



## PRESS RELEASE

North Carolina Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA)  
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### ***STARNES JEWELERS NAMED A 2016 RETAILER OF THE YEAR BY THE NC RETAIL MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION***

**Charlotte, NC** (April 25, 2016) – Starnes Jewelers of Albemarle was recently recognized as a 2016 Retailer of the Year, one of four leading retail businesses to receive the honor from the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA). The award was presented during NCRMA’s Annual *Retailer of the Year* awards luncheon at the Charlotte City Club on April 20th.

Starnes Jewelers is a family-owned business started in 1898 by F.E. Starnes and has been run by only three generations in its 118 year history. It has been a landmark in downtown Albemarle since the Starnes building, which houses the jewelry store, was built in 1907.

Starnes Jewelers and its owners have been honored many times over the years. It was one of the first jewelry stores in North Carolina to be admitted to membership in the prestigious American Gem Society (AGS) of which it has been a member for over 70 years.

Gene Starnes, the present owner, along with his brother-in-law, Chris Bramlett, have held roles of importance to the jewelry industry both on the state and national level. Starnes and Bramlett has served as president of both the NC Jewelers Association and the North Carolina Guild. Starnes has also served as a director of the Independent Jewelers Organization and the National Bridal Service. Bramlett has been a trustee and director of the AGS where he also chaired the education committee for several years. In 2001, AGS presented Bramlett with the Robert M. Shipley Award, the highest honor given in the jewelry industry.

Although Starnes Jewelers is not the multi-faceted operation it was in its early years, the store is still more than just a jewelry store. While maintaining a focus on fine jewelry and gifts, including a complete selection of bridal goods, locals also come to the store to buy their tickets to cultural affairs such as Uwharrie Player productions and other civic events.

In addition to Starnes Jewelers, other 2016 Retailers of the Year are:

- Food Lion - Founded in 1957 in Salisbury, NC
- Moon and Lola – Corporate office in Apex, NC; Founded in 2003 in Raleigh, NC
- The Glass Jug – Founded in 2014 in Durham, NC

“We are proud to recognize Starnes Jewelers as one of our outstanding retail members for their efforts to provide superior value and service to their customers,” said NCRMA President and General Counsel Andy Ellen. “These four award recipients deserve statewide recognition because they are helping to sustain local economies, adapting to meet the needs of their customers, and giving back to their local communities.”

### *About Starnes Jewelers*

Based in Albemarle, Starnes Jewelers is a family-owned, independent retail jeweler that has been in business for over 118 years.

### *About the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association*

The North Carolina Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA) is a nonprofit trade association organized in 1902 to improve the business climate for retailers in North Carolina. Over 100 years later, NCRMA remains the voice of the retail industry for North Carolina. NCRMA represents the interests of individual merchants before the General Assembly and serves as a vital link to state government. Its credibility lies in its longevity and commitment to serving the ever-changing needs of its members. The Association's membership includes more than 25,000 stores from across the state whose business represents 75 percent of North Carolina's retail sales volume. NCRMA serves both large and small retailers from multi-state chains to local "mom and pops" and all types of merchants including antique, apparel, art, automotive, book, carpet, department, drug, electronics, floral, furniture, grocery, hardware, jewelry, paint and variety stores. For more information, visit <http://www.ncrma.org/>.

**Think You Know Retail? Think Again. [This is Retail North Carolina.](#)**



**Gene Starnes, owner of Starnes Jewelers, and Pat and Chris Bramlett were recognized as a 2016 Retailer of the Year by the NC Retail Merchants Association represented by NCRMA President and General Counsel Andy Ellen.**