

Volume II 2012

**The Power
of Sympathy
Flowers**

**'Wow!'
With Your
Wedding
Work**

**A Beautiful
"Bokay"**

**Nature's
Creative
Edge
2011**

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Volume II 2012

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LEADERSHIPREPORT

One Customer at a Time

BY ALICE WATEROUS, AIFD, CF, CFD, PFCI, MFA PRESIDENT



In an ever-increasing 'global marketplace,' there's a lot to be said for exactly what the floral industry has to offer: personal, friendly, quality service.

Not exactly news, but still true. Like the line from Cheers: "Where everybody knows your name." No matter how tech savvy our customers are, nothing replaces being recognized by a real person who actually knows who you are and values your patronage. Humans are essentially compositions of needs and emotions, which forms the heartbeat of our industry. We have the wonderful task of supplying beautiful things that fulfill an emotional need. I share the feelings of a young woman in our industry, Marisa Rakowski, CF, about why she loves being a floral designer: "No matter what the occasion, happy or sad, my flowers make it better." An affirmation of the old line "Say It With Flowers," a statement that stands the test of time and reminds us every day to do our very BEST. After all, we're dealing with important times for each person who walks in the door, calls, or buys online, – being treated as the VIP they are is vital. Our commitment to excellent quality and positive customer attention can't ever change, no matter how much the world around us whirls off in different directions.

I've strengthened my commitment to buy local as much as possible, following the powerful grass roots "Buy Local" movement to support local and regional business. We saw a bit of a backlash last November and December as marketing began to get mean, with mega companies getting more aggressive and greedy. Many folks actually gave more thought to buying closer to home. So, as we endeavor to support one another, it may be time to revive or strengthen your relationships with hometown merchants and businesses. I promise, the preservation of community is worth much more at the end of the day than saving a few coins here and there.

By now, you're thinking: I know all this, blah blah blah. But let's be honest, sometimes in the business of doing business we get swept along and periodically need to re-evaluate and reaffirm what and who we are and who we depend on. It's no accident that a lot of very smart people are making a business of coaching salesmanship and customer service. I hope you periodically invest some time and energy in one of these seminars to renew enthusiasm, focus and goals. After more years than most, my friend and industry icon, Bobbi Ecker Blatchford, AAF, AIFD, PFCI,

not only has taught her share of these sessions, but regularly attends them. That's an example we should follow. At 80 years old, if she's willing to brush up, celebrate and absorb more knowledge, then so should we all.

Customer relationships are the gold ring to reach for on a daily basis; a pleasant greeting and acknowledgement is simply magic. Knowing your customer and serving them better reaps remarkable results. A pearl of wisdom from long ago is still relevant: the success or demise of your business happens one customer at a time. ✻



MFAELECTION

Tellers Committee Counts Your Vote

Newly Elected MFA Board Members



Janice Curran
Director-at-Large
Janice has a Master's of Business Administration with a concentration in marketing from Western Michigan University and currently works for Teleflora as a Territory Sale Manager. She's spent nearly 20 years working in retail, holding several positions including clerk, manager and territory sales manager. She brings a great deal of experience and knowledge to the floral industry.



Teresa Cytlak
Director of Region 3
Ridgeway Floral, Kalamazoo, MI
I believe in what MFA stands for and what it does for its members. The Certified Florist program, the Great Lakes Floral Expo and scholarship programs helps bring education to its members, which is something I feel is important as an owner, designer and mentor in this wonderful industry. Taking advantage of the MHI Work Comp Insurance, Hold Plus Messaging, Consumer Awareness Campaigns, and the Auto Owners Insurance programs are just a few of the business services I personally take advantage of.

The annual Tellers Committee Meeting was held January 12, 2012, to count the ballots for the Michigan Floral Association Board of Directors election. MFA Executive Vice President Rod Crittenden and MFA Treasurer and Hyacinth House co-owner Jim Schmidt reported the results at MFA's Board of Directors meeting. Janice Curran was elected as director-at-large for a three-year term and Teresa Cytlak was re-elected a director of Region 3 for a three-year term. Kathy Petz, AAF, CF, PFCI, motioned to accept the election results as presented and to

destroy the ballots. Kim Herbers seconded and the motion was approved. The new board then convened and elected Alice Waterous, AIFD, CF, CFD, PFCI, as president and Bob Patterson as vice president. Alice then appointed Jim Schmidt as treasurer.

"I'd like to thank the Board of Directors for their dedication to MFA," Crittenden said. "We have a dedicated and devoted group who give hours of volunteer service to grow our association. Their leadership makes our organization stronger every year." ✿

Your 2012 MFA Officers



Alice Waterous, AIFD, CF, CFD, PFCI, of Waterous Floral Consulting in Grand Haven, MI, was elected to serve her fourth one-year term as the Association **President**.



Bob Patterson of Patterson's Flowers, with locations in Big Rapids, Reed City and Cadillac, MI, was elected to a one-year term to as **Vice President**.



Jim Schmidt of Hyacinth House in Lansing, MI, was appointed to serve as the Association **Treasurer** for a one-year term.

SYMPATHYCOLUMN

The Power of Sympathy Flowers

Seeing is believing when you show off your work

BY CHERRIE SILVERMAN, AIFD, AAF, CPF



Sympathy work is my favorite to design, and I've had 30 years of practice. I love listening to my clients to hear and understand how they want to express their emotions with my flowers. When I do the occasional flower delivery to a funeral service, it amazes me how many really bad flower pieces I see... really bad. What we all must realize is that a funeral service is the one place where existing and potential clients see and compare floral arrangements from many different florists. This is the opportunity to shine amongst your competitors.

I have gotten many glowing online reviews for my funeral work. It's not that they say I'm the best florist; they say that I give special care and attention and always strive to create the most striking tribute pieces. I always ask my drivers when they return: How did the other flowers at the funeral compare with mine? This is a smart question to ask – it keeps me on my toes.

A design concept that I have always believed in and followed is that sympathy tributes work best constructed in a two-dimensional format. I do a lot of work for my camera, and I think that constructing a piece to be viewed from a distance should follow the same format; designing within two-dimension constraints and not achieving a lot of depth within

*All sympathy designs featured
by Cherrie Silverman.*





“What we all must realize is that a funeral service is the one place where existing and potential clients see and compare floral arrangements from many different florists. This is the opportunity to shine amongst your competitors.”

the design. A lot of depth and receding colors don't view well from a distance, and sympathy pieces are generally always viewed from a distance. It's funny, in all of the shows and programs I've attending throughout the years, I have never heard this concept discussed, but, it's apparent.

