Ace Hardware Stores in Alabama, Colorado Recognized as 2022 'Coolest'

Ace Hardware Corporation announced it was recognizing stores in Gardendale, AL and Westcliffe, CO as recipients of the company's 11th Annual "Coolest Hardware Store" awards.

Since 2012, Ace has given these awards to stores whose offerings, services and culture are differentiated to suit the desires of their communities.

"Ace store owners provide shopping experiences that reflect the demands and needs of the communities they serve," said John Kittell, Vice President, Retail Operations and New Business, Ace Hardware Corporation. "At Ace, differentiation and localization are crucial. We created these awards to recognize that for our owners every year."

Ace of The South, Gardendale, AL

Located on three acres in suburban Birmingham, Ace of the South's owners take pride in being not just a hardware store.

"Ace in the South is really a cross between a hardware store and an outdoor store," said owner Laura Wood. "We have everything you need as far as hardware, plumbing, electrical, paint. But we also have gardening. We also have sunglasses, apparel, and great locally-made gifts."

"We love it when people come in and say ya'll have everything," she said.

That includes core brands for which Ace is nationally-known, and some that Ace shoppers might never see anywhere else.

"To me what makes this store cool is the uniqueness, from selling Patagonia to selling Big Green Egg to selling Traeger to selling all these key name brands," said owner Britt Wood. "It's amazing the pull that we get into our store even outside of Gardendale just to find these items."

Ace of The South has plans to expand on its "cool" concept, tripling its clothing department, expanding its garden center and adding more hunting, fishing and all terrain vehicles to its inventory.

Valley Ace Hardware, Westcliffe, CO

Locally owned and operated since 1995, Valley Ace Hardware started as a small downtown store in Westcliffe, the Custer County Seat in South Central Colorado.

Today, the store is 14,000 square-feet and home to a 15,000 square-foot covered lumber yard that sells far more than just lumber, including doors, windows, roofing and siding.

It's a store that emphasizes interactivity– both for customers and children from the community.

"Everything we do here is a display, so customers can see it. So they can feel it. And if they can enjoy what they are seeing in our store, I hope that they can enjoy it day-after-day in their home," said co-owner Jeremy Handy.

In summer 2021, Valley Ace started a kids' workshop program, teaching local children on chickens, bees and gardening

"We're not just a hardware store. Our vision and mission surrounds the idea of developing the community, developing our staff," said co-owner Sarah Handy. "The possibilities are endless. And that's' what's awesome about owning an Ace store."

"I think the key to having a cool store is constantly changing," she said. "The store that you see today is not going to be the same store you're going to see in ten years."

In its annual earnings report last week, Ace announced it ended 2021 with 4,751 stores across the domestic United States, an increase of 104 stores from the end of 2020. On a worldwide basis, Ace has 5,583 stores.

For more information on Ace of the South and Valley Ace Hardware, watch their YouTube interviews.

About Ace Hardware

Ace Hardware is the largest retailer-owned hardware cooperative in the world with more than 5,500 locally owned and operated hardware stores in approximately 70 countries. Headquartered in Oak Brook, Ill., Ace and its subsidiaries operate an expansive network of distribution centers in the U.S. and have distribution capabilities in Ningbo, China; Colon, Panama; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Since 1924, Ace has become a part of local communities around the world and known as the place with the helpful hardware folks. For more information, visit acehardware.com or newsroom.acehardware.com.

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