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SEVEN TO BE HONORED AS YOUNG RETAILERS OF THE YEAR

Eric Hassett of Palo Alto Hardware, Inc is one of seven young hardware retailers 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 2008 Young Retailer of the Year program, now in its 12th year.

The purpose of the program, which is coordinated by the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA), is to recognize outstanding performance and encourage talented young people to pursue a career in the retail hardware business. To date, the program has honored 85 young retailers.

The seven to be honored fall into one of three categories: Retailers with under \$2M/year in sale, Retailers over \$2M/year in sales, and multiple store operations. Eric Hassett has been recognized in the last category. Hassett is president of operations at Palo Alto Hardware, Inc, which has three stores: Palo Alto Hardware, Ocean Shore Hardware in Half Moon Bay and the newly opened Willow Glen Ace store in San Jose.

As general manager of the family hardware store, Hassett set to work improving the merchandise mix and customer service and following strict inventory management practices. As a result, sales posted double-digit increases and sales volume doubled in less than four years. He is currently opening a new store in San Jose, Calif. Hassett has been busy making a difference in the community as well. One popular program is his "wooden nickel" program, where customers help donate money to the school of their choice. He also participates in the Rebuilding Together program, which works to repair schools, low-income housing and recreation centers. A strong advocate of environmentally friendly business practices, Hassett has installed solar panels at the Palo Alto store and participates in the Our Water, Our World program, which identifies less toxic alternatives for pest management. Hassett currently serves as vice president of the Progressive Ace Leaders, a group comprised of young, forward-thinking Ace retailers aimed at building relationships and sharing information with the next generation of hardware retailers.

Nominees for the Young Retailer award must be 35 years of age or younger and are judged for their career advancement, professional accomplishments, goals for the future, education and community involvement. Honorees will be special guests at NRHA's 2008 National Convention July 28-30 in Monterey, Calif., where they will be recognized at a banquet in their honor.

Sponsors of the program are 3M Co., The Scotts Co., Cooper Hand Tools and the American Hardware Manufacturers Association.