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RETAIL EXCELLENCE AWARDS CROWN BEST NEW AND RETURNING VENDORS AT THE BIG E

During The Big E, Sept. 18 through Oct. 4, event producers at Eastern States Exposition (ESE) presented the very first Retail Excellence Awards to new and returning vendors at the Fair. On Tuesday, Sept. 29, senior leadership from the ESE Sales department and Mayor Will Reichelt of the town of West Springfield bestowed recognition on the six winners, whose operations are considered the pinnacle of professionalism and precision at the Fair.

“The best retail exhibits do more than offer great products,” said ESE Director of Sales Tim Garstka, “They create inviting spaces, present their merchandise with care and make every guest feel welcome.”

It brings ESE pride to showcase local and small businesses, and the creative entrepreneurs behind them are critical to curating the welcoming spirit of the Fair and the unique shopping experiences that set The Big E apart from most amusement events. The winners received banners they could display at their locations as well as onsite digital advertising, valued at $1,500.

The Outdoor Large Format winner was Jelly Belly Pools and Spas on Industrial Avenue, located just outside Door 7 of the Better Living Center. Off the fairgrounds, you can find their products at their site in Westfield, Mass. Gary Scavotto, president of Jelly Belly Pools and Spas, has worked with pools his entire life, and collective experience that he and his team bring to the show floor are evident in their meticulously cared for pop-up at the Fair.

The Outdoor Small Format winner was Elegancia Designs on Hampden Avenue. They are owned and operated by Roger Jones, and they sell vibrant hand-painted and decorated pots, bird feeders and houses, Jack-o-lanterns, wall decorations and more to brighten up indoor and outdoor spaces. Their designs are inspired by both nature and Mexican folklore, and the artists are spread throughout the world and sign each of their pieces. When he is not at the Fair, Jones owns and operates a boutique hotel in San Miguel, Mexico. This year they celebrated 30 years at The Big E, and he was accompanied by his daughter, Rosanna Isabella Jones Alvarez, at the presentation. She is the owner of The Original Pothead booth in Craft Common.

Falcetti Music in the Better Living Center won Indoor Large Format. This business has two brick-and-mortar locations in Simsbury, Conn., and Springfield, Mass., and they are dedicated to “sharing the joy of music.” They’ve kept this mission alive throughout Northern Connecticut and Western Massachusetts for more than 65 years, offering music lessons and selling instruments including the pianos they display at

the Fair, and they have spent many of those years at The Big E. Tony Falcetti received the honor on behalf of his family, representing a multigenerational musical legacy.

Indoor Small Format went to the Pottery Cellar, whose year-round storefront is in The Mill at Crane Pond in Westfield, Mass. At the Fair, they could be found in the Better Living Center. They sell authentic Bolesławiec pottery, offering one of the largest selections in all New England for those seeking Polish pottery. The business is owned and operated by Dawn Whitehill.

3 Graces, a clothing and accessories boutique in The Front Porch, was deemed Best Outdoor Newcomer. Their highly interactive charm bar served as a big draw for young shoppers, bringing attention to the Fair and 3 Graces, which has year-round sites in Ludlow, Verm.; Manchester, Verm.; and Provincetown, Mass. Their trendy product line included outerwear and accessories beyond the build-your-own jewelry bar. Owner Cassandra Laurent accepted the banner joined by an employee.

RedFive Toys and Collectibles of East Longmeadow, Mass., joined the Better Living Center for the first time this year and became Best Indoor Newcomer. They have a vast inventory of collectible figurines, plush toys, mini backpacks, cards and more, all of which represent the widely loved franchises and media, from KPop Demon Hunters to Godzilla to Marvel and beyond. Monica Rushby and her husband Brian were present when the ESE team surprised them with a banner.

Do you have a product you feel would be an excellent fit for the Fair? Vendor applications open at the start of the year at TheBigE.com for those interested in applying to join the Craft Common, Better Living Center, Young Building, The Front Porch and more.

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About Eastern States Exposition

It's always showtime at Eastern States Exposition (ESE), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation located in West Springfield, Mass. ESE is committed to excellence in providing opportunities for the development and promotion of agriculture, industry, education and family entertainment while preserving our New England heritage. The 175-acre campus holds five exhibition buildings, equivalent to 355,000 square feet of ground level indoor space. Their year-round, on-site dining and entertainment locations include Storrowton Village Museum, Eastern States Farmers Market & Wine Café, Storrowton Tavern & Carriage House. The facility also hosts more than 120 shows and events annually, such as The Big E, America's only multi-state fair, and Hooplandia, the Northeast's Ultimate 3x3 Basketball Tourney + Festival. For more information, check out EasternStatesExposition.com, or find us on social media.

Find images from the presentations HERE.