



C R E A M of t h e C R O P

# Louise Brown

APRO'S 2010 RENT-TO-OWN CUSTOMER OF THE YEAR

**“I’ve always believed that if you take care of others, they’ll take care of you.”**

**By Murlin Evans**

**A**ccording to the age-old axiom, the customer is always right. And that just might be true—but rarely is there one as compassionate and inspiring as Louise Brown, a BestWay Rent-To-Own customer in Portsmouth, Virginia, for the past 20 years. “We felt obligated to get her story out there for all to hear,” says Mike Wines, a BestWay district manager. Mike Dennis, the company’s Portsmouth store manager, agrees: “Based on all the good she does for the community, I thought she was a sure-fire winner.” A winner she is, having recently been named APRO’s 2010 Rent-to-Own Customer of the Year.

A retired cook, Brown and her husband, Arthur, have provided foster care services for the City of Portsmouth for 28 years, dealing primarily with hardship cases and emergency situations. She’s given foster care to more than 500 children and has been honored five times by the city as “Foster Parent of the Year.” Brown relies on BestWay for bedding and other products that enable her to provide foster care. “Whenever I come into the BestWay store, everyone has a smile for me,” Brown says.

In addition to their foster care services, six months ago, the Browns started The Veteran’s Lodge, an organization that provides support to U.S. veterans who are unaware of the benefits that are available to them. The Browns visit churches and prisons to help those veterans initiate the process to receive their benefits.

“What she’s doing in the community is why she won,” says BestWay’s COO Jonathan Rose. “We are just lucky enough to have her for a customer.”

“She’s been an oasis,” Wines says, “a place that offers comfort, understanding, patience and love.”

Crystal Washington became one of Brown’s foster children when she was five years old. “I needed stability and loving and she gave me that,” Washington says. “She taught me how to conduct myself and how to raise my own kids in a good home. You picked a good [customer of the year]. Thank you very much; she really deserves it.”

“It is very important for children to have stability in their lives,” Brown says. “They’ve got to have someone behind them, someone who cares.” Currently, Brown is attending Tidewater Community College to further her education in child development.

“I am choking up right now,” Brown said upon learning that she was being honored. “I’ve always believed that if you take care of others, they’ll take care of you.” As the RTO Customer of the Year, Brown received \$1,000 and was featured in a special video presentation during APRO’s 2010 Rent-to-Own Convention and Trade Show in Louisville.

Brown says that it is wonderful “to know that something good can happen to you. Being a foster mom is good, being a veteran helper is good—[as is] being a good citizen. The most rewarding thing I get out of it is the love. When you’ve got love in your heart, you’ve got everything.”

“I wish that the world had a lot more Ms. Browns out there,” Wines says. ✧

*Murlin Evans is APRO’s senior reporter. To watch a video honoring Louise Brown, visit [www.rtohq.org/video-2010-Customer.html](http://www.rtohq.org/video-2010-Customer.html).*



Louise Brown, APRO's 2010  
Rent-to-Own Customer of the Year,  
right, with Mike Wines, BestWay's  
district manager