



North American Hardware and Paint Association

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Local Entrepreneur Receives 2023 Young Retailer of the Year Award

INDIANAPOLIS—John Luhring, owner of Parkersburg Hardware and Garden Center in Parkersburg, Iowa, and Allison Hardware and Floral Center in Allison, Iowa, was recently named one of the independent home improvement industry's 2023 Young Retailer of the Year honorees by the North American Hardware and Paint Association (NHPA).

The Young Retailer of the Year program, now in its 27th year, identifies and promotes the next generation of aspiring independent home improvement, paint and decorating retailers. It recognizes individual achievement by industry retailers age 35 and younger throughout the U.S. and Canada. Honorees are chosen based on a number of criteria, including professional milestones, community engagement, continuing hardware industry education and extracurricular activities.

Sponsors of the 2023 Young Retailer of the Year program are: American Hardware & Lumber Insurance (AHLI), Arrow Fastener, Intertape Polymer Group (IPG), Midwest Fastener, Pony Jorgensen, PPG, STIHL and Wooster Brush Company.

In 2008, a tornado tore through Parkersburg, Iowa, marking a turning point for John, who had graduated a week earlier from the high school that was destroyed in the storm. When the community came together to help restore the town, John volunteered to help rebuild the local lumberyard and assemble new playground equipment at the school and park. He realized how important it was to not only live in a community, but to be involved in helping it become a better place.

"I realized that being in business is not just about what you do, but it's about how you do it and how you support the community around you," he says. "Service means nothing without a smile on your face and eagerness to help. Growing up in a farming community, we were raised with the values that when a neighbor needs help, we go and help."

John grew up helping his father in the family monument business, which has been selling and installing headstones and memorials for families since 1983. When the local hardware store shuttered its doors in 2017, John saw an opportunity to offer his community a hub for finding supplies, services and fellowship. He started



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assembling the store in a 4,000-square-foot building in the fall of 2017, and Parkersburg Hardware and Garden Center held its first open house in April 2018.

The business has seen marked growth since it first opened, generating more sales than projected. In 2022, the business achieved its highest sales-per-square-foot to date, representing a 97% increase. As a result, John has exceeded his five-year goal in just two years.

When John first opened Parkersburg Hardware and Garden Center, he reached out to members of the community to establish their needs—and he says these people have become some of his best customers. He continues to use that strategy to grow the business and serve the community in new ways. He has added tool rental and paint-matching, and he implemented an electronic ordering system to save labor costs in reordering, allowing staff to spend more time with customers. The garden center has also seen strong year-over-year growth, 10% to 20% since 2018. This year, John is planning a 10,000-square-foot addition to the Parkersburg location, which will include a power aisle, two checkout lanes with impulse items and a semi loading dock.

In December 2022, John acquired Allison Hardware in nearby Allison, Iowa. He is currently renovating the existing historical downtown building and planning a new store layout to maximize retail space and customer flow. He is working with his wholesaler to enhance the product selection to fit the specific needs of the local community.

In addition to running the business, John volunteers his time in the community—as a member of the Parkersburg Chamber of Commerce, through local churches and retreats for youth and adults and at the county fair, coaching those working their livestock.

“I have been blessed with a great community and church family who have helped me to become the person I am today,” he says. “I am honored to be able to give back to the community with my own time and encourage fellowship among our community. It is such an amazing reward to be able to bless those that have helped me become the person I am today.”

He and his wife, Layla, have been married for 12 years and have five children, three girls and two boys. Through years of service with the local 4-H chapter and county fairs, they have learned how to work together with the intention to achieve a common goal—and this has proven to be the blueprint for their business and team.

“Being chosen as a Young Retailer of the Year is a high honor. Each year, manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers in the industry join us in celebrating the honorees’ contributions to their communities and the industry,” says Scott Wright, executive director of advanced retail education programs for NHPA. “John exemplifies the dedication and innovation that keep our industry growing.”



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For more information on the Young Retailer of the Year awards program, honorees and more, visit YourNHPA.org/yroty.

About the North American Hardware and Paint Association

Founded in 1900 by a group of retailers, NHPA is a not-for-profit trade association whose mission is to help home improvement, paint and decorating outlets in the U.S. and Canada become better and more profitable retailers. Governed by a board of independent hardware and paint retailers, NHPA fulfills its mission by providing how-to management resources, product discovery, training programs and networking opportunities for the industry it serves. Learn more at YourNHPA.org.

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