Another important principle is a strong focal emphasis. I believe that an initial “wow” response is generally achieved by a strong, immediate ability to perceive strong focal emphasis. I realize that both of these applications are not





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highly spoken about at seminars and educational events, but I truly believe that they are critical to my abundance of sympathy work. And, of course, no advice from me would come without advocating taking pictures of your work and publishing them somewhere on the Web. The sympathy page on my Web site (www.cherryblossomsflorist.com) links to a Picasa album where I currently have 326 examples of funeral tributes. Two weeks ago, I uploaded a picture of an all white vase. Literally, the NEXT DAY, I had a new client call and order the exact arrangement. The NEXT DAY... the power of the Internet never ceases to amaze me! ✿

Cherrie Silverman opened Cherry Blossoms flower shop in Westminster, CO, on December 1, 1981. She became an FTD Master Florist in 1988, a certified instructor of Sogestsu, Ikebana (Japanese Flower Arranging) in 1989, certified AIFD in 2000 and AAF in 2004. She has been a staff designer for the Fiesta Parade Floats since 2000. Cherrie currently is part of the AIFD online instruction program and co-chair of the AIFD Student Competition. In 2010, a design she helped build won The Philadelphia Flower Show Award of Distinction. She finds many blessings within her existence of being a neighborhood florist.

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MEMBERPROFILE

All in the Family

BY HEIDI ANDERSON, EDITOR

At Steve Coden's Flowers in Southfield, MI, a full-service flower shop, customers get attention from a true floral family.

"My shop is very personalized," said owner Steve Coden. "My wife, my son and I are hands-on; we watch everything that goes out. The personal interest that we take is our biggest quality."

The floral industry has long been personal for Coden, whose father, Macy, first opened the shop in 1957, on 7 Mile in Detroit. Steve took over at age 20, and moved to the Southfield location in 1973, the same year he joined FTD.

"It was a new, full-service office building in the suburbs, the first of its kind, with stores, an athletic club and restaurants," Coden said. "So we took the plunge and became more visible and it worked out great."

For the last 16 years, Coden's son, Jonathan, has been his partner in the business, and both are floral designers. They have another full-time designer and use suburban floral delivery for most of their packages to more than 50 zip codes in Metro Detroit. Coden's wife, Carol Sue, takes care of hard goods, from balloons and stuffed animals to ribbons and supplies, and prides herself on designing their quality gourmet fruit baskets.

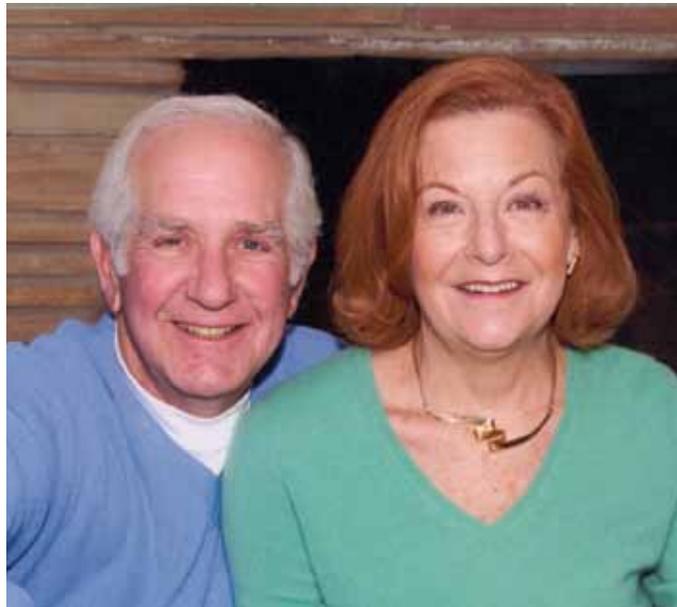
"That's her baby!" Coden said.

The shop has a Web site, www.codenflowers.com, where customers order flowers online. They advertise in the Yellow Pages and local bulletins, and promote their business to schools and churches. In the store, customers can shop for green and blooming plants and pre-made arrangements, as well as individual cut flowers in containers in a front cooler where they can create their own bouquets.

"Our location is very active with lots of people, and many come down from the offices upstairs to build their own," Coden said.

The shop is also active with special event and wedding work at all budget levels.

"Today, people have a price in mind that they plan to spend on decorations," Coden said. "Whatever their budget is, I can do something that makes them happy and fulfills their wishes. My No.1 goal is to make the customer happy, and No. 2 is making a profit. When customers get what they want and they



Steve & Carol Sue Coden

love it, it makes you feel good."

Coden also loves that designing allows him to be creative and gives him an artistic outlet to perform.

"I've refined my own style," he said. "I get a kick out of everything from a simple wrist corsage for a daddy-daughter dance to an extravagant bridal bouquet. It gives me a buzz. It's more than ego; it satisfies a need that I have to perform."

For Valentine's Day 2012, the performance went off without a hitch. Coden hired extra holiday help, and the group had 300 years of floral experience between them. Coden's 7-year-old granddaughter, Emma, came in and made her own little designs for the holiday, complete with a sign: Designs by Emma.

"She's been coming in since she was 3 and enjoys the flowers," Coden said.

Another granddaughter, Frankie, 5, also enjoys putting flowers together, and her sister, Jaye, 2, isn't far behind. So will this fourth generation carry on the family floral tradition?

"You never know!" Coden said. ✿

"Today, people have a price in mind that they plan to spend on decorations. Whatever their budget is, I can do something that makes them happy and fulfills their wishes. My No. 1 goal is to make the customer happy, and No. 2 is making a profit. When customers get what they want and they love it, it makes you feel good."

BRIDAL COLUMN

'Wow!' With Your

BY TRACY PARK



I started out in the amazing wedding business 25 years ago with a home-based studio. I learned to educate myself about the industry, and places like the Michigan Floral Association were there to help me fine-tune my skills and help turn my business into what it is today. I had some great mentors, including J.M.H. Schwanke, who believed in my skills. I have seen many changes over the years – some good and some bad. I am going to share some of the ways you can help your wedding business take off, what worked for me

Derek Cookson Photography



Michael Terri Studios



This boutonniere is one of Tracy's classic fall lapel flowers. The textures and fun wires add to the design. This has a billy ball (craspedia), seeded eucalyptus, viking poms, and a flame calla, perfect for fall.

This was for a July 4 weekend wedding and the bride wanted a garden effect. Tracy used David Austin garden roses, peonies, lambs ear (from my own garden) and also mini callas, topped off with a monogram brooch.

Wedding Work

and how I implemented it into my life and wedding and event studio. I like to think of them as 'recession busting tips:' how to get higher prices in any economy and shifting the fear into value instead.

