

Fresh Digest

A Publication of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council

September / October 2020

TOMMY RENDA:
CAREER & LIFE
SHAPED BY SAFEWAY

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RESUME WITH
ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

FPFC EDUCATES
THROUGH WEBINARS
BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

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Features

- 8 **2021
WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE
FOR THE FPFC?**
- 10 **TOMMY RENDA:
CAREER & LIFE
SHAPED BY SAFEWAY**
- 14 **GIUMARRA BRIDGES
THE GAP FROM FARM TO
GROCERY WITH AIR DELIVERY**
- 16 **ANNUAL FPFC SO CAL
GOLF TOURNAMENT
PHOTOS & THANK YOUS**
- 22 **FOOD BROKERING
IN A
COVID WORLD**
- 24 **FPFC EDUCATES THROUGH
WEBINARS: BUILDING YOUR
OWN PERSONAL BRAND**
- 26 **FPFC APPRENTICE PROGRAM
CARRIES ON
DESPITE COVID**

In Every Issue

- 4 **Editor's View**
BY TIM LINDEN
- 6 **Executive Notes**
BY BRIAN COOK
- 28 **Council News**
FPFC HIGHLIGHTS
- 29 **Trade News**
INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS

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EDITOR'S VIEW

By Tim Linden



Dress Rehearsal for Retirement

The changes that we have had to deal with because of the coronavirus have long since surpassed temporary inconvenience and have moved toward a more settled state. For those of us of a certain age, the shelter-in-place and work-at-home scenario have become a dry run for retirement. For you younger folks, it may well be a preview of the rest of your work life.

I've been working from a home office for the past 22 years, so I have told others that my life has remained largely unchanged during this pandemic. That was true for March, April and May, but it's no longer the case now that the pandemic has moved to June, July and August with no end in sight. I'm now seeing this as a dress rehearsal for my post-work life.

It's true that from the outside my 8 am to 5 pm work life looks as it has for the past two decades. But there are major difference. In the first place, my house is more crowded. While I worked at home, my wife generally did not. Now she is home the same 24/7 that I am. And my daughter, who will soon go back to apartment living at college, has also been around for those same hours. That will be great for all of us,

though of course we will miss her... some of the time. There is a reason that in the real world, 20 year-olds and those in their 60s are not roommates.

But my wife is not going back to an office. Her workplace has determined that they can conduct their business more efficiently using the phone and video conference calls. We will now be together 24/7...for at least the next two decades, if age performance of past generations in our families is predictive.

For the first few months of this challenge, I stuck closely to the routine, and continued to draw a distinction between the weekdays and the weekend. I worked my normal hours and found that I had more free time because I never had to travel. Previously I was out of my office on average about six to seven days a month, attending produce shows, events and meetings, and doing in-person interviews. For the FPFC alone, I typically attended about eight events per year. Those are very worthwhile endeavors and have defined my career, but they are not the most efficient use of your day when you factor in travel time. Without those time-killers, I found that I could easily take an hour walk every day and/or spend

some time in the yard redoing the landscape or in the kitchen building a more extensive dinner meal for the family.

But as these months have dragged on, I've become less disciplined. There is little distinction now between the weekend and the weekdays...much like as I imagine retirement. It's easy to let a project slide to the next day when you know there is nothing else on the schedule. Now I typically write stories on the weekend when I have no phone calls to interrupt me. And I often work in the yard during the week...just because I can. My calendar of phone appointments reminds me what day it is; otherwise I wouldn't know.

I had no firm retirement date prior to COVID...and I still don't. My wife and I have designed our home work spots and hours to create separation, sorely needed, especially by her. Apparently spending 24/7 with me is harder than she thought. Who knew?

Being in my business – publishing magazines and writing stories – deadlines are my way of life. But I have not been as good at keeping them in the past few months

Continued on page 28



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EXECUTIVE NOTES

By Brian Cook



Live & Well

That is not a typo. I am so excited that as of this writing we are a week away from our first LIVE event since early March! The Fresh Produce & Floral Council Golf Tournament at Tustin Ranch is set for August 19 and great care has been taken to assure the safety of members, FPFC staff, and Tustin Ranch personnel. While hugs and handshakes are still some time away I will be happy to see everyone's pretty eyes and what I can only expect will be some cool masks while I air bump them from six feet away. We will ride one per cart, which forced us to cut the field in half. All that said, those lucky members that are able to get out to golf will have a great outing. I am sure of it.

