

Door Security + Safety

DHI'S PUBLICATION FOR DOOR SECURITY + SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

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Leading the DHI Family

**2023–2024
DHI President
Cortney Anderson Wascher**

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Leading the DHI Family

Cortney Anderson Wascher began working in the door and hardware industry at age 11, and her love for the business grew ever stronger as she ascended to lead the company founded by her father in 1960. Now she will also lead DHI as its 2023-2024 President.

BY CORTNEY ANDERSON WASCHER



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CORTNEY ANDERSON WASCHER



Cortney stands next to antique keys collected by her grandfather that were first displayed in her father's locksmith store, representing the company's legacy.



Cortney (center) and her sister, Britt, at an Associated Locksmiths of America convention in 1984.

I am honored and humbled to take the helm of the Door and Hardware Institute as 2023-2024 President.

My first official participation in the door and hardware industry dates back to age 11 when my sister and I worked in the Anderson Lock Company booth at an Associated Locksmiths of America (ALOA) Convention.

As a member of DHI since 1996, I have attended numerous national conventions, training seminars and management workshops. In addition, I chaired the Host Committee for the Chicago DHI Convention in 2002 and have served on additional national committees.

After earning my bachelor's degree in economics from Vanderbilt University in 1995, I joined the Ingersoll Rand hardware sales team, first in Indianapolis at Von Duprin and later in Pittsburgh, working for an independent representative agency. Then, late in 1997, I returned to my hometown to work at Anderson Lock, the company my father, Gene Anderson, founded in 1960.

My dad was influential in developing my love of business and this industry. I learned about door hardware through osmosis from dinner table conversations and could relate business concepts learned in school to our family business. Many people work as interns for short periods, but I lived my internship for many years growing up and am so grateful for that experience.

The time I spent at Von Duprin allowed me to see the entire sales and manufacturing process. I trained in each aspect of the factory, including assembly,

polishing and technical support. Traveling with independent representatives from agencies across the country allowed me to network with industry professionals, many of whom I still connect with at DHI events.

Working in Pittsburgh as an independent representative gave me another vantage point of hardware applications. Our industry responds to ever-changing and often tragic events with innovative products that save lives. My meetings with architects, end users and distributors were opportunities for them to mentor me while I introduced new solutions to them.

I continued with on-the-job training, working as a member of Anderson Lock's hardware sales and marketing teams and even as a lock technician. I also took several DHI classes starting with the basics such as Architectural Hardware 1, 2 and 3 to DHI's current in-person and online offerings.

My DHI experiences, and my terms serving on industry advisory boards, introduced me to people and places I would not have otherwise known. And, although it was oftentimes difficult to be away from my young children for several days at a time, I feel the benefits outweighed the sacrifices.

Working alongside my father gave me an open door to apply my education and training to daily challenges. As a result, I began implementing my vision for widening opportunities for growth by becoming a provider of electronic access controls, doors and frames for new and existing



Cortney and her father, Gene Anderson, at an industry event.