I am sure you all know about social networking. You have to be on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Blogging is also huge. Do you know for every bride/customer I 'friend' on Facebook, she has an average of three to seven bridesmaids,

Dave Tree Photography



This vivid bridal bouquet was designed for an outdoor wedding, using green cymbidium orchids, anemones, seeded eucalyptus and a few other fillers.

some of who will be getting married themselves in the next six to 12 months? After every wedding I do, I average two to four friend requests from the service. They see my work and they see the value I provide. You also need a wedding Web site; not one you use for your everyday work, but one that showcases your wedding designs. I teamed up with some amazing professional photographers who photograph my work in a real setting for my Web site.

"If you offer trendy, out-of-the-ordinary looks, you can get the brides without a 'price shopper' mentality; ones who want you and are willing to pay for it. Your brides and grooms need to recognize you as someone who delivers an upfront perceived value."

I also started implementing a minimum on my wedding work – not that you have to, but for me it works. Trust me, I was worried at first that I would lose brides (and I did) but I stuck with it and it has brought me more business than ever. My business tripled after I did this. If you offer trendy, out-of-the-ordinary looks, you can get the brides without a 'price shopper' mentality; ones who want you and are willing to pay for it. Your brides and grooms need to recognize you as someone who delivers an upfront perceived value.

Now onto the fun part: trends! What I am seeing in the Mid-Michigan area is wedding locales at eco-friendly places such as barns, parks and family homes. Couples want to make their day more personal. The times of over-the-top flowing pilsner vases are slowing down. Mason jars, milk glass (yes, like grandma had,) painted tin cans and old medicine jars filled with wild flower blooms, herbs and fluffy flowers are HOT, as are bridal bouquets wrapped with burlap, old buttons and vintage brooches. This makes for a fun time for us designers to come up with some really out-of-the ordinary



This bouquet was designed for a bridal show Tracy was in. "I always try to make a show stopper that people would love to look at and touch," she said. This used "posey pocket" quick sand roses and about two-dozen white mojolica spray roses. Tracy designed the jeweled bouquet holder.

looks. I also grow a lot of my own herbs, wheat grass and succulents, and brides love that I grow my own. Speaking of succulents, if you're not working with them you're missing out. They are still huge and being asked for more and more

in everything from lapel flowers to earthy bridal bouquets.

My wish for all designers is to share – share your love of design, your love of flowers and your love for the industry. I have some competition in my area, but we all work together. We attend meetings with each other and if we are overbooked, we refer clients to one another. It has made a world of difference to my outlook on the amazing floral business. I love what I do; I love being inspired and learning all the time about what's new and what works for my business. If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me at great-flowerlady@gmail.com I would love to share with anyone what has worked and not worked for me! ✿

Tracy Park owns Park Place Design in Battle Creek, MI. Her love of flowers came when she was a small child. She loved going to weddings to see the flowers – they are truly her passion. Working with all the amazing types of flowers and using them as her medium has helped create the person she is today. With the support of her husband and family, she became a full-time wedding and event designer, previously managing a high-end bridal store for 16 years. Most of her skills are self-taught and she also classes and keep design skills up to date. She has a small 'bride meets herb garden' studio on her property where she meets brides. A stall garage holds her workspace, coolers, supplies and rentals. She has one part-time designer and one delivery and set-up person. Her busy season is April-November.

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A Flourish of Flowers!

There's no better way to celebrate Mother's Day

BY TRISH LILLY



Flowers can say so much – I love you, I'm sorry, congratulations – and most importantly, with the approach of Mother's Day: thanks mom! The annual celebration of mothers is drawing near, and the entire floral industry is in full swing preparing to help consumers celebrate motherhood with the time-honored gift of flowers. According to Wikipedia, Mother's Day continues to be one of the most commercially successful U.S. occasions. Wikipedia cites IBISWorld, a publisher of business research: Americans will spend approximately \$2.6 billion on flowers, \$1.53 billion on pampering gifts, such as spa treatments, and another \$68 million on greeting cards. They further note that it's possible that the holiday would have withered over time without the support and continuous promotion of the floral industries and other commercial industries.

With billions of dollars to be spent on flowers this Mother's Day, let's take a look at a few trends emerging this year. According to Nick Fronduto, chief operating officer of Jacobson Floral Supply, Inc., a hardgoods supplier in Boston, "Mother's Day continues to hold second place behind Christmas in terms of the most impactful floral holiday across the broadest line of products." He went on to identify the emerging hardgoods trends that will play a role:

- Natural moss and birch type containers continue to show strength as a "green" way to celebrate this special day.
- Glass bottles in all shapes, sizes and colors are hot items now and can be used in tandem to make interesting and unique designs.
- Vase accessories are becoming more and more popular. Colored wire and coils, along with diamond wraps and ribbons are among the items in highest demand.
- The demand for unique vase fillers has never been greater. Mirror balls, sea shells, star fish, clam shells, gems and marbles are just a few of the items that are being used to design new and distinctive looks.

In cut flower trends, a Colorado wholesaler reports that the traditional pinks/lavenders will remain popular. However, there is also a push for tangerine (Pantone's 2012 Color of the Year – Tangerine Tango) and the bright hues of popsicles such as watermelon, lemon, lime and the flowers associated with them. An arrangement featuring an explosion of dramatic color and inviting scents will provide a perfect tribute to those women who have devoted their lives to making our lives better.

Florists preparing for Mother's Day are encouraged to sit down with their wholesaler partner to map out product needs. Wholesalers provide reliable service, accurate orders, a sales staff with expert knowledge on the products they sell from cut flower quality to hard goods supplies, and they are responsive to your needs and provide timely delivery.

Given the broad base of products needed to satisfy the end users needs, floral wholesalers continue to be the best resource for these products. The variety of items that they carry along with a sales force that is up to speed on what is new, innovative and trending, makes a relationship with your local wholesaler one that will result in a tremendous benefit for your company and your customers.

So think of the mothers out there waiting for an expression of affection from their sons and daughters and loved ones. Work with your wholesaler to secure the product you need this Mother's Day to help them enjoy a declaration of love and devotion – a beautiful floral arrangement! ✻

Patricia A. Lilly is the executive vice president for the Wholesaler Florist & Florist Supplier Association, a business organization dedicated to providing members with the information, services and support they need to remain competitive in today's constantly changing market. The association offers a wide variety of programs and activities to supporting the mission of enhancing networking and business opportunities for all floral wholesale distributors and suppliers. Visit WF&FSA at www.wffsa.org.



INDUSTRYNEWS

A Beautiful “Bokay”

Eastern Floral’s downtown design

BY HEIDI ANDERSON, EDITOR

Eastern Floral has launched a sophisticated new urban floral boutique in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids called bokay by Eastern Floral. Located in MoDiv, a “hip, unique retail incubator” that houses nine retailers under one roof, bokay caters to the downtown crowd.