Today was also the completion of our second webinar of a two-part series. As one may expect, we had our challenges with the first run but today's webinar went on without a hitch. In July, Karen Tiber Leland taught us how to create a personal brand in a post COVID world. The detail applied to businesses as well as individuals, so members and their companies got full value from this session. Today, Karen took us through the three steps to thought and industry leadership. This highly

interactive webinar allowed us to rate where we are now and learn how best to take ourselves to the next level. We are currently working on the details for the next webinar. Shout out to the Luncheon Committee (see website for committee members) for their ability to pivot and focus on these new events in the absence of luncheons.

A quick rundown of other scheduled events...

Day At The Races moved to October 3 once COVID arrived on the scene in March. This is currently still on the books since it is an outside affair. We are working with Santa Anita closely to assure that all safety precautions are in place for a safe event.

October and December luncheons are being discussed but the recent uptick in cases leads me to believe one or both may be canceled. We will keep you posted on FPFC Updates and will reopen luncheons as soon as it is safe to do so.

Last item to report is the resurgence of the FPFC Golf Tournament in Northern California. Since I came on as Chair this is one of the most asked questions: "Why did we cancel NorCal golf?" Keep a

look out in your email box because this event will be coming to you in 2020. Details are in the works and the committee is being formed. I am very excited to bring a golf event back in close proximity to our Northern California membership.

In closing, a little perspective. As businesses, this has been a tough year for some, a great year for others, while several tread water as we get through the effects of the pandemic. As individuals, this has been a tough year for some, a great year for others, while several tread water. Frankly, this has been a challenging year for businesses and individuals no matter if you are struggling, doing well, or just trying to battle through. We do not know where others are at in life so approach them with kindness. Be a beacon of light and love to others. You will make their day and I promise you too will grow from it. God bless!

Grace & Peace,

PS: If you are a representative from a member company please be sure to send an email to info@fpfc.org to assure you get on the mailing list for future events. 🍀



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2021

What Will It Look Like for the FPFC?

By Tim Linden

Uncertainty is the theme for every produce industry event in 2020 and unfortunately that will continue into 2021 as no one knows just when “normal” will return. But that hasn’t stopped the leadership of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council from looking ahead and taking some bold actions.

The FPFC Expo

In August, the United Fresh Produce Association and the Fresh Produce & Floral Council announced that they will team up to deliver a combined convention and expo June 24-26, 2021 in Los Angeles. The United Fresh Convention & Expo had been planned for April 2021 but is being moved to June to allow greater flexibility for companies returning to in-person events following the pandemic. The FPFC Expo traditionally held in July will move alongside United Fresh at the Los Angeles Convention Center in downtown L.A.

Brian Cook, president of Pete’s and 2020 chairman of the board of the FPFC, told *Fresh Digest* that the details will be announced as planning continues but the combined event is being designed to allow both groups to keep the identity and structure of their own programs while getting the benefits of a larger more robust show. He said there is still a lot of uncertainty about when large gatherings will be able to be held and this was an excellent opportunity to combine two shows into one easing the concerns of attendees as the country does try to get back to normal.

FPFC EXPO Chair Kori Martin of The Oppenheimer

Group, said: “The Board of Directors of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council is thrilled to partner with United Fresh for the 2021 EXPO! As an industry, we are heading into 2021 with high hopes of in-person tradeshows, but we are aware of many postponed events due to the current pandemic bleeding into 2021. This collaborative effort is intended to bring some relief for next year to our exhibitors, retail partners, and attendees in both travel and cost savings with a combined two-day EXPO event. With United Fresh bringing their strong presence to Southern California in the heart of L.A., we look forward to creating a solid networking experience working together for all of our members while eliminating one extra tradeshow for the industry as we consider the challenges of the current season.”

United Fresh President & CEO Tom Stenzel added: “We are excited to be working with FPFC members on their home turf in Southern California. The FPFC Expo is always a great event for retailers and foodservice buyers in the West, and now will be part of a global event with United Fresh. We look forward to welcoming FPFC members and exhibitors to be part of a great celebration as our produce community once again gathers in person.”

Incoming 2021 FPFC Chairman, Sean McClure of Professional Produce also stated his excitement and praise for the partnership. “The consolidation of the two shows for 2021 into a single, two-day event will help bring together an even larger vendor and retail community, providing an increase in interaction for both organizations and their members. The FPFC has had great success in hosting the past EXPO events for its mem-

bers, retail, foodservice and suppliers every year and look forward to continuing that same tradition in 2022.”

