



## CHRIS RICE

Founder & President at  
KELLEX

**F**or over three decades, Chris Rice has quietly shaped the hospitality manufacturing world with precision, heart, and an unwavering commitment to mentorship. His impact stretches from factory floors to design studios to classrooms across the country.

Rice founded Kellex Corporation in 1994 with one mission—to raise the standard of hospitality furniture manufacturing in America. What started as a focused operation grew into a nationally respected brand, known for its quality craftsmanship, contract expertise, and long-term industry partnerships.

Rice built Kellex around principles of community, service, and innovation. He saw the hospitality sector not only as a market but as a movement—one where investing in people would drive long-term success.

Rice's commitment to design innovation has been constant—from pioneering ergonomic furniture for boutique hotels to guiding sustainable production processes that minimize waste and improve durability.

His support for education, both inside and outside his company, is reshaping how hospitality professionals are developed. Internally, he's built workforce initiatives that prioritize skills growth, team collaboration, and upward mobility. Externally, he's brought industry insight into schools and colleges—bridging the often-missing link between classroom and real-world production.

And now, through his mentorship of student designers, Rice is shaping how future leaders view design: not as decoration, but as a tool for human connection and guest satisfaction.

For NEWH, honoring Rice is about affirming the core values that define hospitality: service, excellence, mentorship, and community.

For Rice, it's a chance to shine a light on the people and passions that have fueled his success.