More than 3,000 industry professionals gathered for the 100th in-person IFAI Expo, Nov. 1-4, in Nashville to network, see new products and learn the latest trends and techniques for advanced textiles, fabric structures, specialty fabrics and more.

From an Industry Night packed with more than 300 attendees to classrooms and on-floor campfires, the industry was ready to get business done again. IFAI Expo brought the industry face-to-face, showing the importance of in-person events. Exhibitors reported good traffic throughout the show, with attendees serious about finding new products and services. Even with travel challenges, attendees came from 31 countries and all 50 states to attend this year’s IFAI Expo.

IFAI Expo 2022 will be Oct. 12-14 in Charlotte, N.C.

REPORT COMPILED BY Elisa Bernick, Tim Goral, Sammi Jones, Janet Preus, Jonathan Sweet
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IFAI’s 2021 Outstanding Volunteer Awards

IFAI’s Outstanding Volunteer Awards recognize members who generously give of their time to serve on different boards, task forces and committees, judge competitions and provide education and leadership to others in the industry.

This year’s winners: Tom Auer, president, Bearse USA.; Charlene Clark, CEO, Signature CanvasMakers LLC; Keith Harris, product manager, TenCate Geosynthetics; Paige Mullis, director of concept development, Glen Raven Inc.

The Outstanding Volunteer Awards were created in 2012, designed to recognize volunteers who have regularly gone above and beyond to help, guide and advise. Since 2012, 41 people have received this award.

IFAI Expo 2021 Keynote

Steve Rizzo

Steve Rizzo kicked off the 100th in-person IFAI Expo Nov. 2 with a keynote address focused on optimism even in time of struggles.

Rizzo, a former stand-up comedian, focuses on what he calls “Common Sense Strategies” for tapping into the positive reserves people have to rethink and reshape their lives and businesses.

The key is unleashing the power of your “humor being” every day, Rizzo says, by focusing on three principles:
1. You are the creator of your success and happiness.
2. You need to know without a doubt that you are the only problem you will ever have. Somewhere within you there is always a solution waiting to be discovered—get out of your own way.
3. Whenever you’re confronted with a challenge of any kind it’s never a matter of managing the situation. It’s always a matter of how you manage your mind.

“Most people go their entire lives never knowing they have this power,” Rizzo says. “Your humor being can bring you peace of mind and emotional stability. That’s up to you on how to get that.”

The most successful people allow themselves to take time out to laugh. It’s important to laugh at all the craziness of life, even as we manage the challenges of family and business.

Successful people become what they think about day in and day out, Rizzo says.

“Your thoughts create your beliefs. Your beliefs write the story of your life,” he says. “Every once in a while we have to ask ourselves what type of story are we writing.”

That attitude is at the very core of your success and happiness, he says, and feeling good is the fuel that drives motivation and inspiration. “The No. 1 reason people consistently fail in business and in life is not just because of the situation, the event and the circumstances, it’s because somewhere along the way positive momentum ceases.”

With everything that bombards us throughout the day, it’s important to start your day with an unstoppable attitude. Rizzo recommends doing that by steering your thoughts from the moment you wake up. Instead of thinking about and focusing on the problems ahead, think about what is working in your life.

“You can choose to seize the day or you can let the day seize you,” he says. “Create an attitude of gratitude. Everyone can find that one thing that they are profoundly grateful for. The attitude that you have in the morning is the attitude you’re going to have throughout the day.”
by the numbers

218 EXHIBITORS

3,173 SHOW PARTICIPANTS

50 BAGS DONATED TO BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS FROM THE DEMO AREA

5 SHOW STOPPER WINNERS

31 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

53 STATES AND TERRITORIES REPRESENTED

64 EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS

64 INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

Celebrating 100 YEARS OF TEXTILE INNOVATION

Save the Date — EXPO 2022

Oct. 12–14, 2022 | Charlotte, NC USA
Exhibition: Oct. 13-14 | Charlotte Convention Center

Photo: Christian Weiland

IFAI EXPO 2021

Photo: Christian Weiland, IFAI

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Photo: Christian Weiland, IFAI

Photo: Christian Weiland, IFAI

Photo: Christian Weiland, IFAI

Photo: Christian Weiland, IFAI

Photo: Christian Weiland, IFAI
Recognizing 75 years of excellence

2021 marked the 75th anniversary of the International Achievement Awards (IAA), which means for 75 years, the IAA competition has recognized excellence in design and innovation, highlighting truly spectacular work in the specialty fabrics and technical textiles industry. IFAI’s goal is to promote awareness of the specialty fabrics used in thousands of products and applications in the growing, $130 billion-plus global fabrics marketplace.