Convention education, meetings and networking will begin on Thursday, June 24, followed by a two-day expo Friday and Saturday.

Upcoming Events

Cook said that while the FPFC would like to hold its remaining October and December luncheons this year, that does not look promising. “We haven’t yet cancelled those events,” he said in mid-August, “but to be honest, it doesn’t appear that we will be able to hold them.”

In fact, he called the annual FPFC Dinner-Dance, which is typically held in late January or early February, a 50/50 proposition at this point.

However, elsewhere in this issue is coverage of the FPFC Southern California Golf Tournament, which was held on August 19. Speaking before the event was held, Cook said a lot of planning with the golf course went into making it happen with a strong emphasis on following the rules of social distancing.

“Keep your mask on and keep your distance,” he said, echoing the unofficial theme of the tournament. “We believe this may be the first industry event held since the coronavirus appeared. We want it to go well and for everyone to be safe.”

If it does go well, Cook said the FPFC is looking at some other outside events that might work such as the annual Day at the Races in October.

He also said the FPFC continues to work on other ideas to add value to the members including webinars that were held in July and August (also covered elsewhere in this issue).

Cook said the uncertainty of the times is reflected in the FPFC’s new mantra as it makes plans for late 2020 and 2021, which is “We reserve the right to change those plans.” He added that the FPFC Luncheon Committee has re-invented itself as the Events Committee.

But he laments that in-person events will be few and far between in the foreseeable future. “Relationships and face to face meetings are the beauty of our business,” Cook said. “We all can’t wait to get back to that.” 🌱

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Tommy Renda:

Career & Life Shaped by Safeway

By Tim Linden



Tommy Renda is in the middle of this family photo with his parents and siblings

As Safeway Assistant Sales Manager Tommy Renda tells it, the supermarket chain has been an integral part of his life even before he was born. In fact, in very large part, Safeway determined where he was born and where he grew up.

It was more than 40 years ago that Tommy's parents, Larree and Frank Renda met in Des Moines, Iowa. Larree was a produce manager in a Safeway market. Franks family owned the neighborhood Dairy Queen across the parking lot. Each day, he would come into the market to buy bananas for banana splits. There, the story goes, they began their courtship.

While Frank left Dairy Queen behind and went into construction and real estate, Larree made Safeway a career. "She started as a bagger and worked her way up to executive vice president during her 40 plus-year career," Tommy said. One of her early promotions was to Houston in the 1980s, which is where Tommy was born. Shortly after his birth, Larree was promoted again and the family moved to Northern California. "I grew up on the Peninsula in the Burlingame/Hillsborough area," he said, noting that he still lives in that area in the city of San Mateo.

Tommy went to the academically robust St. Ignatius High School in San Francisco and then on to the University of Portland where he received both his undergraduate degree and his MBA. He was a talented baseball player in both high school and college with fleeting dreams of becoming a professional until shoulder surgery early in his college career derailed that idea. “Before the surgery, I was a pretty good left-handed pitcher,” he says modestly.

Before going to graduate school, Tommy worked for a law firm for a short while as he studied to take the Law School Aptitude Test. His goal was to be a lawyer. “But I absolutely hated it,” he said of the law firm work. So he set his sights on an MBA and a career in the business world.

Upon graduation, Tommy was set up for a “sit down” with one of his mother’s colleagues to talk about his future and give the newly-minted MBA graduate some ideas about pursuing a career. “After we were talking for awhile, he asked me why I wasn’t going to apply for a job at Safeway,” Tommy



Tommy Renda and his mother, Larree Renda, a former Safeway senior executive

remembers. “I told him it seemed awkward to be the boss’s kid.”

But the Safeway executive told him that there were many boss’s kids working in the organization and it wasn’t because of nepotism. Safeway, he assured him, hired the best applicant and it wasn’t based on who they were related to. Tommy did apply and was hired as an Analyst in the frozen food department in 2013. He excelled and was promoted to Senior Analyst in just

the first six months. Six months later he was promoted once again and became a category manager in dairy. When Safeway merged with Albertsons in 2015, Tommy was named Assistant Sales Manager for Produce, a position he has held for the past five years. “I am responsible for 17 categories within the NorCal and Hawaii Produce Departments, all value-added categories, like packaged salads, refrigerated beverages, salad dress-



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Tony and Tommy Renda on the occasion of Tony's Major League debut.

ings & dips, bulk foods, and others. “I am in charge of the 4 P’s of Marketing – Product, Placement, Pricing and Promotions.”

