

# Thomasville Times

Your tri-weekly source for community news

Monday's Internet Edition, April 14, 2008.

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## ALL-AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP

**Staff Writer Kevin Reid - HIGH POINT** — Growing up in Trinity in the 1960s and '70s Otis Farmer and Charles Riehs (pronounced Reece) were good friends. The friendship has continued throughout the years and the two remain good friends. Now that friendship, which has flourished since their childhood, is helping other children. Farmer is now marketing director of American Dream Rooms, a subsidiary of a Chinese company. Riehs is chairman of the board at American Children's Home.

"The more I learn about what the Children's Home is all about, the more interested I am in being a part of helping to put somebody on the right track and on a course that is more positive than they could have ever been on without some dedicated people who can help them." Farmer said.

When American Dream Rooms set up shop in a former Amos Hosiery plant at 401 E. Russell Ave. earlier this year, company brass expressed the need for a community project they could partner with.

"We talked about a charity we could get involved in," said Eduardo Herscovitz, American Dream Room's director of international operations. "We wanted something local that we could get involved in."

Farmer, who lives in Thomasville, had the answer.

"We believe in American Children's Home's mission to provide nurturing care to children who have been removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect," Farmer said. "We, at American Dream Rooms, have a strong desire to make a difference in deserving children lives."

Tuesday, at American Dream Rooms' headquarters, the company announced that it was donating 10 groups of children's furniture, three groups of leather upholstered furniture and some dining room furniture to American Children's Home. The High Point Furniture Market is currently in session and American Dream Homes plans to continue with such donations twice a year during each market.

"This is a developing project," Farmer said. "We will strive to make the children's lives easier."

Russ Gobble, president and CEO of American Children's Home, was present at the announcement.

"We feel blessed that we've been able to form this wonderful partnership with American Dream Rooms," Gobble said. "It's nice to know that these folks came to town, saw our work with children and decided to help us. Everyone we've met with the company has gone out of their way to make us feel welcome and part of their team."

Gobble noted that the furniture at the Lexington facility is 20 years old and, in many cases, out of style.

“We want the same thing you would want for your own children — the best,” Gobble said. “This company makes a great product. I think we all get a little excited when we get stuff. This means a lot because a lot of these kids come to us with nothing.”

Riehs has had a connection with American Children’s Home all of his life.

“I basically grew up at the Children’s Home,” he said. “My grandfather and my father were members of the Junior Order and I joined when I was 16.”

The Junior Order of United American Mechanics founded American Children’s Home in 1928.

“I went over and played with the kids, and I knew how they grew up back then,” Riehs continued. “Today, it’s totally different. Back then they were all orphans. Today, with them coming from neglect and abusive family situations, they’re not as open with you as the kids were when I was growing up there.”

Craig Burris, treasurer of American Children’s Home, explained another goal of its board. “We’re trying to change the perception of the facility,” Burris said. “These are your and my kids. The parents, grandparents and even society in general has a lot to do with why kids are in homes like this.”

Dream Rooms Shanghai, the parent company of American Dream Rooms, has been in business since 1990. It had been making contract furniture and decided to offer its products to the public about six months ago, which led to the creation of American Dream Rooms. This is American Dream Rooms first market. Currently the company is manufacturing primarily bedroom furniture, but it plans to expand its line.

“We’re going to solicit funds from each of our reps and our customers to get different levels of donations for American Children’s Home,” said Bob O’Neill, senior vice president of sales with American Dream Rooms. “We think they’re doing a great job.”

So does Riehs, who owns Sunshine Racing & Auto Repair in High Point, but has never lost his passion for American Children’s Home and the kids who live there.’

“If I can keep one kid in school and off drugs then my time has been well spent,” he said. “My heart has always been with the Children’s Home.”

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