This year, IFAI received a total of 223 entries from 14 countries in 44 categories. Sixty-four winners were selected based on complexity, design, workmanship, uniqueness and function. Judges included industry experts, editors, architects, educators and design professionals.

Judges also selected the “Best of Category” winners in each of the seven major award categories (earning the highest total scores among the Award of Excellence winners within that major category). The winners are:

**FACTORIES AND ENVIRONMENTS**
MakMax Australia, Queensland, Australia, for The Link, Chadstone

**AWNING AND CANOPIES**
Cobertens, San Isidro, Peru, for Rooftop Hotel B

**FABRIC ENVIRONMENTS**
Rainier Industries, Seattle, Wash., for The Canyon at Salt Lake City International Airport

**MARINE**
Charlton’s Marine Canvas, Yorktown, Va., for Leopard 39

For more information on all the winners and other entries, with photos and detailed project descriptions, visit iaa.ifai.com. The 2022 IAA competition will start accepting entries in the spring of 2022.

IFAI names new leadership

As part of the IFAI Annual Meeting at the IFAI Expo 2021, newly elected IFAI board members officially took office.

Amy Bircher is now IFAI’s 53rd board chair. Bircher is founder and CEO of MMI Textiles in Westlake, Ohio. Bircher will be profiled in the January issue of Specialty Fabrics Review.

Kathy Schaefer, IFM, has finished her term as chair and becomes past chair. Schaefer is chief financial officer of Glawe Tent and Awning Company in Fairborn, Ohio.

Other board members and officers elected to new roles:
- **Roy Chism** has been elected as the new first vice chairman/chairman-elect. Chism is president of The Chism Company in San Antonio, Texas.
- **Craig Zola** has been elected to the position of second vice chairman. Zola is vice president of marketing and distribution with Herculite Products in Emigsville, Pa.
- **David Segal** has been elected to his second three-year director term. He is with Edward Segal Inc. in Thomaston, Conn.

Past chair Steve Ellington has completed his term and is leaving the board. Ellington is president of Trivantage.

**Demo Area**
IFAI/Makers member Tom Auer, president of Bearse USA, along with plant supervisor William Ackerley and a team of sewers came together to provide live sewing demonstrations and to assemble 50 red backpacks from start to finish for this year’s Demo Area on the Nashville show floor.

Hosted by the Makers Division and the Industrial Fabric Foundation, the Demo Area featured impromptu and scheduled demonstrations on sewing techniques for making shoulder straps, joining fabric pieces, sewing zippers to bags and building interior seams. The backpacks were donated to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Middle Tennessee. The program was sponsored by Brother International Corp., Fil-Tec Inc. and Gerber Technology, a Lectra company.
All the best from Nashville: The tenth annual Show Stopper competition was designed to showcase the best of the best in the industry, from fabrics and equipment to hardware, services and end products. Designed to recognize the most popular new products each year from our exhibitors, the Show Stopper Awards acknowledge the newest, most innovative, useful and exciting, effective, efficient and economical entries, as well as the most environmentally sound products at the show. Entries were submitted by exhibitors and displayed on the show floor, with winners selected by a committee of industry experts.

A list of all the 2021 Show Stopper participants can be viewed online at: https://ifaiexpo.com/show-stoppers

End Products

**Pergodom**

Pergodom arched retractable roof pergola is shaped as a dome, and its unique design covers large areas such as terraces, swimming pools, skylights and greenhouses without a center post. It allows sunlight through while providing privacy and weather protection.

**Equipment and Tools**

**ACS Double Layer CIPP Line**
Automated Converting Solutions Inc. [www.acsmachinery.com](http://www.acsmachinery.com)

The first automated system to incorporate two sewing machines and three welding systems. This line produces double-layer trenchless and CIPP liners. Tension control and linear actuation ensures a wrinkle-free liner.

**Fabrics, Fibers and Films**

**BeTEX Conductive Fabrics**
Burlan Manufacturing LLC | [www.burlan.com](http://www.burlan.com)

BeTEX conductive fabrics serve the automotive, medical, military and wearable industries and are designed to replace metal fiber products. BeTEX conductive knit is flame retardant, flexible, lightweight and will maintain conductivity for the life of the fabric. BeTEX narrow woven fabrics are easy to integrate into a wearable electronic garment.

