future shows to really consider if you will use this vendor in the next 6 months. Voting in a vendor because you like what they offer and, at some future point, you may have a customer ask for something of theirs...or, you've been in business for 30 years and one customer has asked for one of their products are not good reasons to approve them into the group. To keep these vendors excited, we must have actionable needs or willing efforts to push their products. Passively hoping a vendor will "come in handy" will only result in lackluster results and eventually causing a vendor to leave the group.

There is no way to always get it right and for all vendors that look to join our group to have success. Really evaluate their product line and see if it is something you could get behind. If it is not, simply don't approve them. We do not have to approve every vendor that wants to be in the group. It will add to our exclusivity if we only approve those vendors that are a great fit for the group. It may also mean we may have to cull the vendors in a category and on occasion to vote a new vendor in we may have to vote a vendor out.

I cannot fully understand what each of you are looking for in a vendor and I don't know what will work and what will not since you all are unique on how you go to market and the market you serve. That is why many vendors that I don't think are a great fit still attend the show. I want to make sure the members are listened to and get what you need.

If you have made it this far in my article, I REALLY appreciate it. I hope this information will help and allow you to consider options that you may not have in the past. I appreciate you all and truly appreciate the opportunity I have to be the Executive Director for this wonderful group. I am amazed at the progress we have made in the last two years and look forward to what we will do in the next five. I hope to see you all at the next show in Atlantic City!

**P.S....**The next three pages are some safety training materials provided by The Horton Group. I know your safety person struggles sometimes to know what they can share in these meetings. I appreciate The Horton Group for providing them to us. Since Diane publishes the newsletter once a quarter, they have provided three meeting topics. Our plan is to share three each newsletter. We want these newsletters to be a real resource for our members. Feel free to offer feedback as to other useful information you would like to see, and we will see what we may be able to come up with. I will talk with you all soon.

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## Material Handling - Hand Truck Safety

Hand trucks are effective for reducing strain while moving heavy materials. However, injury can still occur. Use the following tips to prevent strains, trips and falls when using a hand truck.

### Lifting practices:

- Load and unload the hand truck carefully, following proper lifting technique.
  - Always keep your back straight while lifting.
- Get help if the load is too bulky for proper lifting techniques to work or if the load cannot be handled safely for any reason.

### Before moving a load:

- Prepare the path.
  - Inspect and clear your path for ease of movement.
  - Use ramps if the path has stairs or curbs.
  - Measure openings to be sure that there is enough space.
  - Clear the set point.
- Ensure that you have a good view of your path. The load should not be so tall that it obscures your vision.
- Put the heaviest part of the load on the bottom of the hand truck.
- Secure the load as needed, and ensure that the straps are tight.
- Inspect equipment before use.
- Check the tire pressure. Balloon-type tires are more prone to losing pressure, adding strain on the person pushing the hand truck.

### Using the hand truck:

- Grip the hand truck firmly. Push with a straight back, leaning into your walk.
- Walk forwards, unless you are trapped in a tight space.
- Push or pull loads with both hands.
- Tilting the truck back enables you to push the load uphill more easily, but be aware that this action increases the overall weight that you are carrying.

### General safety:

- Ensure that you are trained and authorized for work.
- Wear supportive, closed toe, and non-slip shoes.



# Winter Preparation

In cold, wet conditions, common dangers include slips and falls, as well as vehicle accidents. Taking simple precautions can prevent accidents and injuries.

## Preventing slips:

Areas that may become slick and require extra caution include stairs, ramps, tile floors, parking lots and metal parts of equipment.

- Have an excellent snow and ice removal program in place.
- Place non-skid floor mats and caution signs in slippery, high traffic areas.
- Use traction devices that strap onto shoes when conditions require them.
- Use the right shoes. Anti-slip soles are essential. Shoe soles need to have thin cuts, often called siping, that disperse water and grip the ground.



