

POOL & SPA NEWS

hanley wood

Pool and Spa Expo Lights Up Vegas Strip

By Rebecca Robledo More than 9,000 pool and spa professionals gathered in Las Vegas earlier this month to take part in the International Pool | Spa | Patio Expo, held at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center from Oct. 31 to Nov. 5.

At press time, organizers were still tabulating

attendance figures, but were optimistic about the numbers.

"We expect attendance to be slightly up, which we're excited about," said Lindsay Roberts, IPSPE director at Hanley Wood Exhibitions,

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COUNTRY MEADOWS LANDSCAPING AND POOLS

Viking Pools Purchases Blue Hawaiian

By Dan Schechner The fiberglass landscape recently shifted following the announcement that Viking Pools had acquired fellow manufacturer Blue Hawaiian Fiberglass Pools.

Viking, a division of Latham International, completed the deal for an undisclosed sum on Oct. 22, according to Mark Laven, president/CEO of Latham.

The acquisition further paved the way for Roger Erdelac, owner of Blue Hawaiian, to retire after a lengthy run in the industry.

"I had learned of Roger's desire to exit the business, and I followed up with him," Laven said. "It was an opportunity for us — Blue Hawaiian

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Viking Pools purchases Blue Hawaiian
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has a great dealer network, a good name and a great reputation.”

Viking plans to relocate Blue Hawaiian’s Largo, Fla., manufacturing operations to its Zephyrhills, Fla., facility; it also expects to move production from Blue Hawaiian’s Rocky Mount, N.C., plant to Viking’s Rockingham, N.C.,

facility in the coming months.

In addition, Viking will honor warranty claims for pools installed by Blue Hawaiian prior to the acquisition, and also intends to retain the Blue Hawaiian brand name, according to company officials.

The feedback from Blue Hawaiian’s dealer network, which Laven estimated at

approximately 100, has been overwhelmingly positive, he said.

“They’ll see tangible benefits,” he added. “We’ll be able to provide them with broad support, as well as new marketing and advertising programs we’re looking at introducing in 2011.”

Rising Sun Pools, a *Pool & Spa News* Top Builder based in Raleigh, N.C., met with Viking officials in late October to discuss the transition. In addition to customer service, the builder was particularly interested to learn how Blue Hawaiian’s molds would be affected, if at all, according to Tara Onthank, Rising Sun vice president/co-owner.

“We have a lot of respect for how Blue Hawaiian builds their pools,” said Onthank, whose company has been an exclusive Blue Hawaiian dealer for about two years. “So as long as [Viking] stands behind their products and doesn’t change that, we should be fine. We just hope they keep it going.”

That’s the plan, according to Laven, who explained that Blue Hawaiian’s molds were one of the main reasons Viking was attracted to the manufacturer in the first place.

“They have some really nice designs,” he said. “That was a key aspect of the business, and we plan to support Blue Hawaiian dealers with the same molds they’ve grown accustomed to. So, yes, we’ll keep those molds and continue to market them as Blue Hawaiian.”

The move comes just one month after Viking Pools founder Alan Stahl officially retired from the business — and the industry — following 35 years of service.

Based in Latham, N.Y., Latham International has made a number of industry acquisitions over the past decade. In addition to Viking, it now owns Pacific Pools, Fort Wayne Pools and pool cover manufacturer Coverstar Inc.

The company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in December 2009, but emerged a month later having shed or restructured much of its debt.

In January 2010, Latham became a portfolio company of private-equity firm Littlejohn & Co. of Greenwich, Conn. ■

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