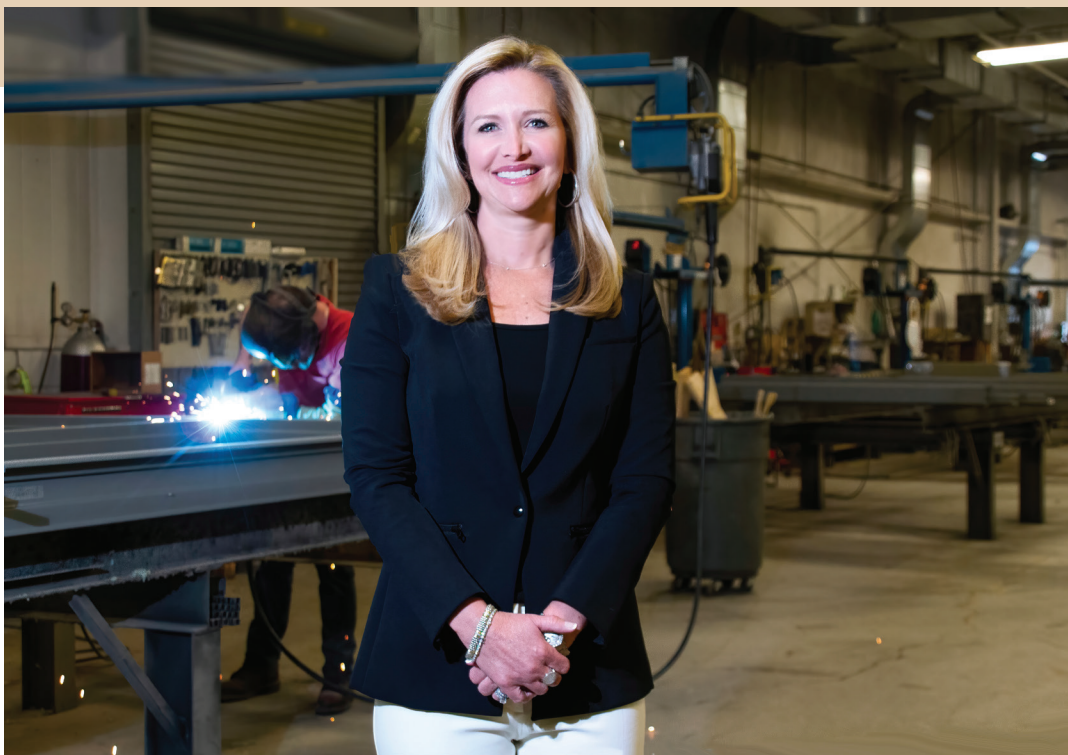
construction. I introduced new technology, processes and products but endeavored to keep the same family-friendly work environment. In the early 2000s, we opened our Door Division, managed by my husband, Devin Wascher, AHC, FDAI, making us a total openings solution provider.

When my dad retired, I was named president; soon after, I became an owner. We are now a certified WBENC (Women's Business Enterprise National Council), with two locations and more than 100 employees.

In 2017, I received the DHI Award of Merit, and in 2018, I was honored with a Builders Hardware Manufacturers Association Award of Excellence. I'm also a former president of the Des Plaines Chamber of Commerce and the local chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction.

Before being elected to the DHI Board of Governors, I also served on the State of Illinois Private Detective, Private Alarm, Private Security, Fingerprint Vendor and Locksmith Board within the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. I was one of two locksmiths in Illinois appointed to this advisory board, which reviews cases brought before the state and makes recommendations for punitive action according to current laws and practices. I represented locksmiths and the door security industry on this critical advisory board from 2009 until 2021.

One of my passions is protecting consumers and the industry's reputation by helping to eliminate phony locksmiths who inundate the internet with faux business listings that link back to a call center and circumvent fire and life safety codes. As door and hardware



A welder fabricates a door frame behind Cortney in Anderson Lock's Door Division.

professionals, we have a great opportunity to protect others and our industry at large.

An even larger passion is my family. Devin and I have two children. Our son Will studies business at Texas Christian University (TCU), where he will be a sophomore. We became fans of the TCU Horned Frogs last year and hope for another fun football season! Our daughter Cathryn, an incoming junior at Prospect High School, plays golf and travel soccer. They have spent portions of their summers and school holidays working at Anderson Lock and helping to lead our Team Gene walk for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

My family keeps me grounded and gives my life balance as I continue to grow in my career.

Vision for the Future

Our industry continues to evolve from primarily selling mechanical devices to electronic locking products, requiring more testing, training and installation time. Increased dependence on technology is transforming

traditional ways of doing business. Although keys will never go away, security is becoming more about collecting and analyzing data and integrating our products with third-party providers to support real-time alerts and facility lockdowns.

