



RETAIL STARS

The Best & The Brightest

BY SUSAN DICKENSON

Home Accents Today is proud to present its 12th annual **50 Retail Stars** list.

The Retail Stars list recognizes 50 independent brick-and-mortar retailers of home accents, including furniture stores and interior design boutiques, that are creative in their merchandising, contributing to their communities and distinguishing themselves from the competition.

Eighteen of the stores on this year's list have been operating successfully for more than 20 years, and six are at least 70 years old. One store on the list, Montgomery's, got its start in the 19th century. Profiled in our March issue, Montgomery's opened as a "furniture and funeral" store in 1888, before its home state of South Dakota was officially a state.

The other golden oldies on this year's list include Von Hemert Interiors, Costa Mesa, Laguna Beach and Torrance, Calif., founded in 1920; Del-Teet Furniture, Bellevue, Wash., founded in 1929; American

Home, six stores in New Mexico, founded in 1936; Higgins & Spencer, St. Michaels, Md., founded in 1942; and Louis Shanks of Texas, Austin, San Antonio and Houston, founded in 1945.

Twenty-five U.S. states are represented on this year's list, with New York contributing seven stores, and California, Florida and South Carolina each contributing four.

Sixteen stores are ringing up annual sales in excess of \$3 million and six of those are at \$10 million plus, a revenue profile that's very similar – almost identical, in fact – to last year's list.

Half of this year's Stars sell online, with most reporting that e-commerce contributed about 10% to their 2015 sales. Colorado-based HW Home, which rings up \$400 a square foot in its four brick-and-mortar stores, said online sales contribute about one percentage point to the bottom line, while the online revenue of Dallas-based Wisteria, which plans to add more physical stores over the next few years, is

currently about 70% of annual sales.

Everybody is on social media, with the number of retailers using Facebook (39) and Instagram (37) up slightly over last year's group. The number of Retail Stars that use Pinterest decreased by 10, and those who say they regularly use Twitter, Houzz and YouTube dropped to about half of last year's count.

A third of this year's stores operate in multiple locations. Mecox tops that category with seven stores in New York, Los Angeles, Florida and Texas, followed by American Home, which operates six stores in New Mexico.

The design strength of this year's group appears to jibe with our recent findings and reports on the growing popularity of interior design. Forty-six of the 50 stores on our list offer design services, and 43 say they offer a to-the-trade program for interior designers.

Also notable about this year's Stars is that almost half were nominated by some of their biggest fans – their home décor vendors.

Our 2016 honorees have made quite an impression on the supply side, prompting their reps and industry friends to call or email us about what it is that makes these stores such stand-outs: "Best merchandised lighting store I have ever seen ... awesome store and team ... always on trend ... one of the most talented designers that I know ... began as a floral company but has become an excellent home and gift store ... great eye ... on everyone's 'best of' list for good reason ... really nice and family-owned ... one of the better privately owned showrooms in the design district ... a really awesome and collected look ... best store in the country, hands down."

We'll be sharing more of our Stars' stats, strategies and stellar retail ideas in upcoming issues of Home Accents Today. In the meantime, we hope the photos and summaries on the following pages will inspire you to visit the 2016 Retail Stars' websites, shop their stores and engage with them on social media. ■



In retailing, as with all vocations, greatness is neither accidental nor contrived.

It emerges in time from the passionate pursuit of ideas – and ideals – and innovations born at the intersection of creativity and opportunity.

Those who learn to harness these forces and to stay focused on fundamentals understand the essentials of greatness. For them, extraordinary achievement becomes simply a byproduct of doing the things they love very well.

The Retail Stars you are about to meet are a collective study in greatness—each with a captivating story unique in their particular setting, and each with something to teach us about ingenuity and vision.

What a great pleasure it is to help bring their stories to you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey L. Portman Sr.
Vice Chairman, President and
Chief Operating Officer
AmericasMart Atlanta