He explained that in those categories, he is responsible for selecting the items for sale, constructing the schematics and merchandising direction for stores, negotiating the cost and price, and building the promotional strategy for each item.

Tommy could not be happier with his career choice. “What’s not to like? Safeway is a great company and I am incredibly happy where I am right now. I get to work with the best team in the industry. At this point, I’m still the junior produce guy with a lot to learn. Learning happens on a daily basis and keeps me hungry and excited for what’s next.”

He said Safeway was a great organization for his mother’s entire career (“They were very good to us!”) and it is proving to be equally good for him. He rattles off a list of mentors who have shepherded his career praising each one for their knowledge and eagerness to help him along. And Tommy admits to catching the “produce bug.” He said people in the produce in-

dustry have always claimed that this department is different than others...and he agrees. “There is nothing like produce. I’m in it for life,” he quipped.

Since the middle of March, Tommy has been working at home but he misses the office. He is yearning for the office to open back up and is not one who loves working for home. “It definitely makes my job more difficult,” he said. “It strips away many of things I find very exciting about the job. I love collaborating with people in retail and meeting with vendors to talk about their products and plans. Sure, I’ve gotten used to Zoom but it is less exciting. I like the face to face meeting. I want to be back in the office.”

His away-from-work life has taken a turn this year as his younger brother, Tony, retired from professional baseball and moved back to the Bay Area with his wife and son. Tony was a standout player for the University of California at Berkeley and then was drafted in the 2nd round by the Washington Nationals in 2012. “My brother is my best friend and golfing partner,” said Tommy, who plays to a 10 handicap, a tad higher than Tony’s handicap of six. “I may have beaten him a few times but he usually gets the best of me. But we don’t keep track of that. We’re both just trying to improve our game and be the best we can be and enjoy our time together on the course.”

The brothers no doubt inherited their athletic prowess from both their parents. Father Frank, who passed away 10 years ago at the early age of 56, was a standout high school baseball player and Larree was a high school state champion in hurdles. Tommy loves having his brother back home and close by. “Other than maybe our dad, I have always been Tony’s biggest fan,” he said. “He has always played on the East Coast (in the minors and majors) so I would always listen to every one of his games on my way home from work. I would have all the apps for the different clubs so I could stream the games. I hardly ever missed an inning, and even more rarely did I miss an at-bat. My yearly summer vacation was always spent in some small East Coast town watching minor League Baseball; I couldn’t have been happier about that!” This is the first summer in many years that Tony hasn’t been playing baseball and so it is also the first summer that Tommy hasn’t been cheering him on. But they have been playing a fair amount of golf and have enjoyed not having 3,000 miles between them. 🏌️

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The Giumarra Companies recently completed a test flight shipment to deliver peaches grown in the San Joaquin Valley to Southern California-based grocery retailer Gelson's. The test included a Cessna aircraft loaded with freshly harvested Henry III variety peaches at Reedley Municipal Airport on the morning of Aug. 7. The aircraft flew for approximately one hour to Whiteman Airport, which is located in Pacoima in the northeast corner of the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles County.

John Corsaro, CEO of the Giumarra Companies, and John Savidan, senior director of produce and floral for Gelson's, were on site at Whiteman Airport to witness the aircraft arrival. After being unloaded from the plane, the fruit was delivered to four local Gelson's stores in Valley Village, Sherman Oaks, Century City, and Pacific Palisades.

"Giumarra was established by a grower family with the aim to share delicious, high-quality fruit with the world," said Tim Riley, president of the Giumarra Companies. "We are uniting our founding values with a commitment to exploring new logistics platforms as we continue to expand our service capabilities. This test with Gelson's proved successful and we look forward to future experimentation with this technology."

Upon arrival to the Gelson's locations, the peaches were showcased in the stores' weekend produce dis-

plays featuring airplane mobiles and signs highlighting the fruit's tree-ripe flavor and exceptional "flown fresh from the farm" quality. To accompany the in-store signage and merchandising, Gelson's shared the message of the peaches' unique delivery method with customers using geo-targeted digital marketing, including social media.

"We are excited to be the first retailer in Giumarra's test to offer this exclusive summer fruit to our loyal shoppers at select store locations," said Rob McDougall, president and CEO of Gelson's. "Our customers have come to expect Gelson's to be on the leading edge of grocery innovation, and we are pleased to bring a new offering in the produce department that utilizes airplane technology to deliver enhanced flavor."

