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Area companies win 'retailer of the year' honors

By Mark Albright, Times Staff Writer

ORLANDO - The owners of two homegrown Tampa Bay area and one Orlando store owner were honored Thursday as "retailers of the year" by the retail industry's largest statewide trade group.

Craftsman House Gallery in St. Petersburg, owned by Jeff and Stephanie Schorr, topped the field among shops with revenue less than \$1 million. Dave and Karen West and their Rolling Pin Kitchen Emporium in Brandon led businesses in the less than \$10 million category.


Kira Powell, Florida regional vice president of Hard Rock International in Orlando, won the award in the larger than \$10 million category for running retail shops in Hard Rock cafes, hotels and casinos.

In four years, Craftsman House, located at 2955 Central Ave., grew into a gallery selling the works of 300 artists. The Schorrs added a restaurant and a night spot with scheduled live music. Next door to the vintage 1918 arts and crafts bungalow is a carriage house that doubles as a classroom and working pottery studio.

One of the reasons the Schorrs were selected was their ability to generate business at a destination with minimal walk-in traffic, as well as their active roles in the neighborhood and small business communities.

The Wests, a kitchen gadget merchandise buyer and a onetime McDonald's executive, founded Rolling Pin in 1995 as a store for foodies that eventually became two stores. Then in 2006 they moved it all to Brandon so Dave, a trained chef, could add a cooking school and bring in cookbook authors and top chefs for appearances. The Wests are now trying to add all 18,000 items stocked in their store to the 2,000 available at their online store, RollingPinOnline.com.

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