“Eastern Floral identified a new market created by the growing condo residents in downtown Grand Rapids,” said Bing Goei, president of Eastern Floral. “We also wanted to promote the positive advantages of having flowers on every office desk.”

Unlike their six other full-service stores, cash-and-carry bokay offers merchandise that is designed and selected to meet the needs and cater to the tastes of downtown residents, workers, shoppers and visitors.

“The inventory we carry is characterized by its uniqueness in

design and type,” Goei said. “Our products are smaller, very easy to carry and very affordable. During Valentine’s Day, a customer commented how nice it was to be able to buy quality flowers that are affordable. Our goal is to have everyone walk out of bokay with a flower or plant.”

The location’s urban-chic arrangements, convenience and sophistication brought fast success with customers.

“The response has been phenomenal,” Goei said. “We are building a loyal clientele of downtown residents, office workers and visitors attending various meetings in downtown Grand Rapids. We certainly are open to growing more business using this model.” ✿

For more information on all of Eastern Floral’s locations and The Goei Center, visit www.easternfloral.com.



TRICKS&TIPS

Chocolate Party

BY GARY WELLS, AIFD, CFD

A long winter can leave you needing something to lift your spirits. A few years ago, some good friends and I decided that what would make us all feel better was chocolate! Who doesn't love chocolate? Rather than

filling our hot tubs with it, we had a chocolate party the last week in January to help us brighten the Michigan gloom. It was a huge success, so we decided to do another party this year.

While brainstorming for decorations it hit me: use pan glue. Anyone who knows me well knows I don't go far without my pan glue! Playing around, I discovered that if I poured it out, allowed it to harden and sprayed it with Design Master's October Brown paint, I had chocolate! You can try it too: with Oasis Mega Wire, form a mug with a wire streaming down and add a spiral around the bottom for a base. Place the base on a sheet of foil and add the pan glue. Heat the glue and carefully pour it down the wire and allowed it to puddle on the table covering the wire base. Repeat this process a couple times allowing the glue to dry between applications. Once the glue is dry, spray with a couple coats of the paint. Once the project is done, use it as a centerpiece with a garnish of fresh flowers.

Use this same technique for front door décor: place a few corsage magnets onto some foil and then pour pan glue onto a foil covered cookie sheet. Repeat that process until you get the desired effect. Once the faux chocolate is ready, print a sign such as: Chocolate Party Tonight! Attach it to the chocolate and glue some fresh flowers for accent to welcome guests.

Another idea is to pour the glue over a votive cup, allowing the glue to pool on the foil before painting it brown. The votive can then hold either a votive candle or fresh flowers. This year's party was a huge success. Everyone enjoyed the décor - and the real chocolate! ✿

Have you created a wedding or special event that you'd like to share in The Professional Florist? E-mail your story and photos to mrsheidianderson@hotmail.com.



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Cultures, Countries, Continents – A World of Flowers

BY ALICE WATEROUS, AIFD, CF, CFD, PFCI, MFA PRESIDENT

Every year, the third week of September, floral designers from around the country gather for what has become “florist camp.” They meet at the country home of Robert Friese, AIFD, the founder and host of Nature’s Creative Edge. Each designs their space into a fantasy with floral materials, centered on a new theme each year – this year was Cultures, Countries, Continents – A World of Flowers.

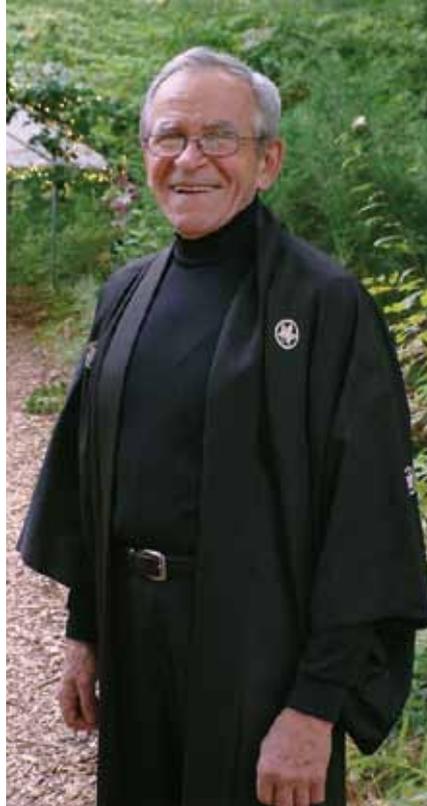
The AIFD Memorial was a collaboration piece directed by Suzie Kostick, AIFD, CF, PFCI, from New Mexico.

Bali was created by Craig Kaufman of Ohio.



Edge 2011

The majority of the designers are AIFD, but several non-members selected on their artistic merit participate. The North Central Chapter sponsors the event and also benefits from the proceeds; designers who participate pay for their own travel expenses and often materials. Proceeds are used by the



Host Robert Friese, AIFD, wearing a Kimono from Japan, where he taught floral design.

Africa, is the work of Philip Meyer, AIFD, from Wisconsin.



American Agriculture, depicted by Lori List, AIFD, of Wisconsin.

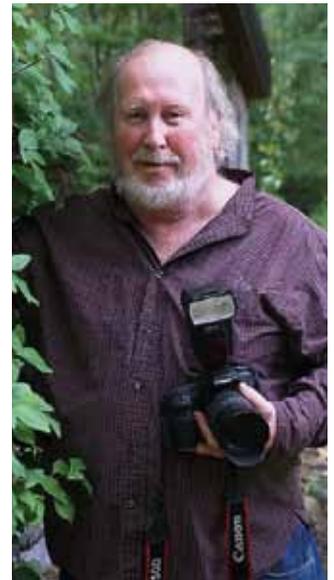
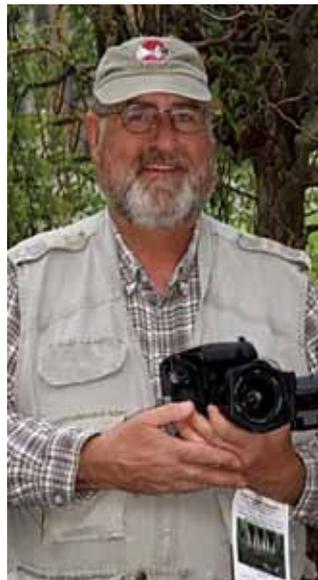




The Nomadic Cultures detailed in a carpet of floral materials by Carolyn Clark Kurek, AIFD, of Indiana.



The Mayan Rainforest, imagined by artist James Lutke from Michigan.



Thank you to NCE photographers Al Cooley and Randy Wegener.

Cultures, Countries, Continents – A World of Flowers



Maasi of the Upper Nile, created by Alice Waterous, AIFD, CF, CFD, PFCI, from Michigan.