Giumarra is known for marketing a full line of fresh produce including avocados, watermelon, berries, and grapes. The peaches, a quintessential summer favorite, are not picked until they ripen on the tree. With aircraft delivery, the fruit arrived in stores much quicker after harvest than with traditional transportation methods.

"As a grower, it is exciting to be able to offer consumers a piece of tree-ripe fruit the way nature intended," said Tim Thiesen, grower for the Giumarra Companies. "This technology helped us swiftly bring a local farm stand experience to grocery stores more



Valley Village Produce Manager Michael Sockett Sets Up Fruit Display



Gelson's Valley Village store

than 200 miles away.”

The Giumarra Companies is a leading international network of fresh produce growers, distributors, and marketers that encompasses a world of freshness. Since its inception in 1922, the Giumarra group of companies has taken pride in a longstanding commitment and tradition of quality, service, and industry leadership to feed the world in a healthy way. Products packed under the company’s Nature’s Partner label represent some of the highest-quality fruits and vegetables in the marketplace.

Gelson’s operates 27 full-service specialty grocery stores in Southern California. Each Gelson’s Market features the full amenities of a traditional supermarket, with the local flavor of a neighborhood market. Their high standards – for quality, value and freshness; unsurpassed service; and attention to detail – define the ultimate grocery shopping experience. With more than 65 years’ experience, Gelson’s is particularly known for its flavorful, hand-selected produce. 🌱



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Virginia Morrison, Litehouse, Inc.
Amanda Grillo, CMC Sales
Larry Willett, The Elite Boutique

FPFC Apprentice, Kyle Griffith of Pete's gives the tournament his thumbs-up approval!



FPFC Staff, Emma McBride-Taylor takes golfers temperatures before registration.



Bruce Flanigan of Advantage Sales, Fernando Azevedo of Botanical Food Company and Darryl Bollack of Mariani Nut Co. catch-up before the tournament begins!



Oscar Guzman and Scott Leimkuhler of Progressive Produce enjoying a day of golfing with other FPFC members.

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Golf Committee Chair, Therese Ferrara of Preferred Sales greets Michael Schutt of Raley's with an elbow bump!



Kristine Gaitlin and Virginia Morrison of Litehouse, Inc. pose with Golf Committee Chair, Therese Ferrara of Preferred Sales.



FPFC Golf Committee Co-chair, Caitlin Tierney of 99 Cents Only Stores fist bumps Jeremiah Traub of Charlie's Produce.



Nick Sanchez of House Foods America gets breakfast at the Taqueria de Anda breakfast truck.



Rick Illig of Henry Avocado Corp. fist bumps volunteer, Dave Howald of USA Pear Bureau.



FPFC Chairman, Brian Cook of Pete's air fist bumps Dennis Krondak of Northgate Gonzalez Markets to thank him for attending!



Membership Committee Chair, Neil Merritt of Bard Valley Date Growers fist bumps Membership Committee Co-chair Jules Buehler of North Shore Living Herbs + Greens after meeting in-person for the first time!



45 years of service to the produce industry



Happy Retirement Joe Marchese!

From starting out in the produce industry at Vons, to produce buyer at Certified Grocers, to a board position at FPFC, to National Sales Director at Veg-Fresh Farms for 25 years; you are a legend. Congratulations Joe! Love, Your Veg-Fresh Family





Volunteer Allen DeMo of Friedas poses for a quick photo with Phil Warren and Phil Warren Jr. of Warren Packaging.



The Progressive Produce team takes quick photo.



Greg Emi of Rainfield Ranches and Raymond Sun of Zion Markets, on the course with Blake Polisky of Natures Produce and Adam Sides of Rainfield Ranches.



FPFC Board Member, Kori Martin of the Oppenheimer Group was happy to see procure friends at the tournament!



Past Chairman Andrew Bivens of Westlake Produce Company gets his temperature taken by Patricia Jimenez of Fresh Concepts before the tournament.



Thank you to our on-course demo sponsor, Warren Packaging!



The Oppenheimer Group poses for a quick photo on the course – Tasi Taulealea, Fernando Caudillo and Kori Martin.

Mike Nunez of Sonora Farms enjoys The Habit lunch truck with Albert Vasquez, Erick Coronado and Ryan Fukuda of Avocados from Mexico.



