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Local Entrepreneur Receives 2026 Young Retailer of the Year Award

INDIANAPOLIS, May 8, 2026—Summer Vasquez, store manager and project manager for Matt's Building Materials in Pharr, Texas, was recently named one of the independent home improvement industry's 2026 Young Retailer of the Year honorees by the North American Hardware and Paint Association (NHPA).

This year marks 30 years of the Young Retailer of the Year program, which 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, and fall into one of three categories: multistore, under \$3 million sales volume and over \$3 million sales volume.

Sponsors of the 2026 Young Retailer of the Year program include: American Hardware and Lumber Insurance (AHLI), ECI Software Solutions, Midwest Fastener and The Wooster Brush Company.

Cody Goeppner, NHPA director of education and training and 2020 Young Retailer of the Year honoree, says the recognition was a turning point for him as it highlighted the hard work he had poured into his career and introduced him to a broader community of passionate, forward-thinking retailers.

"As someone who grew up in my family's hardware store and spent years as a retailer myself, I know firsthand how much heart, grit and innovation it takes to succeed in this industry," Goeppner says. "It truly is full circle and an incredible honor for me to support and celebrate the next generation of leaders. This program shines a spotlight on the people who are shaping the future of independent retail, and based on this year's class, the future is bright."

Summer Vasquez's journey in the hardware and building materials industry is a testament to her unwavering dedication, resilience and leadership. When you speak to people who know Summer, they will tell you that she is a force of determination, grace and heart. Having started at Matt's Building Materials at the age of 16, she has grown from an associate into a key decision-maker in the company, playing a pivotal role in both store management and expansion projects. At just 28 years old, Summer has already helped shape the present and future of Matt's Building Materials in ways that go far beyond her job description.

Her leadership became very visible in the wake of the fire that destroyed the Pharr, Texas, location of Matt's Building Materials in 2022. Tasked with leading the rebuilding efforts, Summer took full responsibility for the store's revival, overseeing product assortment decisions, store layout design, fixture procurement and project execution. Her ability to coordinate these elements while managing the complexities of a store reset was instrumental in bringing the Pharr location back to life.



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Simultaneously, she took on a similar challenge in launching the company's new store in Harlingen, Texas. Applying her expertise, she developed the floor plan, selected fixtures and ensured the product offerings aligned with the needs of the local community.

Beyond the physical setup, she played an active role in the grand opening events for both the Pharr and Harlingen locations, demonstrating her ability to blend strategic planning with operational execution. Now serving as the store manager in Harlingen, Summer has taken full charge of the store's operations, hiring and developing a team while assuming full P&L accountability.

Summer's education in the industry has come through hands-on experience and a continuous pursuit of learning opportunities. She has participated in NHPA-sponsored management education courses, equipping herself with skills to enhance her leadership and business management abilities. In addition, she has been actively involved in Orgill Markets, contributing to critical buying decisions for Matt's Building Materials. Along the way, she has developed expertise in retail operations, merchandising, project management and customer engagement.

Summer's impact extends far beyond the stores she manages. As the granddaughter of company owner Danny Smith, she has long been immersed in the values of family and community service that define Matt's Building Materials. Throughout her career, she has been actively involved in local charitable efforts, many of which have been led by the Smith family, known for their generosity in the Valley.

In addition to her role within the company, Summer is deeply engaged in her church, supporting various outreach programs that contribute to the well-being of the community. She is also passionate about raising awareness for important causes, frequently participating in 5K fundraising events, including those for the Make-A-Wish Foundation and Youth Suicide Awareness. Whether through her work in business or her commitment to philanthropy, Summer consistently seeks ways to make a meaningful impact on those around her.

Beyond her ability to manage stores and lead projects, Summer has been a driving force behind the evolution of Matt's Building Materials. She has played a critical role in curating product assortments, ensuring that offerings are not only based on vendor planograms but tailored specifically to customer needs in the Valley. Her keen understanding of consumer demand has helped drive sales and profitability for the company.

Recognizing the importance of digital engagement, she has also been involved in strengthening Matt's presence on social media, helping the company connect with customers in new and innovative ways. Her ability to adapt to changing retail trends while maintaining a deep understanding of traditional business operations has positioned her as a key player in the company's growth.

In addition to her professional role within the company, Summer is a devoted wife to her husband, German Vasquez, and a proud mom to their two amazing children, Hunter and Alastor. Her family has been a constant anchor throughout her journey and the driving force behind her dedication, determination, and professional success.

The 2026 Young Retailer of the Year honorees will be recognized as part of the Independent Awards Gala at the 2026 Independent Home Improvement Conference in Orlando on July 29. For more information on the Young Retailer of the Year awards program, honorees and more, visit YourNHPA.org/yroty.