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CLEAVER FARM & HOME RECEIVES TRUE VALUE CO-OP'S TOP HONOR OF 'BEST HARDWARE STORE IN TOWN'

True Value Company names Chanute, Kan., hardware store one of top 13 locations

CHICAGO, Feb. 22, 2013 – True Value Company recently honored 13 True Value hardware stores, selected from each of the co-op's retail regions, as winners of its seventh annual "Best Hardware Store in Town" international recognition program. Brothers Chris and Jason Cleaver, owners of Cleaver Farm & Home in Chanute, Kan., were one pair of winners in the spotlight at True Value's 2014 Spring & Rental Reunion, held in Atlanta from Feb. 21 through Feb. 23.

"Winning the Best Hardware Store in Town award is really the culmination of years of hard work by us and our employees," Chris said. "It means a great deal to us to know that what we are doing is noticed and will push us to continue to improve on what we have going."

Chris and Jason's grandfather, Curtiss Cleaver, started the store in 1946 as a small livestock and scrap metal business. Since then, the family has relocated and expanded the business five times, to its current 21,000-square-foot setup, which includes ample space for hardware, a cabinet showroom, lumber and roofing materials, steel goods, farm and ranch and supplies, and a lot more.

Since taking over the store from their father, Eldon Cleaver, in 2006, third-generation owners Chris and Jason say they cannot imagine life in any other line of work. They say they believe the secret ingredient to the store's longevity is its dedicated staff of about 60 people, several of whom have been with Cleaver Farm & Home for more than a decade — some more than 25 years.

"Our employees are a great group of people who really care about what they are doing. They are knowledgeable, friendly and always greet you when you come in the door," Chris said. "The fact that we have that many years of experience is one reason why our customer service is so excellent. Without our people we would not be where we are today."

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In Spring 2013, the brothers heeded the call of their customers and transformed the store yet again, remodeling to the co-op's Destination True Value format, adding more products and repositioning merchandise, and refreshing appearances with new flooring, lighting and signs, all to improve their customers' overall shopping experience.

According to Chris, what lies ahead for the store is more growth. The Cleavers continue to add products and services to their lineup, and are currently working on a business plan for the next several years, which Chris and Jason hope may one day include one or all of their 10-, seven- and five-year-old sons, Drayton(Chris), Weston (Jason) and Jarrett (Jason).

"With the continued support from the community since the remodel we can see additional opportunities for growth in the future," he said. "If the boys show interest in coming into the business someday that would be great... There isn't too many fourth-generation businesses around."

Sponsored by True Value Company, the Best Hardware Store in Town program recognizes retailers who exemplify successful retailing. Store owners either nominated themselves or earned a nomination from a peer or retail manager. Each winner went through a series of selection processes until regional managers narrowed down the top candidates. Mystery shoppers then visited each selected store to gain a customer's perspective. The co-op evaluated each finalist based on physical appearance, product selection, competitive pricing, promotional sales and customer assistance.

"Cleaver Farm & Home represents the best of what it means to be part of the True Value co-op," said John Hartmann, president and chief executive officer of True Value Company. "They are entrepreneurs, dedicated to serving not only their customers, but also their community. They consistently deliver on the five principles of successful retailing: people, place, product, price and promotion. And when they do that, they meet customers' needs and expectations, creating a profitable and sustainable business."

True Value Company, headquartered in Chicago, is one of the world's largest retailer-owned hardware cooperatives. The True Value cooperative represents independent retailer locations worldwide with retail sales in their communities totaling approximately \$5.5 billion. Store identities include True Value, Grand Rental Station, Taylor Rental, Party Central, Home & Garden Showplace and Induserve Supply. Additional information on True Value Company and its retail identities is available at www.truevaluecompany.com.

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