

AIWD

Post-Convention Issue – 2nd Qtr 2023

insider NEWS

News and Promos from:

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Weldcoa
John Tillman
Superior Products
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That's-a-wrap, folks!

2023 Annual Show goes down as one of the biggest **and BEST** shows to date

*Golf Tournament Winners
Committee Columns
2023 Voting Results
New 2023 Vendors
Member News*



(L-R) Vendor/Member Teammates Daniel Curiel (Chart), Kenny Miller (Flexovit) Cerys Hawkins (EasyKleen Weld Cleaners) and Jay Miller (O2 Plus-Carroton, GA) ham it up for the camera during the 2023 Annual golf tournament at TORREY PINES

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2ND QTR 2023 NEWSLETTER

2023 San Diego: REFLECTION



Lumberton, TX - WHAT A SHOW!!! For those of you that were there, you know. For those of you that were not, you missed out. The one thing we must have forgotten to request for that week was for better weather. Who goes to San Diego thinking they need to bring warmer clothes? Outside of that, it was an amazing event. There were so many amazing interactions with everyone, I could not have asked for anything more. I appreciate all of you that took a minute and spoke with me about your companies and the challenges and success you are having. It was great to continue gaining a greater understanding and appreciation of the members.

I made a joke on the last day that I had a LOT of to-do items that I came away from the show with. 42 items to be exact. Yes, some of those are things that I needed to do when I get back or something I needed to do for a specific person. But every time someone mentioned something they could see benefiting the group or making the show better, I made a note of it. This showed me that people are opening up about what they need or what the group needs. To me, this was an amazing experience.



One phrase I heard a lot was "I don't want to complain". Trust me, if your intentions are focused on making things better, you are not complaining! Obviously, we could easily get to the point of nitpicking or complaining. But that is not what I was hearing at the show. I would like to express a huge Thank You for all of you that took the time to be at the show and made it an amazing time. I also give a HUGE THANK YOU to Diane and her team. They were on point and available to help everyone with every possible need.

I thought I would share a few of the takeaway tasks that I received. Not that any of the others that I have are not important, but the following seemed to be the hot topics during the show. The first one being to standardize the potential and primary vendor presentations. This seemed like one of those things that made me wonder why have we not done this sooner. Starting next year, we will structure the vendor presentation in a way that vendors focus on specific aspects of their program and what they are offering the group. They will all be required to have the same core information no matter what category they serve. We may also have specific information they would provide based on their specific category. This way, all vendors will share the same information and when comparing vendors in a specific category for things such as primary, it will be more of an apples-to-apples comparison. This will move vendors away from the historical presentations that tell us about the history of a company and the sizes of their warehouses. We are also looking for a way that we could potentially provide this information to the members attending the show ahead of time for a deeper review of the program. This would be mostly for primary vendor presentations.

Another issue that seemed to be talked about a lot is the opportunity for guests to be able to eat with the member that is attending the show. Usually, this is a spouse that came with their husband or wife and is there to support them but not attending all of the meetings. This was briefly discussed before the meeting, and we recognize the issue. Diane and I will discuss this and figure out a way to make this work. But I did want to make you aware that I heard the suggestions but also want to briefly touch on what the concern has been in the past. I know it is not "cheap" to have a guest attend the show. But amazingly, the average cost for breakfast or lunch at the shows costs the group around 65-75.00 per person. For the receptions, it is even more than that per person. I was amazed by this when Diane told me what it costs to feed people during the show. But we will evaluate the situation and see how to best proceed.

Another suggestion was to have more information available about vendors, especially potential vendors that are participating in the breakout sessions. This is easy enough to do. In the future, we will have a brief description of each vendor next to their name on the selection survey when you are choosing what breakout sessions to attend. This will help you know what they do, if they are a current or potential vendor and if it is a product line you want to learn more about. The breakout sessions I sat in on were amazing and seemed to provide very valuable information.

The last thing that I want to mention that was discussed with me before, during and since the show is the financial health of the members. There is a concern among the vendors that members are not paying their bills within terms. This causes a concern, since we are not a single-pay buying group. Vendors start wanting to evaluate the rebates and special pricing they offer when they are stretched out on payments. I recognize that every company goes through stretches of time when things are leaner than others. Usually, vendors will work with a member if they are open and communicate with the vendors. But we could potentially get to a point where members that are not meeting their financial obligations to vendors of the group, would have to be removed from the group. Yes, this would hurt our overall member levels and to some degree affect the amount of dollars the group spends with the vendors. But that will not matter if the vendors start reducing the incentives to offset their holding costs and collection efforts. We are looking at a period of time in the near future when things for everyone could get tight. I ask you to evaluate your business and make sure you are able to meet your obligations to our vendors within terms.