Mayan Culture, represented by Martin Van Til, AIFD, from Michigan.

chapter on educational opportunities for its members and student chapters.

It's not uncommon for 30 or more design professionals to take part in the display each season. Some set up their display in one day, bringing their design partly fabricated; most construct their interpretations completely on-site over several days. Mr. Friese opens his home to as many as he can, and sees that guests are fed hearty lunches each day. Because the

exhibit opens to the public on Friday evening, the final set-up is Thursday, when an appreciation dinner is catered in. The North Central Chapter appreciates the product donations from floral manufacturers and floral wholesalers, who help make the event possible!

The theme next September is *Kiddie Lit & Fairy Tales, A Fantasy in Flowers*. Look for Nature's Creative Edge announcements on Facebook throughout the year! ✿

BUSINESSTIP

MTG & eProcessing Network Excited About New Mobile Payment Option

BY ANNE HERAGHTY

Smart phones are ever-present these days. We rely on them for so much more than making calls – checking e-mail, keeping appointment schedules, surfing the Web and even paying for purchases. It is amazing that we can manage all this on one convenient device. In the hands of a merchant, there is yet another benefit: accepting credit card payments. If you are a merchant with a smart phone, you have the capability to accept credit cards.

The mobile payments industry is becoming bigger and more diverse. The technology is getting better and better, making it easier and more cost effective to take credit cards via your phone. MTG has worked with one of its partners, eProcessing Network (ePN), to simplify things for those who wish to accept

payments outside of a traditional store or office. ePN Mobile utilizes the UniMag II to provide a solution that could very well suit the needs of your business. UniMag II is a magnetic stripe reader that attaches to your mobile device through the headphone jack. It is small, easy to use and allows you to swipe credit and debit cards when you are out in the field, in your car or at a client's home.

Great Benefits

There are some great benefits to this mobile payments solution. UniMag II readers need no external power supply, plugs or cords. The ePN gateway has the ability to connect to a shopping cart (including Authorize.net certified carts) and recur billing, can be connected to more than one device (as long as it is licensed with the gateway) and can electronically capture the signature and e-mail a receipt. ePN has also added, and continues to add, other available extras such as QuickBooks interface, e-mailing invoices and even an inventory tracking system.

The benefit of utilizing your association's recommended processor, MTG, is that once the product is purchased and the set up is secured, there is only one, low monthly fee of \$10, which covers both the secure gateway service and your MTG merchant processing account. And, there are no minimums to meet.

Mobile payments are a great way for any business to secure a sale by making it incredibly convenient for potential clients to pay – anywhere. It also helps keep processing costs down because a merchant is able to physically swipe customers' cards for the lower, qualified rate. Don't hesitate to call MTG at (888) 599-2209 for further details or to get set up! ✿

Anne Heraghty is a communications manager at Midwest Transaction Group, www.midtrans.com.

INMEMORIAM

Ann Sabo-Jonick

Sunnyslope Floral

Ann Sabo-Jonick died December 25, 2011, at the age of 88, peacefully surrounded by her family. She was a loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother with a kind and generous spirit. She touched many lives with her warm personality, wonderful sense of humor and loving



devotion to her family and friends. She was an honest, hard-working and active professional who lived a life full of accomplishments, including assisting in establishing Sunnyslope Floral in Grandville, MI, a family business. Ann is survived by her two sons, Roy (Jane Sabo), and Gary (Cindy Sabo); five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. ✿

For more on Ann's life, visit www.lifestorynet.com.

Kinetic Bouquets

BY DEREK C. WOODRUFF, AIFD, CF, CFD
MFA'S 2011 DESIGNER OF THE YEAR
OWNER OF THE FLORAL UNDERGROUND IN TRAVERSE CITY, MI

Being innovative in the wedding floral industry is more challenging than one may think. One challenge is coming up with new, cost-effective and inventive designs to share with other floral designers. Another is being able to sell these designs to the consumer bride. It is important to remember that when thinking on the forefront of design, think fun! The word 'kinetic' means "pertaining to motion," and not just figuratively, but literally! This bridal bouquet of juicy orange mini Calla Lilies and Liriope has been bound by Oasis aluminum flat wire. It's not around the handle, where most use ribbon, but instead, at the very bottom of the bouquet. This allows for some fun, flirty movement of the flowers when carried by the bottom. By 'adding a little bounce to your step,' one couldn't help but notice this bouquet walking down the aisle. ✿



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COMPANYPROFILE

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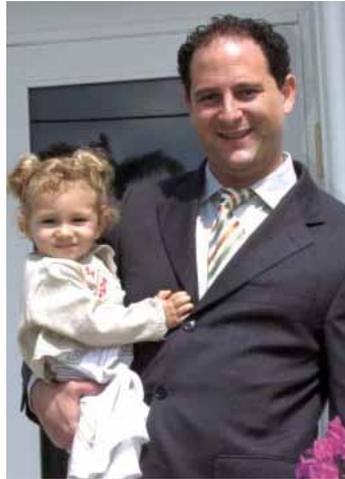
BY HEIDI ANDERSON, EDITOR

In Bogota, Columbia, high in the Andes Mountains, there's a small rose farm that's making a big impact in the floral industry: Alexandra Farms. At the encouragement of his wife, Clara, Jose Azout started the farm in 2005 after attending the International Horti Fair in Amsterdam. Inspired by the David Austin line of garden roses, they started the test farm with 10 varieties of David Austin roses and 30 breeders. By 2009, Alexandra Farms, named for his now 7-year-old daughter Alexandra, was selling fresh cut garden roses all over the world.

"She is very proud to have a farm named after her," Azout said. "We named greenhouses on the farm after my twin boys, Lucas and Noah (now 5.) That will have to appease them for now!"

Azout got his start in the floral industry as sales manager of the small mini-carnation farm Agricola Los Arboles in Columbia. He went on to start Maxima Farms in Miami, which was sold to USA Floral six years later, then worked for Gerald Stevens, Dole Fresh Flowers and the Delaware Valley Floral Group. Azout was president of Transflora, a traditional importer of fresh cut flowers, and Flower Transfer, a customs brokerage and handling business.

Now as president of Alexandra Farms, he's changing the image of garden roses.



Jose Azout with daughter Alexandra

"Garden roses were often cataloged as event flowers because they were expensive and had a short shelf life," he said. "That's changed. We've selected only the varieties that last seven days in cold chain and seven more days in water. They're not as delicate as they used to be, and not as expensive. They are contenders for everyday work."

On the 21-acre farm, every stem is hand cut, graded and packed, with a high appreciation for the shapes and fragrance of the flowers.