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Brad Martin has been a food broker specializing in produce for most of the past four decades and he has never experienced such a disruption in the supply chain as has been the case with the challenges associated with the coronavirus pandemic. On the other hand, he said the produce industry, the retail sector and food brokers have responded amazingly creating a different, but still very efficient, environment.

“Everyone says about a trillion+ dollars of food-stuffs are sold through retail channels and another trillion+ goes through foodservice,” he said. “When foodservice shut down, there was a huge increase demand in Retail channels – let’s say \$250+ billion (on an annualized basis) – sent to retail that nobody was prepared for. COVID caused huge challenges and opportunities! Retailers have done a fantastic job. They adapted brilliantly!”

more” approach with SKUs. They have kept a majority of the SKUs but in an effort to keep the shelves stocked, they have had to put some of the slower movers on the sidelines.”

He compared the efforts by everyone in the industry to what is happening in the world of Major League Baseball right now. “It feels like we are hitting a homerun, but nobody is in the stands cheering it.”

Perimeter operates primarily in the traditional Southern California retail region and has increased its retail force by 25%. Each merchandiser visits six to seven stores a day typically between 5 and 10 a.m., trying to get out of the stores before they become too crowded. “We correct the out-of-stocks that we can and strive for schematic compliance and focus on stocking voids which is a key part of our merchandising service.” Martin said.

FOOD BROKERING IN A COVID WORLD

By Tim Linden

Martin is president of Perimeter Sales & Merchandising located in Anaheim, CA which he started in 1995. He said, the “merchandising” part of that title is a very important service that his company provides, and this “focus” came in especially handy since Covid-19 became an issue in mid-March. “We’ve added retail people and we’ve sent them into stores early every day to stock our products and help out our retail customers,” he said. “Of course, they always wear masks and practice social distancing and follow our ‘chains’ guidance! We’ve been fortunate and haven’t had a coronavirus case yet.”

The longtime produce industry veteran believes the key to the excellent performance by retailers over the past few months has been their concentration on their core products and top sellers. “Because of the big increase in business, they have taken a “less is

He said the biggest impact from coronavirus for the principles he represents is that in the first few months of the pandemic retailers were not looking for new products or as interested in promotions. Some new product releases had to be put on the back burner. “But since June we have been getting opportunities to get back to normal.”

On the other hand, he said many of the principles are manufacturers of complimentary items, which were selling unseasonably well. “If consumers could load their pantries they are. We also saw a run on larger sizes like the two-pound chopped salads were selling very quickly.”

One of his principals is Christopher Ranch, which saw a huge increase in garlic sales, no doubt because consumers were at home cooking a lot more. Martin said the same thing happened with vegetable sales as



Roger Schroeder of Stater Bros. Markets (l) and Rob McDougall of Gelson's Markets (r) congratulate Brad Martin of Perimeter Sales & Merchandising on his Spirit of Life Award given to him in 2017.

they topped fruit sales in many stores. Typically, he said fruit sales out distant vegetables with close to a 60/40 advantage.

Martin is also looking forward to working with some of his principals on new products they have in the pipeline. He noted that Dole, one of his longest standing customers, has a new value-added packaged salad product that tells the consumer to “Just Add Chicken.” Martin believes this will be a great seller as it will help consumers easily create a restaurant-quality meal at home.

While presentations are more complicated, he does not believe the pandemic has cost Perimeter any new business. He is always in contact with principals looking for representation and that activity has continued though he said most companies are more likely to wait until things normalize a bit more before launching with a new broker. Martin and his team also continue to meet with retailers, albeit usually by Zoom or some other on-line platform. “Respecting social distancing, retail management is still getting out to the stores so sometimes we meet them at the store or drop samples off at a location of the buyer’s choice, but we haven’t been going to their offices to make formal calls,” he said.

Post-Covid, Martin does expect that most of his daily processes will revert to the pre-Covid pattern, but he also expects there to be some permanent changes. He expects Zoom meetings will continue at

least some of the time as it can be an efficient way to have a face-to-face meeting with a principal or a retailer. But he is old school and does pine for the day when he can shake hands again with his customers and partners. And he said those in-person meetings tend to be shorter as you have a time slot and you keep to it. “The “Zoom type” meetings always seem to run longer, so maybe an in-person meeting is actually better for the Buyer.”

He believes the uptick in retail produce sales is here to stay, at least for a while. “I think we are going to continue to see a higher level of in-home cooking, with more produce sales at retail, which is good for our industry.”

