



North American Hardware and Paint Association

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Local Entrepreneur Receives 2023 Young Retailer of the Year Award

INDIANAPOLIS—Katie Prus, manager and part owner of Abbotsford Paint and Decorating, Abbotsford Commercial Paints, Chilliwack Decorating Centre and Garrison Village Paint and Decorating in British Columbia, Canada, 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 Katie's dad Martin purchased Abbotsford Paint and Decorating in 2002, she was 10 and spent the following six months helping her mom and dad tidy the store every Friday night. Outside of those initial months spent in her family's store, Katie spent her early working career in retail outside of her family business, having no interest in paint or the operation.

Although Katie returned to work at Abbotsford Paint and Decorating in 2011, it wasn't until 2022 that she fully committed to this career path and expressed a desire to take over the business and carry on the family legacy. Soon after, the operation acquired two additional locations in Chilliwack and Garrison Village, British Columbia.

Katie threw herself into education opportunities upon her return to the family business.

"I quickly noticed that if I wanted to be taken seriously I needed to do my research and participate in as many classes and programs as I could," Katie says.



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Whenever specialty classes were offered through vendors or suppliers, Katie attended. She also supplemented her industry knowledge with interior design courses, where she learned to read blueprints, use Photoshop and further understand color intricacies. She also made the most of her proximity to a local paint warehouse, frequently attending classes to expand her understanding of various topics, such as Venetian plaster.

Katie has implemented various strategies to attract and retain customers to her operation. She collaborated with local businesses that sell home decor to create complementary color collections in her operation to make shopping easier for customers. Katie also partnered with local real estate agents, supplying store-branded brushes and gift cards to new homeowners.

Abbotsford Paint and Decorating boasts the largest in-store selection of wallpaper within a paint store in British Columbia, Canada, and Katie takes pride in keeping the store up-to-date with the latest trends, which is why she introduced a new line of Venetian plasters. The operation also has a history of hosting in-store classes, which Katie plans to resume hosting in the spring.

Katie has also successfully leveraged social media to bring business to her operation. She is active on Facebook and Instagram but has found particular success on TikTok, building a platform with over 297,000 followers where she showcases the science behind color creation and her day-to-day activities in the store. Her success has resulted in brand deals with businesses like Benjamin Moore, a local coffee shop called Station Cold Brew Coffee Co., a skin care line called Truly Lifestyle Brand Inc. and more.

Supporting the local community is important to Katie, who has spearheaded efforts to support local theater groups, volunteered for a local food bank's toy drive and helped with relief efforts after a massive flood in her town. In 2019, Katie initiated her operation's sponsorship of a new local basketball team and worked with them to promote her stores' brand.

Katie has been active with other local organizations, including the Rotary Club and chamber of commerce, but more recently has been involved in and consistently attends Abbotsford Executive meetings, which brings together local business owners biweekly to talk about their companies and needs. She is a part of NextGen, a committee within ALLPRO that plans events, and Canpro Decorating Products, a business-to-business buying cooperative that she credits for her leadership skills and expanding her knowledge base.

"I am finally at a point in my career where I am seeing the value of a family business and this industry," Katie says. "I am so grateful for the connections I have made and the people I have met along the way. I look forward to leaving my mark with the other young minds in the industry."

"Being chosen as a Young Retailer of the Year is a high honor. Each year, manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers in the industry look forward to celebrating the honorees' contributions to their communities and



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the industry,” says Scott Wright, executive director of advanced retail education programs for NHPA. “Katie exemplifies the determination and innovation that keeps 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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