

Media Contact: Lindsey Thompson, NHPA Editor, lthompson@YourNHPA.org and 317-460-3007

Jason Blair 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 Jason Blair, CEO of TAL Building Centers in the Pacific Northwest.

“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.”

Jason’s journey in the independent home improvement channel began after he finished high school in Tucson, Arizona. A friend was working at a local lumberyard, Payless Cashways, and invited him to apply for a job at the same location. After earning a civil engineering degree from the University of Arizona, Jason continued working at Payless Cashways, and at age 24, Jason became one of the youngest store managers at the store. From there, Jason moved to Foxworth-Galbraith, Higginbotham Brothers, True Value and Wilco Farm Stores.

“During that path, my ultimate career goal was to become a CEO by the time I was 50,” Jason says. “The opportunity with TAL came up and after a months-long dance, we finally got to the point where I felt like it was the right decision for me to move to TAL to be their next CEO. I followed in the footsteps of a great CEO before me, so it was a great transition into an actively growing company.”

For the last four years, Jason has been leading TAL Building Centers, a family-owned business that was founded in 1906 and now has 28 locations in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. In his time at TAL, Jason says it’s been a focus on the basics that has led to continued success as a company. If the stores look good, the shelves are stocked and every employee is taking care of the customer, those basics will lead to success.

When he thinks about his own growth as a leader throughout the years, he reflects on the great people who have pushed him in very different ways. He has worked for different types of leaders and every one of those leaders along the way saw something in him, pushing him and motivating him to the next level.

“I’ve also been very fortunate to work with some great teammates. So whether they were peers or people working for me, they also supported my career growth and helped me as a person become the leader I want to



North American Hardware and Paint Association

1025 East 54th St., Indianapolis, IN 46220

317-275-9400

nhpa@YourNHPA.org

YourNHPA.org

be,” Jason says. “I am an aggregate of all of those people along the way. I can’t overemphasize how important all those people were who believed in my future career.”

When it comes to building up future leaders in the company, Jason is very intentional.

“I’m a big fan of culture, but I’m an even bigger fan of a culture of accountability,” he says. “The leaders who I have in place running operations have a very strong emphasis on coaching their employees and those emerging leaders and setting very clear expectations and holding them accountable.”

When looking at the future of the independent home improvement channel, Jason says the future is strong. He believes there is a spot that the independent retailer fits in that’s different and unique than the big boxes, including the independent’s ability to adapt to local markets quickly and bring in local products that will make a difference in communities.

While a focus on the basics and the independent’s value proposition of service is crucial, Jason says independents can’t be blind to the need to invest in technology and analytics to continue to develop their people and stay competitive.

“Independents are able to deliver a level of service that I think that the national chains struggle to replicate. Independents are able to engage and adapt differently and employ reliable people who are there to help that customer every time,” Jason says. “Even when adopting technology, independents need to stay true to who their genuine self is. That’s going to lead to long-term success in the independent channel.”

For Jason, the Top Guns honor is a thank you to all the people who helped him get where he is today.

“From my family making sacrifices to my friends who have supported me personally to the great mentors I’ve had along the way, there were some folks who took some pretty big risks in my career, and I really appreciate that they did that,” Jason says. “They saw something in me and this award is a reflection of that.”

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.

#####