

**Best Hardware Store in Town – Dinner and Awards**

**Lyle Heidemann Talking Points**

Friday, Feb. 22, 6 p.m.

The Commerce Club

191 Peachtree Street Northeast, Atlanta, Ga.



Welcome to Atlanta, and congratulations on the hard work and dedication that's brought you here tonight.

As you know, we created the Best Hardware Store in Town award in 2007 to recognize retailers like you who deliver a consistent and compelling shopping experience. Each year since then, I've looked forward to highlighting the winners from across the country – and, recently, around the world – at our Spring Market.

Your businesses are concrete examples for your peers of just what successful retailing looks like: a store staffed with stand-out individuals focused on customer service that is competitively priced, well-promoted, easy to shop and well-stocked. I look forward to seeing each of you honored on stage during the General Session tomorrow, and again offer my sincere congratulations.

So without further ado, I invite you to please come up as your store is called.

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Our first recipient for Best Hardware Store in Town for 2012 is:

### **Boland's True Value Hardware – Chapin, South Carolina**

- Since Ronnie and Tonia opened their store in 1982, they've aimed to have the best customer service and community relations around and their business has become the hardware store of choice for much of the county.
- The Bolands, now joined by their son Eric, not only expanded their business twice from its original 3,000-sq.-ft. facility to today's 18,000-sq.-ft. location, they also earned Chapin's "Business Person of the Year" award in 2007. And theirs was the first store in South Carolina to remodel to True Value Company's Destination True Value format in 2010.
- The Bolands are actively involved in the area chamber of commerce, veterans' affairs, Toys for Tots, and other local causes.

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## Cook's True Value – Prosser, Washington

- Jeff Cook's parent's started the store in 1961, in a modest 2,000-sq.ft. location. But as the Prosser community grew, along with word of the store's excellent service, Cook's True Value expanded too, first to 4,000 sq. ft., and then again to 6,000 sq. ft., before moving into an old grocery store location boasting 11,500 sq. ft. of retail space.
- Today, Jeff runs the store with his son Scott, and in 2011, the pair remodeled Cook's to the Destination True Value format, adding another 1,000 sq. ft. of retail space to the store.
- The Cook's keep customers coming back by focusing on the basic hardware tenets: merchandising, housekeeping customer service and breadth of selection of product, from sporting goods to housewares, from outdoor living to lumber and everything in between.

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## DeRonne True Value Hardware – Eastpointe, Michigan

- David and Diane DeRonne are carrying on the tradition started by their grandfather, who opened the first DeRonne Hardware store in 1940, and their parents, Paul and Lorrie, who purchased their DeRonne True Value Hardware in 1964.
- DeRonne is known throughout the Detroit market for their great service and selection. Local kids even sign up on a waiting list for the chance to work at the store.
- In addition to the traditional hardware fare, DeRonne also features a large niche business, including Carhartt and Just Ask Rental.
- Boasting 10,000 sq. ft. of retail space, the store became even more customer friendly thanks to a 2006 remodel. And the DeRonne's are now looking to add a second location.

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## **Horn's True Value – Sayre, Pennsylvania**

- Celebrating 100 years in business this year, Karen and Bernie Duggan's Horn's True Value prides itself on its friendly and knowledgeable employees who greet each and every customer who walks through the door.
- The store has grown from a laundry service founded by Karen Duggan's great grandfather and great uncle in 1912 to a 20,000-square-foot retail hardware store that continues to meet the needs of its community today.
- Horn's has the products their customers need, and offers an array of niche markets, including Just Ask Rental, a small engine repair shop, a JC Penney Catalog store, a large toy department, UPS service and computer color matching.
- Horn's also strives to take care of their community in others ways, and is involved with the chamber of commerce, the historical society, and the Salvation Army.

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## **Kelly's Freeport, Ltd. – Freeport, Grand Bahamas**

- A hardware leader in the Bahamas for more than 47 years, Kelly's is clean, modern, well-lit and features more than a dozen departments, including bridal registry, automotive, bed and bath, lumber and more.
- The store's dedicated team of more than 100 make it a point to build relationships with their customers, many of whom are repeat shoppers. Staff members call customers by name and often know exactly what they're shopping for.
- In addition to their commitment to helping customers, Kelly's has made itself great by regularly giving back to the community: In 2012, the store assisted the local home for neglected children, the island's public hospital, and many other organizations. And they also received a much appreciated paint grant from True Value Foundation's Painting a Brighter Future for Lewis Yard Primary School.

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## Palm Springs Hardware – Palm Springs, California

- Dave Callahan and Gregg Heyer’s Palm Springs True Value has been a part of their community since 2000, but a relocation in last year really set the store on the right path.
- The 24,000-sq.-ft. store is now located in a more visible location in downtown Palm Springs, and remodeled to DTV, which has been hugely popular with customers.
- The store’s 36 friendly and helpful sales associates further enhance its customer experience. Many on staff have been with the store for more than five years, and all are well trained with expert knowledge in multiple areas of the store.
- The store is known for its expanded and unique assortments and Dave says, “Job No. 1 is to be in stock and have what the customer needs. We have the best assortment. People can find what they want every time.”

