

# Hardware Conference Unveils New Programs

The 19th annual Hardware Conference, which took place in Marco Island, Fla., Sept. 7-9, continues to attract new manufacturers and hardware retailers. Conference Director Tom Chasteen attributes the success to the open, honest communications between the manufacturers and retailers.

This year Chasteen and Michael Braun of Advanced Web Applications Inc. introduced three new programs to assist vendors in their efforts to capture product data from participating retailers that can be shared with wholesale buyers to improve product development. Retailers, vendors and wholesalers expressed interest in the live demonstration.

Chasteen explained there are four additional programs in various development stages to be released in the next year. "These programs are simply the culmination of the requests by retailers and manufacturers over the past two years to speed up the process of getting new products to market through the retailers' primary wholesaler," he said.

Also in conjunction with the conference, True Value, Do it Best and Ace Hardware all sponsored their annual dealer luncheon meetings and reported increased attendance over the previous years' meetings. Chasteen attributed the increase in attendance to the fact that The Hardware Conference is the only forum in the industry where Ace, Do it Best, Orgill and True Value retailers come together with manufacturers and wholesalers to specifically preview new and existing products.

The two open dialog sessions give attendees the opportunity to discuss issues and trends that are having both a long-term and immediate impact on the hardware industry each year. This year the slowdown in the housing market and its impact on the industry were discussed. Retailers and manufacturers also discussed various ways they can take some of the cost out of the channel to achieve lowest landed costs.

During the awards dinner this year True Value recognized Francis Bailey, owner of Sanibel (Island) True Value, with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Bailey has been in the retail hardware business for more than 50 years.

Ace Hardware awarded Joe Waksler with the annual Beacon Award for his commitment to his community in Port Charlotte. His store was completely destroyed by Hurricane Charlie in 2005, and Waksler completely rebuilt the store from the ground up and was back in business within 18 months.

Do it Best awarded Fred Gumienny of D&E Do it Best Hardware in Mims, Fla., with its Beacon Award for his strong commitment to the communities his store services. Gumienny and his family have already purchased the property for their second ground-up location, scheduled to open in 2008.

The North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) sponsored two dealer seminars. One was a discussion of ADA (Americans with Disabilities) lawsuits and how to make sure retailers' stores are in compliance with the federal law. Dan Stahl of Southern DataComm explained the new American Express processing requirements. Bill Lee, NRHA's vice president of catalog operations and creative services, demonstrated the employee training program that is currently available for free to all NRHA members, Ace dealers and True Value dealers.

John Hammond, NRHA managing director, presented three \$1,000 checks to the winners of this year's scholarships. Each year NRHA sponsors three scholarships to deserving applicants who are children of retail hardware store owners or children of their employees.

Activant and ICI Paints stepped up to the marquee sponsorship level joining Rubbermaid, NRHA, Robert Bosch Tool Co. and Miami Children's Hospital Foundation. "We are very proud to be associated with these industry leaders and our other sponsors and participating vendors," said Chasteen. "This really is an industry event as evidenced by the strong support of the participating wholesalers, True Value, Ace, Do it Best and Orgill."



Jim Troiano of Do it Best Corp. presents Fred Gumienny of D&E Do it Best Hardware in Mims, Fla., with the NRHA Beacon Award for his involvement and commitment to the industry and his community.