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Denise Brookhouse 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 Denise Brookhouse, CEO of Koopman Lumber based in Whitinsville, Massachusetts.

“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.”

Denise says she is honored to receive this recognition and join the class of accomplished past honorees.

“To be included in that category is truly an honor, but I’m only here because of the team that we have at Koopman Lumber,” Denise says. “I share this honor with all the employees and my team. This is a great industry with a lot of great people in it, and so to be recognized alongside them is an honor.”

In 2011, Denise’s husband, Tony Brookhouse, who currently serves as COO of Koopman Lumber, received the Top Guns Awards honor, making the couple the first husband and wife to be named honorees. Denise is resting on her own laurels, however, having amassed an impressive resume during her career in the independent channel.

Denise was born into the industry. Her grandfather Peter founded Koopman Lumber in 1939 and her father Don joined the company after a career in teaching and sales. While in college, Denise continued working at the stores during the summer but moved on to work as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in the internal audit division of a large Fortune 500 company after graduating. After several years in the corporate world, Don invited Denise, Tony and Denise’s brother Dirk to join the company.

In January 2026, Denise transitioned into the CEO role for the company after serving as CFO. She succeeded her brother Dirk, who had served as the company’s CEO since 2010 and now is the company’s president and board chair.

“In January, I started going on what I was calling a listening tour, meeting all the employees, getting out to all the locations and connecting with all the managers to start formulating short and long term goals,” Denise says. “From what I learned, I was able to set those goals that would benefit all aspects of the company.”



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The No. 1 goal Denise has set for the company is remaining family-owned and independent, integrating the fourth generation into the business and growing through either acquisitions or ground ups,

In her journey from cashier to CEO, Denise credits the strong team she has in place.

"I'm really only as strong as my team," she says. "Having a really good team, especially with all the growth we've done in the last few years, has been key. That growth has really stretched our team in good ways, and I think it's given us more opportunity."

To grow as a leader, Denise takes part in several industry roundtables and reads books and listens to podcasts on leadership. She was also involved with a local family business group in her area.

Helping the teams at Koopman Lumber grow in their leadership abilities is also important to Denise, and the company has sent a number of employees to NHPA's Retail Management Certification Program, which she says allows the company to find those employees who want to be developed as leaders and then gives them the skills to do so. The company offers a program called G4, where new employees coming into the business do a nine-month rotation to work in every department, meet all of the teams and get an overall feel for how it operates and everyone contributes.

Denise also has the goal of developing a leadership program at Koopman Lumber to identify employees who want to grow into managers and future leaders.

To be successful in the independent channel moving forward, Denise says that retailers will need to pay attention to the consolidation happening in the industry and have a succession plan in place.

"I think technology will continue to be very important in keeping businesses more efficient, and along with embracing innovation, independents need to keep fulfilling that customer service piece," she says. "That customer service side will continue to be a differentiator."

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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