Staying up-to-date in the security and life safety sector is essential to serving our customers and communities. My mother, Teresa, taught school. Like her, I believe strongly in the value of education. Whereas most of the DHI classes I took were in person, often in another state, today's online offerings make technical training more accessible, flexible and economical. The internet allows us to access information in the fastest way possible. It gives us digital resources and materials with immense data and knowledge.

The technical skill set of new employees illustrates the paradigm shift in how they acquire knowledge because they are digital natives. The skills they contribute are new and will positively influence our industry.

“My dad was influential in developing my love of business and this industry. I learned about door hardware through osmosis from dinner table conversations and could relate business concepts learned in school to our family business.”



Cortney Anderson Wascher shown in Anderson Lock's expansive Door Division warehouse.

Post-pandemic training reflects cultural trends toward doing (nearly) everything online. DHI's impressive expanded and updated educational offerings break the molds of yesteryear, appealing to young professionals and industry experts seeking the next level of learning, but wanting to take classes at their own pace and on their own schedule.

During the past few months, Fundamentals of Architectural Doors and Hardware (COR101) and Introduction to Building Codes (COR102) self-study courses were redesigned and relaunched; they currently lead our robust course catalog.

DHI continues to invest significant time and resources into our educational offerings. On-demand learning classes will appeal to employers looking to train industry newcomers. Like the classes mentioned above, DHI will invest in more self-paced course conversions this year; however, instructor-led online options and in-person class offerings will grow.

While I fully endorse online DHI courses and require all new Anderson Lock employees to complete COR101 and COR102, I also know I would not be who I am today without in-person classes, conventions and connections. I also encourage DHI members to support their local chapters and to attend off-site training and leadership summits whenever possible.

As I mentioned, demands are higher for electronic solutions. School security, in particular, continues to transform classroom security locks due to all-too-common school shootings. DHI recognizes the need for technical class offerings; however, not all



Cortney and Devin with their children, Will and Cathryn.

classes are appropriate to be held online. During the pandemic, our family noted the value of in-person education with our children. DHI acknowledges that not everyone learns the same way. Some skills and techniques are better learned through hands-on training.

Developing an understanding of codes and standards is essential for specifiers, suppliers, installers, and anyone who maintains doors, frames and hardware. DHI serves the life safety and security industry

by focusing on our commitment to educate, advocate, innovate and facilitate strategic paths forward.

Attracting and developing a new generation of industry leaders is becoming crucial for meeting the ever-changing demands of our industry. By offering step-by-step training courses that do not require prior experience, DHI helps develop and assimilate new talent. Knowledge empowers people, keeping them moving forward in their professional lives.

As veteran employees retire, it is essential that our industry becomes more proactive with onboarding, mentoring and retaining skilled workers. In addition, by leveraging education and the culture of caring deeply about maintaining codes and standards, we will improve security and life safety in all facilities.

DHI's rich legacy of door and hardware leaders who contributed their time and talents for the benefit not only of our industry but for the betterment of our society should be celebrated to inspire the next generation of certified professionals. DHI remains the gold standard for its class offerings and credentialing programs.

The best way to connect with past and future leaders is by attending meetings such as the DHI conNextions conference and trade show, which will be held in Boston, October 25-26, 2023. Another excellent opportunity is the DHI Management Summit, to be held July 19-21, 2023 in Colorado Springs.

I thank all volunteers who share their expertise and bring DHI to new heights. Like you, I am passionate about our industry. Our responsibility is to ensure that our environments are safe and secure.

DHI goes beyond "doorknobs and frame sticks." By elevating our image as cutting-edge solution providers with security and life safety expertise, I am confident we will attract talented, driven team members who will find meaningful careers in doors and hardware.

Our doors are open to a progressive future. I look forward to working with you this year. +

CORTNEY ANDERSON WASCHER is
President/Owner of Anderson Lock
Company. Email: caw@andersonlock.com.