**Hardware, Findings and Accessories**

**NATULON® Ocean Sourced™ Zipper Collection**
YKK USA Inc. | [https://ykknorthamerica.com](https://ykknorthamerica.com)

These premium zippers are made from ocean-bound plastic waste collected within 50 km of the coastline of Sri Lanka. They offer the same strength, durability and functionality as conventional zippers and help YKK achieve its goal of further reducing carbon emissions in its manufacturing processes.

**Services to Manufacturers**

**PrintCraft™**
Trivantage LLC | [www.trivantage.com](http://www.trivantage.com)

PrintCraft by Glen Raven is an all-new print system technology delivering unlimited shade fabric customization backed by a five-year limited warranty. With as little as five yards, fabricators can provide full fabric customization on multiple width options through a single source.
Whether you’re looking to enhance your post-Expo experience or are seeing these companies for the first time, use the information below from IFAI Expo exhibitors to learn more about the products and services they provide.

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The collaborative approach
Creating a pathway to successful commercialization of new textile technologies.

The plenary luncheon session at IFAI Expo’s Advanced Textiles Conference brought together a panel of speakers united in a single message about the importance of collaboration in advancing textile manufacturing. Rhode Island’s textile industry provided the success story example.

Moderator Michael Woody, CEO, Trans-Tex LLC, Cranston, R.I., noted components necessary in this effort. Textile companies had been hesitant for fear of “tipping their hand” to a competitor. Breaking down the “silos” and getting people to cooperate was an important step, and the geographic proximity in Rhode Island helped in this regard. Government and political support is also critical, he said, as well as the involvement of colleges and universities.

Clare King, president of Propel LLC, Pawtucket, R.I., said, “The textile industry was exhausted.” The Rhode Island Textile Innovation Network (RITIN) rejuvenated the industry there and was so successful that it’s received attention across the country.

Mary Johnson, 401 Tech Bridge manager, said one initiative by this economic development organization based in Portsmouth, R.I., addressed the state textile industry’s aging workforce by identifying those close to retirement so a company could prepare in advance. It also helped companies hire replacement staff and connect with younger workers. “There’s a generation that doesn’t know about manufacturing, so there was an effort to show where the opportunities are.”

Scaling up manufacturing
Collaboration was a theme in many sessions, emphasizing the need for greater partnering among industry, academia and government participants. This is keenly felt among e-textile product developers.

“We still have the post-development valley of death,” said Propel LLC’s Clare King. Her company has been developing new smart products for about a decade. “It’s the gap in the transition [from prototype] to scaling up into making thousands,” she says. “The most brilliant work is coming from startups, but their investors don’t want to pay for the manufacturing.”

Large-scale manufacturing, however, requires the proper equipment and costs a lot of money, even as much as a $1 million. “It’s a long pipeline and a huge investment,” says Stephanie Rodgers, Apex Mills. “Maybe a startup has $10,000 to try something out.”

But it’s not just the money. It’s having the equipment that will do the job and having a partner willing to dedicate expensive equipment and time to creating a solution.

That’s the mission of the Advanced Functional Fabrics of America (AFFOA), a public/private partnership led by MIT.

In his presentation, CEO Sasha Stolyarov pointed out AFFOA successes in helping startups pursue manufacturing in the U.S. and getting those products to market. What most startups need, he said, is pilot-scale machinery, rather than the lab scale that produced a prototype, or on the other end of the spectrum, full commercial production equipment.

Deployable inflatable robotics
In his presentation, Ryan Gundling, CEO and lead engineer at Ryzing Technologies LLC showed how sophisticated, soft robotic structures can use inflatable technology to overcome a range of challenges. The added dimension of dynamic capabilities takes this technology to quite another level.

Gundling’s company has developed inflatable components that can be interfaced with mechanical parts to form a unique end product, designed and built for a specific use, such as in military operations, for automated systems in industrial environments, robotics for maintenance projects and other systems that function autonomously. Soft, inflatable technology can be an integral part of a tunneling “worm” in a search and rescue situation, where a person could not possibly go, or in a robotic hand that can pick up an item with precision.

Although the company has not yet integrated smart fabrics in their projects, Gundling says, “We’ve thought about it. That’s definitely the next step for us.”
New processes for new products

Part of the effort to bring e-textiles and e-textile products to successful commercialization is focused on new materials and processes that make commercialization more viable.

