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**ACE HARDWARE JUMPS TO 6th ON
'ENTREPRENEUR'S FRANCHISE 500[®]' LIST**
Hardware Cooperative up 6 Places in Annual List

OAK BROOK, Ill., Jan. 15, 2009 – Ace Hardware has surged six places – from 12th to sixth – on *Entrepreneur's* Franchise 500[®] list, an annual ranking of the best small business franchise opportunities for individual entrepreneurs and potential investors.

Ace is the only home improvement retailer in the top 50 on the 2009 list, which was published online and in the January 2009 issue of the magazine. The company has continued to climb in *Entrepreneur's* rankings, moving from 18th in 2007 to 12th in 2008 and now nearing the top five.

According to the magazine, all companies are judged on quantifiable measures of its franchise operations. Researchers consider, among other criteria, the financial strength and stability of companies, along with their growth rate, years in business, startup costs and opportunity for company-backed financing.

“The relative recession resistance of our convenience hardware industry, coupled with the power of our brand and unwavering commitment to assist and enable our local owners, has helped contribute to our ever-better rankings,” said Ray Griffith, president and chief executive officer of Ace Hardware Corp. “Plus, new investors and existing Ace store owners interested in opening additional stores have the best of both worlds: the support and strength of strong national brand and the ability to localize their business to meet the needs of the community.”

“We're proud that a prestigious publication like *Entrepreneur* has recognized our efforts,” continued Griffith. “We feel that all of our retailers embody the entrepreneurial spirit for which the magazine is known.”

Since 2005, Ace has experienced the largest expansion in its 85-year history. Ace has opened 420 new stores in the United States over the last three years. With more than 4,600 neighborhood hardware stores, 50 percent of the U.S. population is within three

miles of an Ace store – a statistic showing both expansiveness and yet considerable room for further domestic growth.

Entrepreneur is a news and information source for small business owners and entrepreneurs seeking real-life, practical information to help them run better businesses. The magazine offers analysis of current business issues and trends from the unique perspective of the entrepreneur.

About Ace Hardware

Throughout its 85-year history, Ace Hardware has been known as the helpful hardware store by both customers and communities. Last year, Ace ranked “Highest in Customer Satisfaction among Home Improvement Stores for the Second Consecutive Year,” according to J.D. Power and Associates. With 4,600 hardware, home center and building materials stores that generate annual retail sales of more than \$12 billion, Ace is the largest retailer-owned hardware cooperative in the industry. Headquartered in Oak Brook, Ill., Ace currently operates 14 distribution centers in the U.S. and one in Shanghai, China, and its retailers' stores are located in all 50 states and 60 countries. For more information on Ace, visit www.acehardware.com.

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