

Convention and the nursery family

Something special happened at this year's OAN Convention, held in November at Salishan.

Anytime there's a large gathering of our membership, I find myself rejuvenated. The camaraderie is something to behold. You see titans of the industry interacting with up-and-comers and the future of the industry. They talk about trends, production and labor challenges as easily as they give updates on family.

Tom Fessler is a giant in our industry. He recalled handing his son Kyle, then just 10 days old, off to the Bigej family at convention. They watched Kyle while Tom attended the various business and social events.

At this past convention, Kyle was sworn in as the association's new treasurer. And once again, a new generation of Bigej offspring was there to help with child care. I'm sure some of the kids in attendance will one day become household names in Oregon's nursery industry.

Of course, we also had our adult version of day care — sort of. Friday night started with hospitality suites hosted by Leonard Adams Insurance, Crop Production Services and a past president room hosted by outgoing past presidents Mark Bigej and Leigh Geschwill. It's a cliché to say "a great time was had by all," but I'm pretty sure it was.

We also put the association on a sustainable path relating to governance. Our finances are in good order along with our programs and services.

Worker protection standard changes

We had expert panels on two issues facing the industry. One was the changing state and federal Worker Protection Standard (WPS) rules, and the other was succession planning. There were several big takeaways on the former.

1. Everyone has to comply with the new regulations. Many in agriculture believe that if you are not a restricted use pesticide applicator, you do not have to abide by the regulations. This is false.

2. There are significant requirements for worker training, recordkeeping, placement of decontamination supplies and notification.

3. There is a 150-foot buffer for any pesticide application that requires a respirator and a 100-foot buffer for applications where the handler is required to use eye and glove protection. For operations that are near neighbors and roads, this will be a challenge.

4. We are actively working with Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Agriculture to provide resources and training portals through www.pesticideresources.org. In Oregon, the OAN will do significant outreach to the membership. We will schedule meetings, webinars and have resources on the members-only page throughout 2018.

Many in agriculture, including the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, requested a delay in implementation of the WPS until training and outreach is completed. In spite of such pleas, any delay was rejected by the Environmental Protection Agency and Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Ready or not, WPS goes live on January 2, 2018.

Planning for the next generation

Passing the farm operation on to the next generation is a growing challenge. To address that, we had an expert panel with Dave Buck (CPA from Aldrich); Brad Eriksen (attorney with Jordan Ramis) and Nellie McAdams (Farm Preservation Program) talk about steps owners can take now to keep a nursery industry operation going into the next generation.

To properly transition to a new ownership, control and management structure requires legal and accounting expertise. Putting planning off does not spare the expense.

Estate taxes are a real thing — at least for now. Operations that plan ahead of time can ensure that operations do not have to sell part of the property to pay off the tax to state and federal governments. A decade ago, the OAN



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secured passage of a bill that provides a dollar-for-dollar tax credit up to \$7.5 million per person. This is good enough to eliminate the state estate tax liability for 90 percent of the nursery operations in the state.

Over the next 20 years, 64 percent of Oregon's agricultural lands will change hands. With the average farm owner being 60 years old and 84 percent of Oregon farms being sole proprietorships, the challenges for succession planning are clear.

Several resources can help, including NW Farm Credit Service, Chemeketa Community College, trusted legal and accounting firms and your association.

A night of celebration

A highlight of the entire convention experience is giving thanks to our volunteer leaders and honoring those who have contributed to the association and industry over the years.

Two outstanding service award winners — Ken McVicker (Van Essen Nursery) and Kristin VanHoose (Amethyst Hill Nursery) were honored for their dedicated service to the betterment of the industry. The full complement of deserving awardees are featured in this issue of Digger (see article on Page 9).

For me, the most special part of the evening was seeing the OAN Honorary Lifetime Membership Award given to two very deserving individuals and one couple. Teri Dillard Lund (William Dillard Nursery), Frank Schmidt III (J. Frank Schmidt & Son) and Dan and Diane Wells received this prestigious honor. We heard great stories about all of them and the contributions they have made.

I am proud to be part of this association and honored to work for such a great industry. I am looking forward to a successful new year. Bring on 2018! ©