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## **Penn Valley True Value Hardware – Penn Valley, California**

- Owner Scott Gutierrez' special knowledge of the hardware industry comes in part from spending more than 30 years at his family's store. Those skills, alongside Penn Valley's top-notch customer service and product mix has allowed the team to create a truly enjoyable shopping experience for customers.
- The store's employees are experts at hardware and at customer service, treat each other like family, and are trained to have an ownership mentality.
- In addition to products, Penn Valley offers many services, including propane refills, pipe threading and cutting, key making, blade and chain sharpening, and more.
- And to remain competitive with other local hardware stores, Penn Valley delights customers by matching prices, including those of Home Depot.



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## **Pojoaque (poe-waw-key) True Value – Santa Fe, New Mexico**

- An integral part of its rural reservation’s community, Anthony Urbina and team’s Pojoaque (poe-waw-key) True Value has served the area for more than 30 years.
- In 2011, Pojoaque (poe-waw-key) added 2,264 square feet of retail space, and adopted DTV, resulting in a clean, well-lit store that draws customers back with its product assortment and knowledgeable, helpful sales associates.
- Anthony attributes the store’s success to his team members, most of whom come from within the pueblo and are placed in the appropriate areas based on their knowledge.
- “Our people are what keep the customers coming back,” he says. “The team members know their customers, and are always very willing to assist them when needed. They're eager to learn, and they'll do whatever is needed for the store to be successful.”

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## **Prairie Side True Value – Kenosha, Wisconsin**

- After 25 years in corporate America, Gary Dickes fulfilled a life-long dream when he and his wife, Marilyn, opened Prairie Side True Value in late 2010.
- Gary’s passion for owning a hardware store has carried over into superior customer service.
- With the amount of competition in Kenosha top of mind, Gary is adamant that his strategy be focused on the customers. He's also constantly coaching his employees and having frank conversations centered on the 5Ps of retail.
- “If I hear laughter in the aisles, then we're doing it right,” Gary said. “We've created an environment where customers want to be. That's success.”

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## Richardson True Value Hardware – Haskell, Texas

- Although Richardson’s focus has altered from its original emphasis when it opened in 1964 as an International Harvester Truck and Tractor dealer, it’s always found a way to support the rural Haskell community, first adding a True Value Hardware in 1992, and a NAPA Auto Parts in 1995.
- General Manager Carl Milburn, who took over the store in 2000, notes that customer service is a high priority, and one of the reasons why consumers regard the store so highly.
- The store’s employees, with a combined experience of 98 years, greet every customer who enters the store, and personally assist them in finding what they need.
- In addition to helping customers inside the store’s four walls, Richardson’s supports the Noah Project, an organization that advocates for victims of family violence.

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## True Value Hardware of Litchfield – Litchfield, Connecticut

- Since True Value of Litchfield opened in 1985 and Roger Mahieu Sr. put Roger Jr. to work with a broom, the father and son team has created a store well known for its dedication to helping customers get what they need.
- Thanks to several long-time associates, some approaching 20 years with the store, customers know just who to go to with a project question.
- Since opening 27 years ago, the store has continued to grow – from a relatively small space to 20,000 sq. ft. today.
- In 1999, the Mahieu’s added Just Ask Rental to their business. And, in 2012, the store remodeled to DTV, which has been instrumental in their continued success.

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## True Value Home Center – Marshall, Minnesota

- True Value Home Center, which got its start in a 20- by 24-foot garage in 1952, now occupies a 38,000-sq.-ft. facility, offering a Just Ask Rental department, kitchen and bath shop, a complete flooring department, and much more.
- Despite a Menards opening in the area a couple of years ago, the store's business continues to succeed — thanks in large part to its experienced and caring people. Customers often comment on the good, honest advice they receive from the store's staff of 60.
- True Value Home Center is about more than selling merchandise, it's about helping people solve problems. The staff is trained to find out what projects customers are working on and how to best help them with those projects, and they all follow the mantra, "We don't sell anything we wouldn't use ourselves."

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## **Watkins True Value Hardware & Appliance – Maryville, Missouri**

- Watkins True Value originally got its start as an appliance store and then grew into a hardware store to meet the needs of its community. Now in its third generation, owner Mark Watkins runs the store with his wife Carol and two sons, Brad and Brian.
- Fresh off a relocation last year into a 27,000 square-foot vacated Wal-Mart, the store has earned a reputation for making people feel comfortable, and customers often remark on how much they prefer to shop with Watkins True Value rather than go to the big boxes or other competitors.
- Known for its excellent product selection, as well as its customer service, the store sells power equipment and even has a parts and repair mechanic on staff to assist customers.

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## **Conclusion**

The passion that you have for your stores is obvious. The fact that you're here tonight being celebrated for your hard work and dedication – and the work of the great teams you've built – proves that you are remarkable examples of the 5Ps in action. My wish for you in 2013 and beyond is that you would continue to improve, grow and prosper, as you look at your store through the eyes of a customer. Congratulations!