"We're not a rose factory where every flower is identical," Azout said. "It's a much more romantic project. These are high-end, exclusive roses that you won't find for sale at a big box store. The shapes and fragrance

differentiate them from a chain store to a real florist; it's what makes them so special."

Currently the company offers the most varieties in the market – 25 – and has 100 in the testing phase. In summer 2012 more David Austin varieties will be launched, along with French and German varieties.

"It's the war of the roses!" Azout joked.

More than half of their roses are sold in the United States,

Toulouse Lautrec



Romantic Antike





Caramel Antike

followed by Japan, Holland, England and places all around the globe.

"I love meeting all the people and seeing the different cultures around the world," Azout said. "The Japanese bride who uses our alabaster white rose, the Detroit bride who wants red. I love all the roses; seeing them all on display in one room, that's a candy store to me!"

And others agree: the Society of American Florists has awarded Alexandra Farms roses a host of outstanding variety ribbons, and at the 2011 Proflora flower trade show in Columbia, they were crowned show champions.

Alexandra Farms also offers Novelty Dutch Hydrangeas, grown

under shade cloths instead of in the greenhouses. Azout imported 30 varieties from Holland and Germany, which took two-and-a-half years to test, compared to nine months for the roses. Six varieties were perfected and are for sale by color – from the deepest blue to the hottest pink – which is determined by the soil. They also offer the unique Japanese 'popcorn' hydrangea.

Five importers sell flowers from Alexandra Farms to floral wholesalers all over the world. In Michigan, Alexandra Farms flowers can be found at Mayesh, Nordlie, Rokay and Saginaw Valley Flower Exchange. ❁

For more information, visit www.alexandrafarms.com.

Pink O'Hara



Piano



BUSINESSCOLUMN

The Flower Business – Past, Present and Future

BY RED KENNICOTT

“It was the best of times.
It was the worst of times.”



Charles Dickens wrote these words in another century about another time. However, they apply very well to the flower industry as it is today. On one hand, many traditional “brick and mortar” florists are suffering. There are thousands less of them today than just a few years ago, and industry economists predict that the numbers will continue to drop. Florists are squeezed by higher costs while at the same time their customers are disappearing, because they also have been squeezed by the recession. Corporate accounts and the wedding and event business almost vanished after the Stock Market crashed. Non-traditional competitors have seized an increased portion of this shrinking market pie. Every day seems to present a new dilemma.

Florists of my generation sometimes recall with nostalgia how the flower industry was when we were young. If consumers wanted flowers then, the only place to get them was at the local retail florist. There was no competition from supermarkets, box shipments from farm to consumer, or Internet order gatherers. “Wire service orders” were all gathered by retail florists, and there was a warm feeling of family in the floral community. There was so much business that florists worked all through the night before holidays like Easter and New Years Eve. Even small florists always had a box of gardenias and at least six-dozen large mums in the cooler at all times. Only a few cultivars of flowers were available, and many of them were seasonal. Quality expectations were lower.

I recall hearing one of the most respected florists relating his answer to a customer who asked how long her roses should last. He told her that she would be “doing very well if they lasted four days.” Red roses in those days were called Better Times, named during the Depression, and by today’s standards, they were not red. In fact, they turned to sort of a bluish color if the grower held them a few days before the holiday. In spite of all of this, florists were making a good living and the flower industry seemed to be thriving. Old timers of that day talked about how they survived the Great Depression without closing their shops or losing their jobs, while some of their friends were in the bread lines.

Today we have a whole new set of dynamics, starting with the flowers that are available:

1. There are many flowers today that previous generations of florists did not dream of having, such as alstroemeria, Stargazer and LA lilies, green trick carnations and tulips on a year-round basis. Roses come in hundreds of varieties rather than the dozen or so (at best) that used to be found in a wholesale house. There is a vast selection of cultivars and varieties that were unheard of only a few years ago.
2. Flower quality has dramatically improved. Roses have more petals, and many of them take up to four days to open. Then they last and perform well for many more days. Virtually every cultivar is vastly superior in size, shape and keeping quality compared to flowers of the past.
3. Longer lasting flowers are being delivered through the supply channels. This starts with better growing and post harvest procedures at the farms and continues throughout the shipping process, where today it is possible to maintain the cold chain all the way to the consumer if all partners in the distribution process do their part.
4. Communication technology makes it easy for floral distributors to be in touch with growers all over the world continuously. Hence, retailers and ultimately consumers can get timely answers to their questions about flower availability.

How, Who, and Where

How many flowers are being sold today? Who is selling the flowers? Where are the flowers being sold? The answer to all of these questions is that there are no reliable statistics. The dollars spent with full service florists include the prices of those services, while most dollars spent at supermarkets are only for the product, so the selling dollars are not comparable. A box of a dozen roses sold on the Internet shipped by overnight courier direct to the consumer at a cost of \$19.95 ends up costing the consumer well over \$40.00 when handling and freight charges are added.

Large quantities of flowers are being sold at farmers markets at very low prices and for cash, so they are under the radar screen of both floral industry economists and the IRS. A case can be made that Americans consume more flowers today than in the past, but they are buying them in different places and according to different patterns. That trend will increase even more as a new generation looks to the Internet, cell phone apps and text message referrals from their friends.

As a somewhat traditional floral distributor, our company's primary customer base today consists of retail florists, event companies of all sizes and local supermarkets. Traditional florists are still our core business, and we live and die with their successes and failures. My favorite time of the day is the first hour of the morning when many of the hands-on owners/operators of shops stop to pick up flowers and supplies on their way to work. Talking to them gives me a first hand knowledge of what is really happening in the marketplace. We are fortunate and blessed to be selling a product that everyone loves. Whoever heard of someone who does not like flowers?

When we look to the future, I always think of the power of marketing. My marketing hero in the flower industry is Paul Ecke Jr. He took what was essentially a Mexican weed and turned it into the largest selling item in the USA flower industry. It certainly took product development and growing sophistication, but ultimately it was marketing that made poinsettias so popular. There are endless opportunities for marketing of flowers today. For example, we have been promoting peonies from Chile (where it is spring) for Christmas sales. They really seem to be catching on.

At a national level, our product is sadly outmatched by other commodities in the marketing arena. We desperately need major national promotion of flowers. A group called Floral Marketing Funding Initiative Coalition (FMFIC) was established several years ago by representatives of virtually all of the major national associations in the flower industry. The mission of FMFIC was to

find a way to raise major national funds for marketing flowers in a manner that is broad based and fair for all. The mission was accomplished, and the method is a National Promotion Order for flowers, similar to the "Got Milk?" campaign. All that is needed is the support of the flower importers and domestic growers to initiate the process of getting a promotion order for our industry. The success of such a national promotion was proven back in the 1990's when we had Promoflor for a period. Some of you remember the "Buzz the Bee" campaign, which demonstrated that marketing dollars can be dramatically leveraged to move the needle and raise consumption of flowers at the national level. The possibilities are endless.