Prof. Jesse S. Jur, N.C. State University and director of ecosystem technology with AFFOA, explained his research in inkjet printing of e-textiles. With multiple variables, it’s a complex process, but it has its advantages, such as the ability to do patterning, Jur said. His research group has worked with various inks, processes and substrates that will make the conductive ink behave differently. Process control, conformity of the ink deposition and adhesion have been challenges.

In the end, “It’s the multi-layer structure that we’re doing,” Jur said, that is most impactful in the current research. “And to access all this work in the flexible film world and convert it into the textile world.”

Nextiles founder and CEO George Sun is promoting a “problem-first” approach for solutions in new technologies. “I truly believe that textiles can serve as a Moore’s-like law in terms of innovation,” he said. His company is working on an integrated approach in e-textile products that includes a software development kit (SDK) so all the device capabilities “talk to each other.” For now, Nextiles is focusing on the sports market, but Sun envisions many more applications, including sensing in self-driving cars, diagnostics in healthcare, soldier health monitoring and in geriatrics for remote monitoring and injury prevention.

In the end, he sees his company is something like Intel in a computer. “You wouldn’t buy a Nextiles shirt,” he said. “You’d buy a Nike shirt, for example, that has Nextiles technology in it.”

Conductive rubberized fabric

BeTEX conductive fabrics by Burlan Manufacturing LLC are designed to replace more expensive and heavier metal fiber products. The company has now added a conductive rubber material to its product line. It also has a conductive knit that’s flame retardant, flexible and lightweight. The company’s narrow woven fabrics are easily integrated into wearables, the company said.

Photo: © Mark Skalny Photography.

U.S. TRADE POLICIES OUTLINED

A panel lead by trade attorney Nate Bolin, partner, DLA Piper, with the Hon. Bill Jackson, assistant U.S. Trade representative for textiles, and John Macisso, legal counsel and director of global trade compliance, Albany International Corp., discussed priorities of the Biden administration and how they will likely impact the textile industry.

Jackson said the administration wants to shift its focus to one that puts the interests of workers and disadvantaged groups first. Trade agreements and supply chain issues are also in the forefront, particularly those that relate to critical products such as high-tech components and PPE.

Concern about the root causes of migration coming from central American countries is part of the discussion in the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), Jackson said. “We know that textiles are a big industry there. [There are] jobs on both sides of that supply chain.”

Although there has been some pressure from U.S companies to allow importing more products from countries outside of U.S. trade agreement partners, that is “not consistent with what we’re doing,” said Jackson. “You can’t attract new investment in growth with the participants if they don’t have the advantages of the agreements in place.”

He is confident that growth will happen. “We have a tremendous capacity here in the western hemisphere to actually produce more in this region—competitively,” he said. “China will continue to be a big player, but we’ve had too many eggs in the China basket. We’re seeing a once in a generation opportunity to shift that production to the U.S.”
The new normal

When the first cases of COVID-19 began to appear, Jeff Sponseller, executive vice president of Miller Weldmaster, said there was much confusion and misinformation. “At first, there were so many people trying to tell you what to expect it was like drinking from a firehose.”

In a session called "New Normals for Old School Attitudes: Running an International Business,” Brent Nussbaum, president of Miller Weldmaster, recalled the numerous meetings that took place to prepare for what was coming. “When our governor closed nonessential businesses, we shut down for two weeks. We thought that was the right thing to do. We furloughed 60 of our 115 employees so they could retain their health benefits.”

But not everything worked out as the company planned. “In addition to the unemployment benefits and stipends that were coming through, we had just paid out our employee profit sharing,” said Nussbaum. He said people in lockdown weren’t traveling or dining out like before, they now had more money than usual, and many were reluctant to return to work.

According to Sponseller, another problem was misjudging the market. “We saw our tent customers making emergency tents, so we wanted to launch a mass marketing campaign to say we have the machines available for you to buy, immediate shipping, training and so on,” he said. “But when I spoke to our tent customers, they said every event that they build tents for had been cancelled—the Daytona 500, horse races in upstate New York, air shows—all those events where they made their money every year went to almost zero, so they said thanks but no thanks.”

SPECIALTY FABRICS

Leveraging rental tents during and after the pandemic

Jim Reyen, business director at Johnson Outdoors Inc./Eureka! Big Tents Division, presented the campfire session “Leveraging Rental Tents During and After the COVID Pandemic” at IFAI Expo in Nashville, Tenn.