Martin also expects food broker representation to increase on the commodity side of the produce aisle. He notes that more companies are selling their produce in branded bags, which sets up an opportunity for food broker in-store representation.

He also believes that food brokers that offer merchandising services, such as Perimeter Sales & Merchandising, proved their worth during this pandemic to both their principals and retailers. They offer a service at no cost to the retailers and at a savings to the principal, who would need to spend far more for the same level of merchandising support. A food broker can do this because of the ability to spread the cost across multiple clients. “We are a cost efficient and better way to get the job done!” he said. 🍌



Build
your
personal
brand



FPFC Educates Through Webinars

By Tim Linden

Creating your own personal brand “is about leveraging the asset that is you.” So said Karen Tiber Leland, who conducted a webinar on behalf of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council in July to help members communicate who they are in a concise and authentic manner.

Leland is founder of the Sterling Marketing Group, a management and marketing consultancy, and the author of “The Brand Mapping Strategy,” a book designed to help business owners and executives create a brand – either business or personal – to elevate their company and/or themselves to become leaders in their field. Her FPFC webinar, held in mid-July, focused on developing a personal brand as she took attendees through a seven-step mapping process. She called these “seven lenses” through which one can define their personal brand.

The longtime management consultant noted that at the end of the day your personal brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room. She argues that knowing your personal brand, which includes your strengths and weaknesses and what

gives you energy, can inform your decisions and dictate what tasks you are best suited for in your company. As Leland went through the seven step process, she used an audience participation approach, coaching the individuals on how to enhance their personal brand.

The first step is creating an “Anchor Statement,” which is your go-to definition of who you are. It is the answer to the question “What do you do?” if you are at a cocktail party or a business networking event. She noted that a lot of people present a statement that elicits confusion by being either too detailed or too brief. She said it should be quick and easy and to the point but should also give listeners answers to three questions: what you do, what specific qualities do you bring to the job, and what results you achieve.

The second lens explores your Unique Branding Proposition. What sets you apart; what’s your specialty. When establishing your personal brand, Leland said the third element is to make sure your Tone & Temperament are consistent throughout your communications and social media postings. Does

your email reflect who you are? Do the photos you post represent who you say you are?

Brand Energy, the fourth lens, appears to be one of the more important self-reflective elements of one's personal brand. She posits that people can be divided into 12 archetypes, with the average person being able to identify most strongly with one or two of them. These are the attributes that create "your best energy," she said. She listed the 12 as: Advocate, Maker, Connector, Motivator, Synthesizer, Fixer, Implementor, Visionary, Interpreter, Story Teller, Facilitator and Monitor. If one is running a company, it is best to have many of these archetypes on your staff. As projects are assigned, employees can be given tasks that match well with the archetype that gives them energy. The titles are fairly self-explanatory but Leland gave some examples of people fitting into the categories. She called an artist or a baker a Maker, while a builder would be an Implementor and a Synthesizer excels at taking different elements and putting them together.

The fifth lens of one's personal brand is their Signature Story, Leland said. It answers the question, Why do you do what you do? She said knowing your story is very important. Others want to know. It goes hand in hand with your Signature Service, which is your core competency. Ultimately, it is what you are "selling."

The final lens from which to view one's personal brand is through your Brand Enhancers & Weaknesses. Leland used a simple box divided into four quadrants to explain this element. At the top are "strengths" and "weaknesses" with the corresponding bottom boxes labeled "opportunities" and "threats". Leland said having a good understanding of these qualities can help you improve your personal brand and find the opportunities for improving your personal brand.

Become a Thought Leader

In August, the FPFC and Karen Tiber Leland were back at it as she presented another webinar informing Council members on the three steps to becoming a thought leader in your industry.

The two presentations went hand-in-hand as she revealed that the foundation of thought leadership is having a clear and concise brand, be it personal or your company brand. Leland said that becoming a thought leader is an organic process that develops over time. It starts with your brand statement and moves forward with what she called collateral, which is your on-line presence. Leland said to become a thought leader you must be on Linked-In and have a website. "An online presence is critical," she said,

arguing that the internet is the first-place people will go to look you up and see who you are. A poor or non-existent on-line presence is antithetical to becoming a thought leader, she indicated.

She noted that brand clarity, collateral and consistency has to be there before one can move on to becoming a thought leader. While consistency would seem to come naturally, she said a lot of companies fail in this regard, offering different and conflicting messages through different social media platforms "It is super important and more critical than ever," Leland said, noting these challenging times have more people sitting at their computers searching and finding lots of information about you and your companies.