## Driving safety:

- Slips can happen when entering and exiting your vehicle, so be cautious. Use a three-point stance when getting in and out of your vehicle. Use a grab-bar or doorframe for stability.
- Be aware that the vehicle itself can lose traction, causing uncontrolled skids.
  - When roads are slick, slow down, leave extra following distance between yourself and other cars and do not make sudden vehicular movements.
  - If you begin to skid, turn the wheel in the direction you want the vehicle to go. Ease your foot off the accelerator, and do not hit the brakes.
- Know the weather conditions you will encounter and plan ahead.
- Inspect your vehicle for proper tires and other winter driving gear.
- Be sure that chains and cold weather gear are on board and ready for use.
- Assume that roads, bridges and exits are icy, and be ready for them.
- Keep lights, windows and mirrors clean. This is especially important in low visibility situations such as darkness, ice or fog.
- If pulling over due to an emergency, increase your visibility to passing traffic. Activate the vehicle's hazard warning lights, wear your safety vest, set up a warning triangle or flares and assume that ongoing traffic does not see you.

*Remember, ice is twice as slippery at 30°F as at 0°F.*

## A Safe Worker's Promise

### Personal commitments you can live and work by:

- I anticipate possible dangers in any given operation and make every effort to analyze and avoid them before starting work, including immediately communicating such to my direct report.
- I am careful when using tools and use them only for the purpose for which they were designed. I look for defects. If I discover a defective tool I will turn it in for repair or replacement.
- At all times, I practice good housekeeping habits. I believe in the policy of *a place for everything and everything in its place*.
- I understand the importance of participating in company training, standard practice development, job hazard assessments and incident investigations to further enhance overall safety.
- When operating machinery, I follow all machine specific training and requirements, recognize the hazards involved and take necessary precautionary measures. Before starting a piece of equipment, I look it over to ensure that neither workers nor materials will be endangered. When I leave equipment unattended, I make certain that it is safely shut down. I take necessary precautions to prevent the equipment from being started by an unauthorized person.
- While driving, I obey all traffic rules and regulations. I am alert to the possible inadequacies of other drivers and am prepared to make necessary allowances for safety on the road.
- I take the necessary precautions to properly attend to cuts and scratches. I am aware that by doing this, I can avoid potential infections.
- I believe in wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). I am fully aware of the many times in the past when using PPE, such as safety glasses, safety shoes and gloves, has enabled workers to avoid injury.



A large graphic for '40 Years of Service'. The number '40' is in a bold, orange-outlined font. The word 'Years' is in a cursive script, and 'OF SERVICE' is in a clean, sans-serif font below it. The background is a dark blue with various digital icons like a globe, a hand holding a pen, and binary code.

40 Years  
OF SERVICE

Forty Years of Innovation & it's just the Beginning!

The **Trendex** team would like to thank all our customers and friends for your support and loyalty over the last **40 years**.

The innovative, high quality, reliable software that we have been able to implement has been the result of the collaboration between **Trendex** and our Customer base, which continues to grow, bringing new ideas.

We encourage you to keep challenging us with new ideas for many years to come so that we may pursue our passion, developing the best ERP System designed specifically for the Welding Supply Distributor.

We will continue to devote our time and energy so that **You May Succeed**.

The logo for Trendex Information Systems. It features the word 'Trendex' in a large, white, sans-serif font with a red dot above the 'i'. Below it, 'INFORMATION SYSTEMS' is written in a smaller, white, all-caps sans-serif font. The background is dark blue with a faint image of a person's hands typing on a laptop.

**Trendex**  
INFORMATION SYSTEMS

For more information regarding our software, please contact our offices at 1-877-4-TRENDEX or at [sales@trendexsys.com](mailto:sales@trendexsys.com) • [www.trendexsys.com](http://www.trendexsys.com)



P.O. Box 154 ▪ Statesboro, GA 30459  
www.aiwdgroup.net

## AIWD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

North: Tim Robb  
AIWD President 2023-24  
Torco Supply  
610.577.9733

West: Clinton Bush  
A-L Compressed Gases  
509.534.1595

Midwest: Max Hoyt  
Max's Breathe Easy Gases  
620.208.6100

South: Tim Makool  
Kool Gas  
870.318.5509

Southwest: Douglas Seaman  
Arizona Welding Supply  
602.570.4492

### **Executive Director**

Kelly Horton  
khorton@aiwdgroup.com  
409.289.3282

### **Operations & Events Director**

Diane Calhoun  
dcalhoun@aiwdgroup.com  
817.602.9488

### **Treasurer**

Connie Hoyt  
connie@maxsweldingsupplies.com  
316.323.0348