I truly appreciate you all. I am amazed and appreciative that I am able to work for such an amazing group. I feel that things are moving forward, and we are making great progress as a group. We are getting noticed by the other groups again and they are seeing that we are a force to be considered. Please, continue to reach out to me with things you need help with or concerns you may have.



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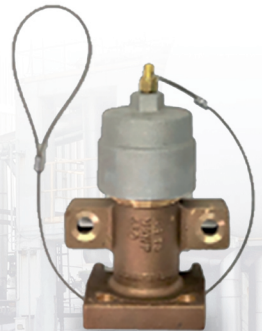
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Please welcome these newest Vendors to the AIWD Group!



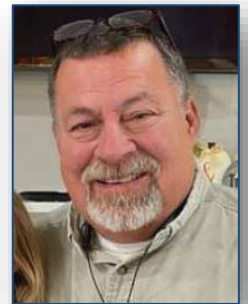
Be sure to log on to the AIWD portal soon to learn more about our newest suppliers!

From There to Here:

MY JOURNEY as an AIWD Member

Wynne, AR - **Kool Gas, LLC** is a small independent welding supply store located in Arkansas. Our business began in 1998, working out of the back of a pickup truck. From there, we have grown tremendously. The name changed along the way, but our mission has remained the same. We have struggled for years to build our business, changing vendors regularly as it has always been a challenge to compete with the big guys. We had several vendors who worked with us, but how did they make money on such tight margins?

In 2015, we reached out to AIWD and began learning about all they had to offer. They agreed to let us join the group, and things started changing. The next day, we had a vendor contact us with lower pricing. With all the negotiating we had done in the past, we were convinced we had best pricing, but we soon realized that was not the case. We quickly learned the value of an organization like AIWD and the amount of support it would bring us.



When I first started the store, vendors would come into our office and train us on all their products, explaining how everything worked and how to get people interested in buying their products. We would even go out and make sales calls together, but that type of product representation ended in the early years. When we went to the first convention, I was able to see and hear about products I knew nothing about. There were so many new products on the market that I was completely unaware of. All of a sudden, a whole new realm of products and support for those products was at our fingertips. The AIWD convention quickly became a new way for us to gain product knowledge and support that we could share with our employees. This was such an amazing asset to our company that I thought it would be the most important benefit we would gain from the conventions. Boy was I wrong.

In January 2020, I learned of an even larger benefit that AIWD could provide for Kool Gas. The vendor who was selling us our packaged gas cut ties with us overnight. We went from having all our gases to nothing, just like that. We pump our own oxygen and mixed gases, but what about everything else? What were we going to do? For years, we had friends in the business who provided our packaged gases, but over the years, all those people had sold out or died. We were without our mentors, people who had helped us so many times in the past to solve problems. That's where AIWD stepped in. We were able to go to their website and find other AIWD members who were able to fill our gases. And not only fill them—they were better priced and willing to work much faster with us on returning our product. We went from almost losing everything to building lifelong friendships with people just like us—small businesses out to help other small businesses in a very competitive market. I can't say enough about the value of the other members in our group.

Now that we know so many other people doing what we are doing—people working together with the same products—we have a whole new group of mentors. Some of them are much younger than me and some are much older, but all of them are willing to help in a moment's notice. I know many people in the business who worry about the future, but with AIWD, I feel confident that our members can stick together and help one another out, no matter what challenges we face.



