



NEW REGION CAO

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HANGING 'EM UP

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Chamber announces best in business for 2012

By **LISA TALLYN**
and **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writers

Acton Home Hardware named Business of Year

It's certainly worth the drive to Acton, if the winners of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce 2012 Business Achievement Awards are any indication.

Three out of four award recipients announced this week are Acton-based, and one is in Georgetown.

Acton Home Hardware is the Chamber's 2012 Business of the Year; Entrepreneur of the Year is Andrea Clark of Tanner's Pub and Grill. The Employee of the Year is Nancy LaRose, manager of the Acton Salvation Army Thrift Store and Downtown Georgetown BIA is the recipient of the 2012 Green Award.

The annual awards recognize the outstanding achievements made by local businesses and their employees. The recipients will be honoured at a celebration banquet on Wednesday, March 6.

Business of the Year

When it comes to competing with the big box stores in surrounding municipalities, Acton Home Hardware owners Bill and Val Manes have used a small-town approach to service the needs of their customers.

The couple's Queen St. East store was selected as the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce's Business of the Year for 2012 thanks largely to a devotion to providing excellent customer service with a personal touch.

On a first-name basis with many of its clientele, the Maneses have owned the Home Hardware since it was located in downtown Acton in 1996, then moving it



Val and Bill Manes, owners of the Acton Home Hardware store, stand in front of the shop Tuesday after learning they had been named winners of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year Award.
Photo by Eamonn Maher

to what was then the eastern part of town in 1999.

"When the store was built in '99, there were empty fields around us," recalled Bill, a Campbellville native who attended school and played sports in Acton.

"We had no idea that the subdivisions that are here now would be going up, so it

turned out well."

If there's an event going on in Acton, it's most likely sponsored or supported by Home Hardware in some way. For many years, the Maneses have quietly thrown their support behind the Acton Fall Fair, the Leathertown Festival, the BIA, Light Up The Hills, the Acton Santa Claus Pa-

rade and Paul Murr Golf Tournament, among other things, as well as sponsorship of youth sports organizations.

"That's what it's all about," said Val, who hails from Calgary. "That's what a small town is, right?"

"Pretty much everything that goes on, we sponsor it or help out in some way," added Bill.

Currently employing 16 full- and part-time workers, the Maneses have put in place staff members with extensive expertise in each of the store's departments.

"Providing excellent customer service is the key," said Val. "Convenience plays a big part too. If people in Acton need something, we're just down the street."

And even if they don't have something in stock, they can call on the Home Hardware network of stores to get the customer what's needed.

"For example, Acton Home Hardware is primarily hardware, whereas Milton is lumber," Bill said. "We work together. They send people here for things and we send customers down there. It's a good mix."

Employee of the Year

What makes working at the Acton Salvation Army Thrift Store enjoyable for Nancy LaRose is the unpredictability and the unknown.

"We get all walks of life in here and it makes life really interesting," she said.

"It's different every day and you don't know what to expect. I was in customer service (at the olde Hide House for 15 years) but it was a routine and there were certain things I had to do. Here, routine goes out the window within five minutes

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