

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 10, 2009**

## **10 Retailers Honored as Retail Innovators of the Year** *Inaugural Retail Recognition Program Sponsored by Vermont American*

*INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana* ... Ten home improvement retailers are being honored for outstanding achievement as owners and managers of independently owned hardware and building supply stores in the United States and Canada. They are honorees in the 2009 Retail Innovators of the Year program. Sponsored by Vermont American, the program is organized by the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) and *Hardware Retailing* magazine and is dedicated to honoring independent retailers who are setting the example for retail innovation in the home improvement industry.

### **This year's honorees in the Overall Category include:**

- **Jeff Cardwell, *Cardwell's Do it Best Home Center, Indianapolis, Ind.*—**  
Cardwell, who is president of Cardwell Do it Best Home Center in Indianapolis, has partnered with the Salvation Army, the American Legion and is active in the Keep America Beautiful campaign. He is founder and president of the People Helping People network, a ministry that provides disaster relief services. In 2005, he led a first response team of volunteers to assist the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. He is also a founding board member of World In Need, which has raised more than \$2 million for earthquake victims in El Salvador. Recently, Cardwell worked in El Salvador with the Fuller Center for Housing and with Bloom's Children's Hospital to build the first burn center in Central America. In 2003 he was appointed Honorary Lieutenant Governor of the State of Indiana, and he received a United States Congressional Salute for Community Service.
- **Tom Levi, *Levi Home Hardware Building Centre, Almonte, Ontario, Canada*—**  
Levi's retail philosophy is at the end of every transaction, the customer, the staff and the store should all come out a winner. This philosophy is what has helped the store grow by 23 percent over the past four years. A leader in his community, Levi sponsors many community events throughout the year supporting Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Canadian Cancer Society, the local hospital and Canadian Troops serving in Afghanistan. In 2007 the store received the Paul Straus Public Relations Award from Home Hardware Stores Limited for demonstrating creative and innovative approaches to store promotion and building customer and community relations through public relations.
- **Bobby Fuller, *Fuller and Son Hardware, Little Rock Ark.*—**  
Fuller and his sons Jeff and J.R. have taken the art of advertising to a new level among home improvement retailers. They write, produce and star in their own compelling cable television spots. Earlier this year they entered three television spots in the Arkansas Advertising Federation's ADDY awards and won for all three entries. Fuller and Son Hardware is also renowned for putting its name on as many products in the store as possible, including buckets, T-shirts, hats, golf balls and even bottled water that is for sale in the store.

**This year's Category honorees include:**

- **Merchandising: Bill Keim, *Keim Lumber, Charm, Ohio***—The entire 120,000-square-foot facility at Keim Lumber features handmade Shaker-style cherry woodwork, including the endcaps. The service desk is designed like a town square, with lights and a clock. All this operating in a town of just 100 residents.
- **Technology: George Smith, *Westlake Ace Hardware, Lenexa, Kan.***—With more than 85 stores located in Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico, Westlake is continually on the cutting edge of new and innovative ways to merchandise product and enhance the shopping experience. Its latest “customer experience” features in-store digital signage.
- **Advertising & Promotions: Kyle Walters, *Elliott's Hardware, Plano, Texas***—Walters is a master of “big ideas.” Earlier this spring he welcomed former President George W. Bush back to Texas by offering him a job as a store greeter. The story was picked up by both national and international news wires and culminated in a personal visit to the store by President Bush himself on Feb. 21 to personally decline the offer.
- **Store Operations: Jim Zyrowski, *Ben's Supercenter, Brown City, Mich.***—This store is a “staple” in the community of 1,300 residents, offering customers a hardware store, a grocery store with a full-service butcher shop and bakery, a pharmacy, a bank, a screen printing/sign shop, a rental center, a pizzeria and a Subway franchise ... all under one 72,000-square-foot roof.
- **Employee Training: Will Barnhart, *Wilco, Mt. Angel, Ore.***—Employee training is top priority at Wilco. The 11-unit chain has developed customized training programs for employees, including an intensive five-day Cashier Mastery course that enables entry-level cashiers to learn the skills for the job and deliver superior customer service.
- **Community Involvement: Brent Burger, *Campbell True Value, Madison, Maine***—In 2007, Burger founded the “Nine Days for Nine Children” project, a home-makeover challenge focused on saving nine children and their mother from being evicted from their home. He purchased the family's foreclosed home at his own expense, then launched an initiative dedicated to renovating the 1,400-square-foot home and returning it to the family of 10. Burger also serves as Vice President of the True Value Foundation.
- **Green Marketing: Marc Robichaud, *Robichaud TIM-BR MART, Meteghan Centre, Nova Scotia***—When other retailers were crafting their green strategies, this fifth-generation retailer was already living them ... at home and in his 140-year-old business. For the past decade, Robichaud has been an expert at helping his customers live greener lives. Through his efforts, he continues to save customers money, reduce their carbon footprint and make them loyal customers.



**NRHA**  
North American Retail  
Hardware Association

**HARDWARE**  
**Retailing**

“These retailers are leading the industry by example in what can be achieved by independent retailers across the home improvement industry,” says Bill Lee, NRHA managing director and publisher of *Hardware Retailing* magazine. “Their example encourages other independent retailers to continue their pursuit of excellence in hardware/home center retailing, and we applaud their efforts.”

This year’s Retail Innovator Award recipients will be showcased at the upcoming NRHA Annual Convention and All-Industry Conference, which will take place July 13-15, 2009, at the San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter in San Antonio, Texas. The Retail Innovator Awards program will be held on July 14, where the honorees will be recognized for their accomplishments. They will also be featured in the August issue of *Hardware Retailing* magazine.

**For more information on the 2009 Retail Innovator of the Year Awards or the 2009 NRHA Convention and All-Industry Conference, log on to [www.nrha.org](http://www.nrha.org).**

#### **About Vermont American**

Vermont American Power Tool Accessories is one of the largest power tool accessories brands in the world. For over 60 years the company has helped independent home improvement retailers outfit consumers and professional tradesmen with premium quality bits and blades designed to meet rugged jobsite requirements. Vermont American products successfully combine function and design, resulting in patented and affordable solutions to user needs with products like circular saw blades, twist drill bits and screwdriver bits, router tables and accessories. All Vermont American bits and blades are manufactured to precise standards and tolerances, fit any brand of power tool and provide trusted performance. Vermont American is part of the Robert Bosch Tool Corporation group of reliable power tool brands

#### **About NRHA/*Hardware Retailing***

The North American Retail Hardware Association serves the \$321 billion retail hardware/home improvement industry from its headquarters in Indianapolis, Ind. NRHA publishes *Hardware Retailing*, the industry’s leading trade magazine that is distributed to more than 36,000 independent home improvement retailers across the United States and Canada. The editorial content covers the most pressing issues that home improvement retailers face on a daily basis and fulfills NRHA’s mission of helping retailers become better, more profitable merchants.

#### **For More Information Contact:**

Scott Wright,  
Manager of Training and Communications  
North American Retail Hardware Association/*Hardware Retailing* Magazine  
Direct: (317) 275-9417  
Toll Free: (800) 772-4424  
[swright@nrha.org](mailto:swright@nrha.org)

6325 Digital Way #300  
Indianapolis, IN 46278-1679  
(317) 290-0338  
(317) 275-9403 fax  
[www.nrha.org](http://www.nrha.org)