During the session, Reyen explained the changing demands for tents throughout various stages of the pandemic. “The first wave of tent demand ran from March to June 2020,” he said. This stage included tent requests for hospitals, restaurants and drive-through testing sites. “The second wave ran from July 2020 to March 2021,” Reyen said. During this period, businesses and restaurants continued to be popular clients, but schools also chimed in on the demand. The third wave (March 2021 to present day) has included a steady stream of requests from schools, businesses, restaurants and vaccination sites.

According to Reyen, tent types and styles that have been in popular demand throughout the pandemic have included pop ups, pole tents, frame tents, clearspans, and military grade/rapid deployable tents.

As for the future, Reyen said he expects to see a lot of creative uses for tents. “I believe there’s a lot of pent-up demand for outdoor concerts and weddings.” Outdoor movies and shopping areas might be on the horizon, too.

How to outsell your competition

During the education session “Outselling Your Competition,” James Auerbach, vice president, event segment for the American Rental Association, shared four measurable and respectable pillars that all salespeople must excel at in order to outsell their competition. Referred to as the “RSPF recipe,” Auerbach defined the pillars as research, scheduling, presentation and follow up.

Research should be carried out every day and it is important for a manager to ensure the team is working from a verified prospect list. Auerbach also recommended that teams commit to having quarterly contact with their top 50 clients.

According to Auerbach, scheduling is the most pivotal habit that separates a great salesperson from an average salesperson. Constant (obsessive) schedule management is key, and managers should encourage team members to checkerboard their time in order to maximize efficiency.

Presentation is another main pillar that salespeople should master in order to outsell their competition. Team members should embrace conversation, ask questions and practice patience when dealing with clients. Visuals, such as high-resolution photos and short videos, can also be utilized to effectively inform and pitch products and services.

Auerbach defined the follow-up period as being one of the most neglected steps that sets great salespeople apart from average performers. To ensure a proper follow-up with a client, salespeople should use a variety of communication methods (text, email, call) that are spaced out and properly scheduled on a calendar.
The road to zero

Study after study shows that “sustainability” greatly influences consumer buying decisions. In 2017 some 10.1 million tons of nonwovens were produced globally. That’s 270 billion square meters totaling $43 billion worth of textile money. Of that, Michael Savarie said only about 37 percent of it was classified as sustainable.

“What does sustainable mean?” asked Savarie, sustainability manager at Piana Nonwovens. “It can mean anything from recycled, regenerative, OEKO-TEX® certified—all those aspects that make it what we call sustainable.

Savarie said in this current economy, manufacturers are unable to get materials they need—yet they are throwing away millions of tons of materials. “Why are we throwing these materials away?” he asked.

The reason is the so-called linear economy, he said. Products are manufactured, used by consumers and most times thrown away. “In this linear economy, we don’t capture the value of these textiles at the end of their lives, because we have no way of actually getting those materials back.”

But now manufacturers are talking about following the circular economy. That infrastructure—which requires both education and legislation—enables manufacturers to reclaim materials that can be processed and reused, significantly reducing material cost and waste. “It means we can use certain materials that can be recycled after the fact and actually bring back and use once again—if they have a recovery system in place,” Savarie said.

More companies are beginning to do this with plastics and with woven materials. Piana Nonwovens, for example has created the first fully circular foam alternative called V-Smart that can replace the foam cushions in chairs and sofas. Typically, foam is either thrown away or ground up to be used in carpet underlays.

“Companies like Procter & Gamble are working with researchers in Michigan to reclaim diapers and reuse those as adhesives,” Savarie said. “There are some pretty crazy technologies out there that are driving the circular economy of nonwoven material and giving it another life.”

Working with architects

In a session called “How to Talk and Work with Architects,” Marc Shellshear, general manager of Value Vinyls Inc., said the biggest challenge is a waiting game.

“You have to think of selling to architects as a way of building a pipeline to tomorrow,” he said. “Remember that architects don’t purchase anything. The general contractors do, but the architects are the absolute key to making those final sales.”

Long before any construction begins, architects file design plans with the Construction Specifications Institute. Shellshear said it is critical to accurately list all your product’s specifications and know where it falls within CSI. “If you specialize in TIG welding rather than MIG welding, for example, put that in your specs,” he said. Why? Because, first, it will show other architects specifically what you do, but it will also help thwart your competitors who will try to insert their products in place of yours as the process continues.

