

For Immediate Release
March 3, 2006

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CedarWorks Receives Excellence Award from Maine MEP

Rockland, ME - CedarWorks Playsets is a recognized global leader in the design and production of high quality, durable cedar playsets. The Rockport-based manufacturer and its products personify the quality, hard working, community oriented qualities of Maine, winning the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Best Toy Award and awards from the Parent's Choice Foundation, and iParenting Media.

Today Barrett Brown, President of CedarWorks added another award to the company's trophy case, accepting the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership's (Maine MEP) Manufacturing Excellence Award presented by State Representative Christopher Rector, Ranking House Republican Member of the Business, Research and Economic Development Committee at the company's Rockland manufacturing facility.

"I cannot think of any Maine manufacturer that is more deserving of the Maine MEP's Manufacturing Excellence Award than CedarWorks, which recognizes a company's efforts toward achieving world-class manufacturing status, implementing manufacturing practices to advance in the marketplace and, most importantly, its commitment to improving the lives of its customers and others," said Representative Rector.

Other local dignitaries in attendance included Representative Ed Mazurek, D-Rockland, Representative Stephen Bowen, R-Rockport, Senator Christine Savage, R-Senate District 22 and Jack Cashman, Commissioner of Maine's Department of Economic and Community Development.

In accepting the award, Barrett Brown recognized the company-wide commitment to excellence. "It is satisfying to be recognized for the work we do every day to bring the best

products and service to our customers. I'm proud to accept this award on behalf of the entire CedarWorks team."

Beyond producing quality play structures for children, CedarWorks is also dedicated to the community, giving 10 percent of its profits to organizations that benefit children and the environment, and donating more than 375,000 cedar seedlings to customers, woodlot owners and environmentally concerned groups.

"Despite already being one of the top companies in its market, management at CedarWorks recognized there was room for improvement, so they brought in the Maine MEP and the two organizations worked together to make a world leader in their industry even better," added Commissioner Cashman.

The Maine MEP conducted several Lean Manufacturing events at CedarWorks. Lean is a technique utilizing simple but effective methods to identify and reduce waste and excess inventory, clear shop floors and streamline production processes all with a goal of decreasing costs and increasing productivity.

"CedarWorks maintains 98 percent customer satisfaction which is incredible, but across the board the staff and management have shown a commitment to achieve 100 percent satisfaction, epitomizing quality work and quality people" said Representative Mazurek.

Lean implementation at CedarWorks produced improvements in several areas, including a 20 percent increase in first-run quality approval of wood-graded parts, reducing travel distance for products moving through the grading area by more than two miles a day and clearing over 500 square feet of shop area.

"CedarWorks is the only residential playset company in the United States to achieve ISO-9001 certification, which is an international symbol of manufacturing quality," added

Representative Bowen, R-Rockport. "Their commitment to quality and their community should stand as an inspiration to Maine manufacturers of all sizes and products."

Barrett Brown's parents bought Cedarworks in 1988 when it was a regional manufacturer of swing sets and cedar fencing. The company has grown more than ten-fold since that time and now sells swing sets and furniture to families across the United States and 20 foreign countries.

"In less than 20 years, the Brown family has taken a local company and made it a world player in its industry without ever forgetting that the people who make its products and the people who buy them are the keys to its success," said Senator Savage.

The Maine MEP is an affiliate of the NIST under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2000 manufacturing and business "coaches" whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information on the Maine MEP program call 1-800-637-4634.