Welding Supply Store

1910 Falls Blvd., Wynne, AR
Phone: (970) 208-8586
Email: sales@koolgas.com

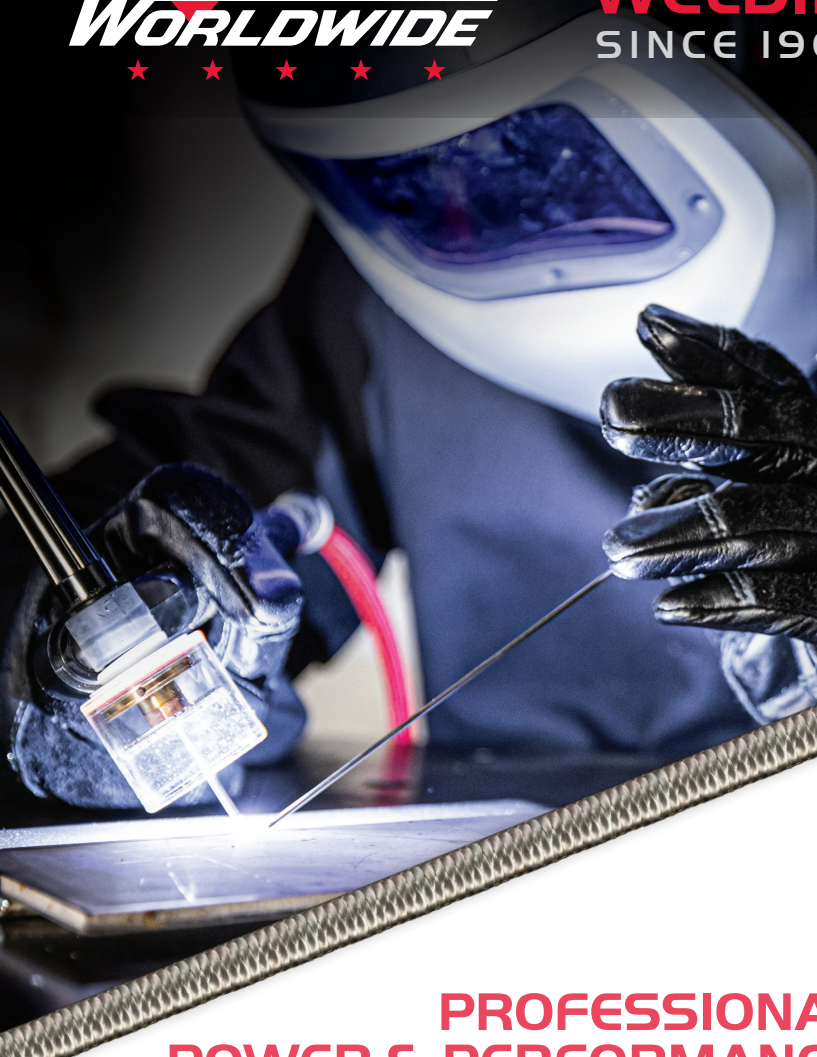
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2023 ANNUAL AIWD GOLF TOURNAMENT



Torrey Pines Golf Club
La Jolla, CA

AIWD's annual golf tournament this year not only sold out in 60 days, we still ended up with more than 24 stand-by's on a waiting list! This course is booked out by Torrey Pines members 90 days in advance, so the tournament director couldn't allow us to add more players other than just *one extra foursome*, which we gladly accepted. In the end, 76 members and vendors got to play the course of their dreams this year. Although the weather was chilly and wet, no one seemed to care. We snapped this iconic group shot above just moments before the shotgun start. **See ALL golf images** by clicking the **PHOTOS** link on www.aiwdgroup.net.

1st PLACE:

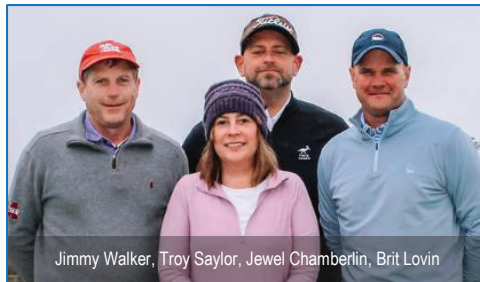
Team "Gimmes-All-Day"



Kevin Reynolds, Trey Calhoun, Glenn Stovilas, Steve Rosenthal

2nd PLACE:

Team "Designated Drivers"



Jimmy Walker, Troy Saylor, Jewel Chamberlin, Brit Lovin

3rd PLACE:

Team "What Would Spackler Do"



Frank Haskett, Ben & Chris Kittleson, Melissa DeJesus

Men's Longest Drive



John Michalowski

Closest to the Pin



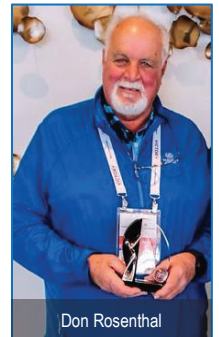
Gavin Baker

Women's Longest Drive



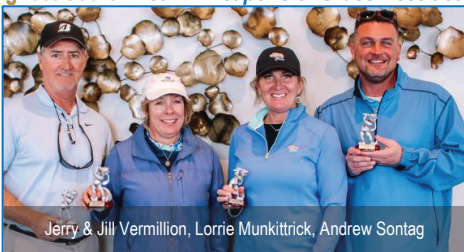
Lorrie Munkittrick

Longest Putt

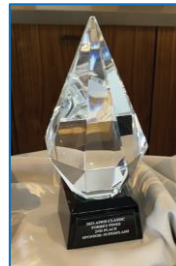
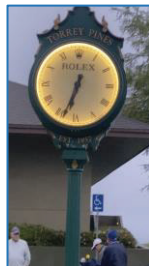


Don Rosenthal

Highest Score: Team "Weapons of Grass Destruction"



Jerry & Jill Vermillion, Lorrie Munkittrick, Andrew Sontag





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Effective May 1, 2023, John Tillman will be relocating our existing Lithia Springs, Georgia Warehouse to our new site in Fairfield, Ohio. Products that were shipping from Lithia Springs will begin shipping from Fairfield, OH site on or before May 1, 2023. This new location is a larger facility and is geographically positioned

favorably to service Tillman's customers. Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to our Customer Service Team or directly to your point of contact:

Lithia Springs Warehouse
850 Maxham Rd #400, Lithia Springs, GA 30122

Fairfield Ohio Warehouse
6021 Union Centre Blvd., Fairfield, OH 45014



Meet our Newest Team Member



Scott Epple

from: Melissa DeJesus, Sales Manager

Our new Product Specialist, Scott Epple, has 9 years of broad marketing experience with large and small manufacturers selling to a wide range of industries. A graduate of Cleveland State University, he has a passion for most things marketing and is looking forward to collaborating with our partners to help grow Superior Products.