As documented for more than 10,000 years, flowers are a unique and timeless commodity in the history of human emotional expression. Those of you who are young and have recently entered the flower industry have the blessing of being able to offer floral consumers a profound range of superior floral products that can be sold and delivered to consumers in ways that were never before possible. You have my admiration and envy. My goal is to try to stay healthy and in good shape, so that I can be around to see what happens next for the flower industry, and watch how you take advantage of today's myriad opportunities. ✨

Red Kennicott is the chairman and CEO of Kennicott Brothers Company, a floral importer, grower, distributor and wholesaler of fresh cut flowers and florist supplies, serving florists and the floral industry throughout the USA since 1881. Visit their Web site at www.kennicott.com.



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Chairman's Report Why Certify?

BY TIM LATIMER, CF, CF CHAIRMAN



CF certification sets you apart as being committed to excellence in your field. As a retail florist, you know the importance of skillful employees who provide consumers with fresh, quality products, excellent service and outstanding design. As a Certified Florist, you will have the tools to do just that. Your Michigan Floral Association is here to help you. The Professional Education Center will offer a review class June 5, 2012, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at the MFA headquarters in Haslett, MI. Cindy Ching, AIFD, CF, will guide you through the hands-on portion of the exam, and give you great advice on studying for the written test. (see page 29 for more details) And speaking of the written test, it is now available online! Just call the MFA office and let them know you want to take it online. If you prefer, you can still take the test on site at the next testing on June 10, 2012, at Michigan State University.

If you are new to the floral business or just want to learn more, the Professional Education Center is now offering "night classes." Courses available include "Introduction to Floral Design and Intermediate Floral Design. These classes are a great way to prepare for Certification. Invest in your most important asset, YOU!

Even if you are a designer with years of experience, it will help to read through the design section of the certification manual before testing. I have evaluated many designs for CF and I can say first hand that the most common mistakes are mechanics. When preparing to take the test be sure that you are familiar with all the mechanical aspects of design. If you are wiring and taping flowers, be sure that your wire is covered and your tape is tight and smooth and not bulky. If you are gluing a design be sure that the glue doesn't show. Be sure that water in vased designs is clean, that the stems reach deep into the vase and all lower foliage is removed. When designing in floral foam, be sure that the stems are inserted deeply and securely. You will be given an evaluation to review before you make the designs. Be sure to read through the form and use it as a checklist for all the things the evaluators will be looking for. The test will require you to make five designs (don't worry – there will be plenty of time). One of the required designs is a duplicate design. You will be given a

picture of a design and be required to duplicate the design in the picture. Don't make the mistake of trying to "improve" the design; copy it exactly as pictured. There is no replacement for practice! But one potential downfall is practicing without outside input. If you are making mistakes, you need to have someone point them out so that you don't continue to "practice" those mistakes. It would be helpful to get in touch with a designer whose work you respect (preferably one who is Certified) and have them check your work and offer suggestions for improvement. Every designer, no matter how much experience they have, can benefit from constructive criticism. Testing can be a challenge, but you can do it. I hope to see you at the next CF test! ✨

Our new CF Chairman, Tim Latimer, CF, teaches floral design at Michigan State University and has been on the CF committee since its inception. He was involved in developing the Certified Florist manual and writing the written exam. Tim has been designing and teaching at MSU for 25 years.

CF Flower of the Month RANUNCULUS (*Ranunculus asiaticus*)

Native to Asia and celebrated for its medicinal properties as well as its bright beauty, the small camellia-like ranunculus ranges from white to pink, red to yellow to orange. Also known as Buttercup in the language of flowers, a bouquet of ranunculus says, "I am dazzled by your charms." Ranunculus are available January through May. The bright colored flowers are welcome additions to garden arrangements, oriental designs and wedding work.



FLORAL TIP *From the CF manual, page 1* – By the time fresh flowers arrive at the retail floral outlet, they may have been off the plant for one week; foliage may have been off the plant for two weeks or more. If they have received proper care and handling up to this point, they will be in good condition. Proper care and handling in the retail environment is essential to continued longevity of flowers and customer satisfaction. Keep your flowers fresh and customers satisfied! The CF manual is a great resource to teach you how.

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Certified Florist Manual & Testing

Did you know? MFA's Certified Florist (CF) program is a comprehensive program that covers all aspects of professional floristry and is the most affordable program available to florists today. And the most convenient: you can self-study at your own pace with this great manual/reference resource. The Certified Florist accreditation is nationally recognized and an approved pathway to AIFD accreditation. MFA offers an optional, educational "Steps to Certification" class to help prepare for certification. Other Certification or Certified Floral Designer programs available today would cost you over \$1,000 and could take you years to accomplish! But not this program:

***Cost for manual and one round of CF testing is \$599.99 (includes tax & S/H)**

***Cost for manual only is \$399.99 (includes tax & S/H)**

Consumers today are offered more and more options for purchasing flowers and are looking for your credentials or certification to help them justify spending their money with you. Let them discover you are a Certified Florist when they look into your business!

Get your CF manual today and prepare for the CF exam, which consists of 2-1/2 hours of hands-on design (you make five designs: one duplicate for incoming wire service orders, one vase, one pin-on corsage, one wrist corsage and one wedding bouquet,) and two hours of written work (30 product ID and 120 multiple choice questions). If you pass each section with a score of 80 percent or better you, become a Certified Florist!

The CF Manual consists of the following chapters and books:

1. Care & Handling
2. Product Identification
3. Customer Relations/Sales
4. Delivery
5. Marketing
6. Accounting
7. Gluing
8. Lighting
9. Basic Floral Design (this topic is covered using two books that are included with your manual purchase.
Florists' Review Design School and
Flower Arranging... Step by Step Instructions for Everyday Designs)
10. Study Guide & Evaluation Forms



**Visit www.michiganfloral.org
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Professional Education Center

Steps to Certification

Date: June 5, 2012, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Location: MFA Professional Education Center

Cost: Member/\$149 Non-Member/\$199

Lunch included

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- Do's and Don'ts
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- A Hands-On Experience

Cindy guides those who plan on becoming a Certified Florist.

You'll get tips on how to prepare for both the written and design portions of the test. Students will spend part of the day reviewing the written test and then work in the design room learning what is needed to pass the exam, with the all-new CF sections to the written and hands-on!

Attendees will leave with a clear understanding of what it takes to pass the prestigious national CF exam.

Please bring your own tools!



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FOR SALE: Successful Business and Building. Owner Retiring after 35 Years. Northwest Wayne County Location. For more information, contact Robert Campbell at (248) 568-7830 Max Broock Realtors.