Fortunately, Shellshear said, the pandemic has made these challenges somewhat easier to handle. “Your competition will still try,” he said, “but I believe the pendulum has swung and contractors are less likely to make spec changes and seek out alternative suppliers, because they, like the rest of us, are short staffed.”

Don’t make the mistake of thinking all architects are the same, he cautioned. “The one thing you need to do is put yourself in their shoes. If you don’t it will be hard to visualize what these guys are trying to do. They are very different from general contractors and people in the construction industry.”

Still, successfully working with architects will require research on your part. “You need to do your work to know about the firm you are trying to work with,” Shellshear said. “You need to know what kind of buildings they specialize in. Do they do schools or airports? Do they have a signature style? You can often look at a building and know what firm designed it.”

Despite the warnings, architectural selling does pay off greatly if it’s done properly, he said. “The key is patience. It takes a very long time from when you work with an architect to when it becomes a viable project. But that will pay off in the end.”
Shade sail dos and don’ts

Shade sails offer a great business opportunity for fabricators, but it’s important to keep some key “dos and don’ts” in mind.

That was the message from Shazeebo owner and founder Patrick Howe during his presentation "Shade Sails Dos and Don’ts—A Deep Dive,” presented at the IFAI Expo in Nashville.

There are several considerations for those that are looking to expand their shade sail business, Howe says. Be sure to study the environment to look for possible problems.

A steady diet of wind will cause mechanical breakdown of the shade cloth, vibrate the hardware excessively and reduce the lifespan of the product. If you see a windfarm in the area, for instance, that could be a warning sign of a potential problem.

Look for water issues, such as a low-lying area that floods on occasion or a golf course where the owners soak the ground to make the grass grow. Too much water will saturate the ground potentially causing the footing to fail, which lets the posts tip in, making the sail loose.

If a yard is full of large rocks, they may not have been delivered. Those rocks likely came from the property. Warn the property owner there may be an extra charge for a hard dig.

Don’t forget to measure properly and look for potential obstacles.

“One of the most important times to pump the brakes, slow down and take your time is during the measurement process,” Howe says. “If you put junk in, you’re going to get junk out.”

Howe recommends investing in a laser designed with a 3D function. It’s quicker, more accurate and safer than using a tape measure, he says.

Protect your customers and grow your business

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. It is primarily caused by harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun, and experts say that one in five Americans will be diagnosed with a skin cancer by age 70.

In a session called “Sell Shade! Reduce the Risk of Skin Cancer and Grow Your Business,” Dennis Rushing, general manager of Industrial Shadeports, explained why ultraviolet radiation is so dangerous.

There are two types of ultraviolet radiation, Rushing said. Longer wavelength Ultraviolet B rays cause tanning, but overexposure results in sunburn and in many cases blistering. It’s also the primary cause of skin aging.

Ultraviolet A rays have a shorter wavelength but penetrate the skin more deeply. "Exposure actually damages the DNA of skin cells on the innermost part of your top layer of skin, where most skin cancers occur," said Rushing.

What does all this mean? “Shade is going to be needed more and more,” he said. Schools, churches, and outdoor public spaces need to provide better protection to people, especially children who are less likely to realize they are harming themselves.” He said children often get a lot of intense sun exposure that damages their cells and may result in cancer many years or decades later.

Rushing said that tent, awning, and shade structure sellers have an important role to play in reducing skin cancer by educating clients to the damaging effects of the sun and explaining how they can help limit exposure. Properly installed and maintained shade structures can block up to 97.7 percent of UV rays.

“Anything you can do to protect children is good for business,” said Rushing. “If we all get involved in this, it will only grow your business.”

SHADE SAIL ENGINEERING

Timothy Akes, representative for the Americas, MPanel Software Solutions, and Andrew Askwith, senior software developer, MPanel Software Solutions, presented the education session “Shade Sail Engineering—It’s Not Just a Bunch of Numbers.”

According to Akes, there is a tendency for shade sail engineering specifications to be overlooked until construction begins, which can be expensive. Rather, companies should aim to involve engineers during the initial stages of a new shade sail project.

Askwith guided education session attendees through a live demonstration of MPanel’s software and highlighted the program’s unique ability to apply various loads—such as wind, snow and rain—to determine a shade structure’s sail displacement, fabric stresses, cable tensions, and pole and footer sizing locations. By utilizing modern and easy-to-use software, companies involved in shade sail engineering can better design and install shade projects that can weather outdoor elements.