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Ash Ebbo Named 2026 NHPA Top Guns Honoree

May 1, 2026, INDIANAPOLIS—Celebrating its 20th year honoring trailblazing retailers in the channel, the North American Hardware and Paint Association (NHPA) has named its 2026 Top Guns Awards honorees, including Ash Ebbo, CEO of Clement's Paint, based in Austin, Texas.

"Top Guns honorees are pillars of innovation and forward-thinking, and have helped grow their businesses through strategic leadership with consideration for their communities, their teams and the industry," says Scott Wright, NHPA president and publisher. "They've grown their businesses, challenged the status quo and led their teams through some of the industry's toughest moments—and they're not done yet. This year's Top Guns are prime examples of what bold leadership looks like in independent home improvement retail today."

The independent paint channel is in Ash's blood. Ash's father opened the store in 1986 and has always been a part of her life. Joining the operation full-time about 13 years ago, Ash went into the business with a desire to continue the legacy.

As the CEO of the company, Ash manages the back-end financials, making sure everything's operationally running well and that the business is making money. Ash also helps drive company culture at Clement's Paint, which she says drives success across the board.

The team at Clement's Paint understands their stores will rarely offer the lowest prices, so everyone works to create an environment where people want to be, building relationships with customers to keep them coming back to the stores.

"I'm getting my MBA right now and in one of the classes, we talk a lot about the difference between the game that it looks like you're in, which for us would be retail, and the game that we're actually in, which is customer relationships," Ash says. "My dad likes to say, 'With all things equal across the board, you're going to buy from your friends. All things unequal across the board, you're probably still going to buy from your friends.' Customer relationships are everything, and I think that starts with culture and the guys on the front line in the stores."

The company's strong culture has helped Clement's Paint grow, especially when opening a brand new store.

"When you acquire a store, you have a customer base, but opening a new store, you're going into somewhere pretty much blind. You have your ideas about the area, but you have to raise awareness," Ash says. "Having a bench of employees who are ready to take on that kind of challenge is pretty much everything."

When Ash looks at her path to leadership, she is grateful for her brother-in-law Scott Lawson, who set the example for what a strong leader looks like. Ash is also working on getting a master in business administration, which has led to her growth as a leader.

As Ash and the team at Clement's Paint work to build up future leaders, the company's culture is key to creating a new generation of leadership. Leadership leans into managers and assistant managers to help create standard operating procedures (SOPs) around the expectations of being a leader, so they and future managers have a guide on how to grow in the company.

"I think leadership comes naturally to some people and is harder for others. If an employee is struggling, we provide those resources and people to help lead them if they're struggling with taking on some of the responsibility naturally," Ash says. "We want to build a bench of those natural leaders who are able to build more leaders around them, and fortunately, we have many of those people already in place."

Building up leaders throughout the independent channel will also be key to growth in the industry, Ash says.

"At the ALLPRO conferences lately, I feel like there's been a lot of discussion about unity, and I think us working together as independent retailers, rather than being in competition, is probably going to be our biggest strength moving forward," Ash says. "I think that networking is one of the biggest benefits of any of these conferences because learning from each other is the best thing we can do for growth for all."

Winning the Top Guns Awards honor was a surprise to Ash.

"I definitely wasn't expecting it, and it's an honor," Ash says. "I've been working really, really hard going back to school trying to make myself better. I think getting a little recognition just makes me really proud."

Each of the honorees will be featured in upcoming issues of *Hardware Retailing* and *Paint & Decorating Retailer* magazines. Top Guns honorees will be honored at the Independent Awards Gala at the 2026 Independent Home Improvement Conference held July 29-30 at the JW Marriott Grande Lakes in Orlando, Florida. The National Hardware Show: Concept to Commerce and DIY Con are the Top Guns exclusive sponsors.

For more information on the Top Guns awards, visit YourNHPA.org/top-guns. To learn more about the 2026 Independent Home Improvement Conference, visit ihiconference.org.

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