Seeking Donations: MFA Scholarship Committee seeks donations for the 2012 silent auction: Help fund the MFA Scholarship program with a donation to the Silent Auction. All kinds of items are needed. Electronics, tools, sporting equipment, as well as any floral related products. For more information on how to donate please call Peg Long (Saline Flowerland) at (734) 429-4458 or Jim Schmidt (Hyacinth House) at (800) 777-9945.

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the professional florist

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 7.28" PETITE VASE TRIO
 PLAIN
 Opening: 3.75", 2.375", 2.5"
 12/Case



3907CLR
 Van's #292087
 8.5" GARDEN URN
 PLAIN
 Opening: 4"
 12/Case



3104CLR
 Van's #292294
 8.5" GATHERING VASE
 PLAIN
 Opening: 4"
 12/Case



3007CLR
 Van's #295787
 8.5" MARILYN VASE
 PLAIN
 Opening: 3"
 12/Case



3005SCLR
 Van's #292216
 9" RIO BUNCH VASE
 OPTIC
 Opening: 2.75"
 12/Case



3002SCLR
 Van's #292192
 9" RIO VASE
 OPTIC
 Opening: 5.375"
 6/Case



3003SCLR
 Van's #292194
 9.25" RIO CACHE VASE
 OPTIC
 Opening: 7.25"
 6/Case



3020AST
 Van's #292230
 10" BOKAY VASE TRIO
 PLAIN
 Opening: 3.75", 4.625", 3.875"
 12/Case



3905CLR
 Van's #292086
 10.25" GARDEN URN
 PLAIN
 Opening: 4.75"
 6/Case



3008CLR
 Van's #292217
 10.5" RIO VASE
 PLAIN
 Opening: 5.5"
 6/Case



3929SCLR
 Van's #292297
 12" CONICO VASE
 OPTIC
 Opening: 6.5"
 6/Case



3004CLR
 Van's #292202
 13.25" MING VASE
 PLAIN
 Opening: 5.5"
 4/Case



3605CLR
 Van's #292089
 14" GRECIAN URN
 PLAIN
 Opening: 6.5"
 6/Case



Alsip, IL
 708-371-8000
 Edina, MN
 952-831-8008
 South Bend, IN
 574-282-2884
 Indianapolis, IN
 317-291-8267

Walker, MI
 616-785-9500
 Chicago, IL
 773-254-0700
 Doraville, GA
 770-449-0100



3914CLR
 Van's #295760
 5" BUBBLE BOWL
 PLAIN
 Opening: 3.25"
 12/Case



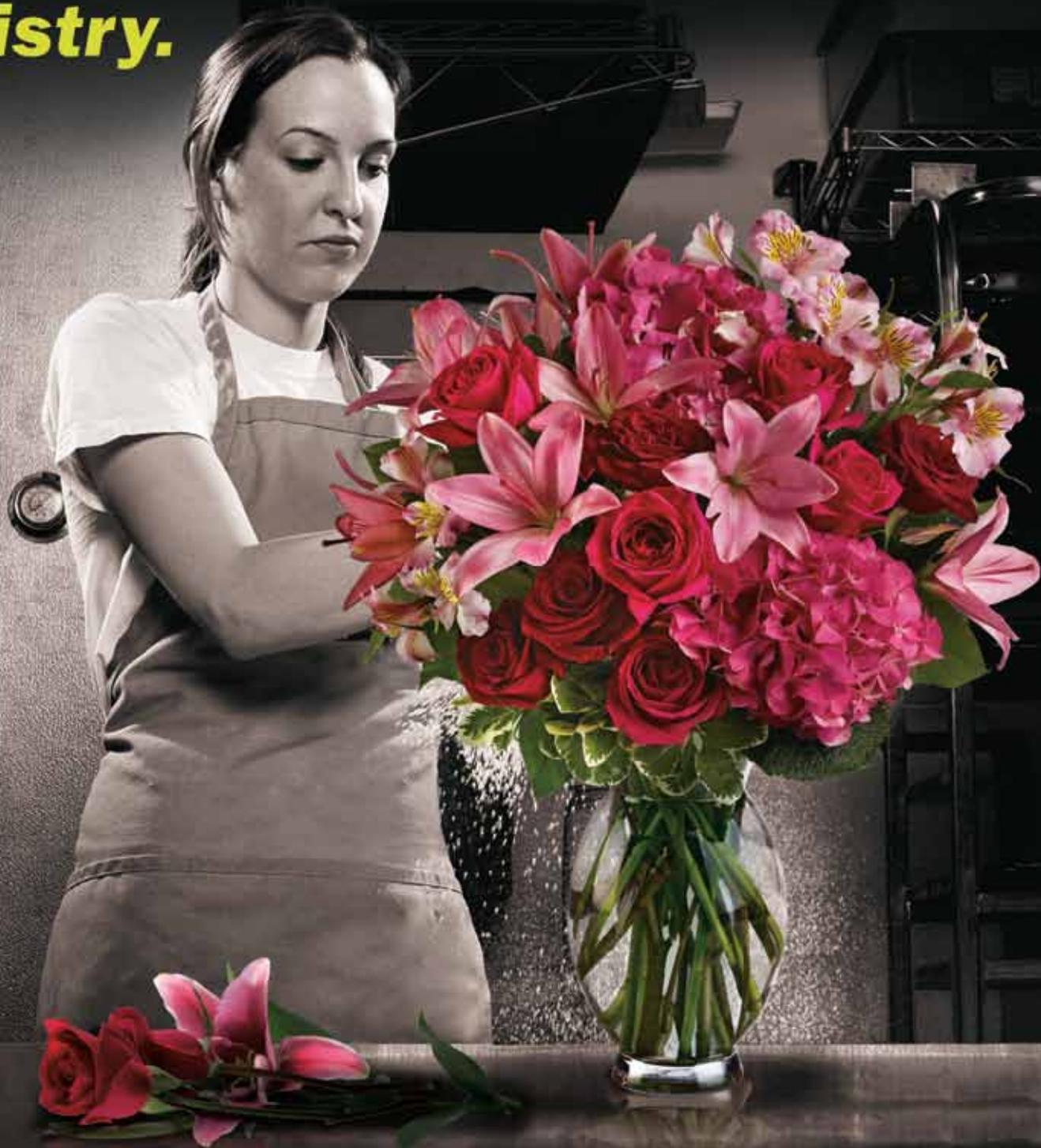
3967CLR
 Van's #291722
 6" BUBBLE BOWL
 PLAIN
 Opening: 4.25"
 12/Case



3553CLR
 Van's #293002
 8" BUBBLE BOWL
 PLAIN
 Opening: 5.25"
 4/Case



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