Superior Launches their new iFP Parts Washer with Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Superior Products welcomed two OPW CES representatives, Rishi Khera and Linda Townsley, for their annual kick off to the summer! Superior Products traditionally starts the summer with an employee lunch, but this year it was *extra* Superior!

After a business review that recognized 6 new hires to the Superior staff, the team celebrated the installation of their new **iFP Parts Washer!** This investment in Superior Products eliminates the additional maintenance costs and employee repair hours from the retired parts washer. The iFP Parts Washer also keeps in alignment with Superior's commitment to the environment with its closed-loop, solvent-based cleaning system. The organic, modified alcohol solvent is non-hazardous, biodegradable, non-flammable and CFC and halogen-free. This system ensures that each part shipped from Superior Products is cleaned to the CGA G-4.1 specification for oxygen cleanliness.

During the celebration, Duane John, Danial Eggleton, Charles McClendon and Joe Mazur (four employees who work with the iFP Parks Washer daily) were elected the cut the ribbon.

Congratulations to our 2023 Vendors of the Year!



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Going Forward...

Opportunities

About for AIWD Members

Guest Column by **Douglas Seaman**
AIWD Board Member, Southwest Region
President, Arizona Welding Supply

Surprise, AZ - As I have finished reflecting on 2022, it was apparent to me that it (2022) was a year of acceptance, opportunity, and transition. **Acceptance** as the world and business realized that many of the changes, both positive and not so positive, brought on as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, are here to stay. **Opportunity** as new ideas, approaches and needs were identified. **Transition** as we straddle the pre- and post-pandemic world but moved much closer to determining the new era we live in.

In this message, I want to reflect on some of our accomplishments over the past year and provide a preview of how members can benefit this coming year. AIWD continues to grow and thrive because our industry continues to grow. While our industry isn't impervious to a recession, if we have one, I have always seen "less suffering" in our industry, particularly since I came "out west" 44 years ago.

You and I can never take for granted that economies will be forever healthy going forward. I believe we can take for granted that as members of AIWD, we have something many don't and that is a wide council of members who have seen ups and downs throughout their careers. They *will* offer sound advice if we are willing to ask. We get together once a year as a group. While in San Diego this year, one on one and in meetings, many were willing to share their experiences, good and bad.

We have a great group of business leaders; we have an opportunity to assist each other in our success. I mentioned to a few of you that I was going to have a huge amount of helium in the next 18 to 20 months coming on-line (*approximately 45 million c.f. annually*). This will be gaseous helium delivered in tube trailers. My first priority will be to make AIWD members one of the largest helium distribution groups in the nation. We will be working on purchase pricing, making every effort to make it the same price per 100cf per AIWD Member. The only caveat will be the freight to the destination. I will keep you posted.

I am looking forward to a strategy to make AIWD heard by working on other commodity prices to put us all on equal ground, as well as welcome any recommendations or comments you may have.

Member Update

Please join us in welcoming the newest members of the AIWD Buying Group!

Unique Gas & Supply
Chuck Schwab, Owner
19396 Paint Blvd.
Shippenville, PA 16254
P: 814.226.8265
E: uniquegas1@gmail.com

Wright Bros. Industrial Supply
Tom and David Wright, Owners
1745 San Felipe Rd., Suite 10
Hollister, CA 95023
P: 831.637.2060
E: tom@wright-supply.com

TEXGAS Welding Supply
Willie Anderson, Owner
12771 Market St
Houston, TX 77015
P: 281.974.3368
E: willie.a@tex-gas.com

A Weldors Supply
Rod Randall, Owner
8136 W. Reno
Oklahoma City, OK 73127
P: 405.789.1407
E: arod48@cox.net

SH-350DM



SH-500M



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Pontoon Beach

Still Growing!

CES Welding Supplies Opens 2nd Location in O'Fallon

Charles E. Scott Welding Supplies is one of the AIWD's most recent members, joining the group in June of 2022. CES offers a full line welding supply, portable propane tanks, RV fills and safety equipment for individual and industrial workers. Although they've run a highly-successful single store business since 1976, they're proud to announce they've recently opened their second store in O'Fallon.

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O'Fallon

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Midwest: Max Hoyt
Max's Breathe Easy Gases
620.208.6100

South: Tim Makool
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870.318.5509

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