



North American Hardware and Paint Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local Entrepreneur Receives 2023 Young Retailer of the Year Award

INDIANAPOLIS—Matt Lambert, regional vice president for Nation's Best in Oklahoma and Texas, 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 include American Hardware and Lumber Insurance (AHLI), Arrow Fastener, Intertape Polymer Group (IPG), Midwest Fastener, Pony Jorgensen, PPG, STIHL and The Wooster Brush Company.

When Matt was 12 years old, he began working in his parents' store, Lambert Lumber, in Broken Bow, Oklahoma. By 14, Matt was working full time in the lumberyard—stocking, cleaning and helping with deliveries. At 16, he started working inside the store, and by the time he graduated high school in 2008, he was running the front counter, handling sales, mixing paint, cutting keys and anything else that came his way.

Matt attended Oklahoma State University to study IT management. However, at the end of his first year, he returned home to help his parents run the store after their manager quit.

From there, Matt began taking on bigger responsibilities, including a complete interior remodel of the store. They brought in new shelving and insulated the building. Matt also built up the paint department and brought in new planograms in addition to enhancing the front entryway.

Matt took the reins of Lambert Lumber in 2011, directing every aspect of the business: sales, management, ordering, inventory control and margins.



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His ability to evolve the business delivered a new, more agile Lambert Lumber. He realized a custom home plan was more appealing to customers than a cookie-cutter one, and if they are more interested in the project, they are more likely to buy. Matt worked on a plan with local builders, where Lambert Lumber would acquire customers and custom design their homes. Once the design was finished, the customer would be referred to a builder to construct the home. Matt guaranteed the builders the business, and in return he expected them to buy from Lambert.

This created a booming business for Lambert, and they designed thousands of cabins and homes in the area. Not only does the company profit from the design and build, but it also sells supplies to maintain the homes. Once Lambert Lumber entered into custom home builds, there was no stopping it, and Matt established his family's business as the dominant force in his market. Sales skyrocketed 280% from \$3.5 million in 2011 to \$13.3 million in 2016. By the end of 2018, Lambert Lumber reached \$15 million in sales.

Matt's father realized the store would be in good hands with his son and wanted to create a succession plan to turn the business over to him. However, Matt humbly declined to take over the family business, saying it was his parents' store and they should profit from selling it—he would show the new owners he was worth the investment to stay on.

In 2019, Matt met Chris Miller, who started the Nation's Best chain of stores. Chris not only bought the business—he offered Matt the opportunity to stay on and grow the store. After the ownership transition took place in September 2019, the store still operated as Lambert Lumber and Matt was still in charge. He retained the freedom to run the store, but now he had the expertise Chris gained in his years of running Parker Lumber to draw on.

A few months later, Nation's Best bought a five-store chain in west Texas and the stores' systems needed to convert to Epicor, focusing on the program's POS, accounting and general ledger functions. Chris sent Matt to help with the store conversions and get every employee trained on the new system. By 2021, Matt was promoted to operations leader for Nation's Best, overseeing each store.

In 2022, Chris promoted Matt to national operations manager and gave him a new objective: Identify highly talented people at their locations to join the Nation's Best team. With bigger acquisitions happening more frequently, they needed to further build up their team to fuel their growth.

Matt has taken full advantage of the growth opportunities Chris and Nation's Best have offered, and he is a key reason Nation's Best is thriving today. As the company grew to over 40 stores in 2022, Nation's Best reorganized the company by region. Matt was promoted to regional vice president over the South Central region of the U.S.



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Matt has played a vital part in the success of Nation's Best. He successfully built Lambert Lumber into a juggernaut, which set the bar for performance and culture for the other 40-plus stores that later joined the company. Matt was instrumental in setting operational standards and best practices during Nation's Best's infancy, building the foundation for astronomical growth.

"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. "Matt exemplifies the dedication and innovation that keep our industry growing."

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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