In the platform development stage, which she called Phase One, is thought leadership development. Leland said the biggest mistake people make is not hiring the right people to create their on-line identity. She cautioned against hiring a relative or cutting corners to save money.

She called Phase Two "Brand and Buzz Building." Leland listed 40 different tactics in which to accomplish this task such as blogging, tweeting, advertising, Facebook, webinars and public speaking. "You don't have to be doing everything," she said, adding that most thought leaders concentrate on two to five things and invest the time and effort to do a few things very well.

For example, in these pandemic times, Leland has pivoted to doing webinars as her public speaking efforts have been curtailed.

She said the biggest mistake people make in Phase Two is not understanding that the payoff or R.O.I. of these efforts is measured over time, not immediately. That public speaking gig or the advertising you do will pay off in the long run if you are doing it well, she claims.

Phase Three, which is thought leadership, is the result of doing the first two phases well. But your work isn't over when you reach this level. Successful thought leaders reach out to the media; they publish via books, podcasts, blogs, or white papers; and they can be found speaking on panels at conventions and other events. Thought leaders, she said, also must form new thoughts and ideas, speak for their industry, and generate content. "You have to be a go-to source."

Leland said the biggest mistake made in Phase Three is launching too quickly. You can't jump out and be that go-to source if you haven't done the foundational work and set yourself up to be the authoritative source. "It takes a process to get there and then there is a lot of work that goes with it," she said. 🌱



FPFC APPRENTICE PROGRAM CARRIES ON DESPITE COVID

By Tim Linden

The Fresh Produce & Floral Council is an event-driven organization, and as such, its annual Apprentice Program has also relied heavily on those events to mentor and educate the 12 members of each class since the program began. But like seemingly everything else in 2020, a new normal had to be devised.

“We have moved ahead and are holding all the programs on-line,” said Kristen Reid of MIXTEC Group, who has chaired the Apprentice Committee since its inception and is serving as co-chair this year

with Kraig Loomis of GreenFruit Avocados. “We usually start in April and we couldn’t do that this year because of the coronavirus so we delayed it a bit and launched in June.”

That delay allowed the committee to put together a robust program that Reid said offers advantages over the previous programs. She said there are some disadvantages with the inability to have in-person meetings, but indicated that the pluses are balancing out the minuses and she is confident Apprentice Class 2020 is getting an equally rewarding experience to

previous classes.

“Everything is on video via Go to Meeting,” she said. “One of the pluses is that we have been able to include panelists from all over the country. We have been able to expand our reach.”

The program’s June opening event followed form as Bryan Nickerson of Western Growers (WG) gave the apprentices a quick education on the federal Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, which forms the regulatory base for all transactions in the fresh produce arena. Nickerson, of course, conducted the seminar via the internet but it was the same basic program that WG has delivered to the apprentices in each of the previous years.

In July, public speaking experts helped the group improve that skill.

The August event featured a top notch panel of impressive produce industry leaders discussing leadership. The panel included Wes Mathison of Stemilt in Washington along with Jackie Caplan Wiggins of Frieda’s, Mark Munger of 4Earth Farms and Cassi Shindelbower of Fresh Gourmet. Reid said it was an excellent presentation with the diversity of presenters a real plus.

September is going to feature another advantage of the on-line program as the apprentices will virtually tour a couple of produce operations. Reid said they will miss the fun and camaraderie that is developed during a bus tour to a Southern California facility, but the virtual nature will allow for more tours and again, more diversity. “We are going to kick it off with two tours in September and then we are going to do a bi-monthly tour after that. Instead of one day of tours, the apprentices are going to be able to tour more operations over the course of the year.”

Future programs will include panels on retailer, foodservice and food safety. Still up in the air will be the ending ceremony. In past years, the Apprentice Class has graduated at the FPFC Annual Dinner Dance. With the likelihood of that event taking place waning, Reid said alternatives are in the works. She also said the class will be brought together at some point in 2021 to meet face to face. While that has been missing, she said the class has still been able to create

personal friendships albeit virtual at this point.

Emma McBride-Taylor of the FPFC is a member of the apprentice class and said the virtual experience has exceeded her expectations. “I will admit that before we started the program, I was a little skeptical about how well it was going to work,” she said, adding that since the program began her fears have been allayed as there have been many interactions with the other apprentices both in the classrooms and privately.

McBride-Taylor said that the public speaking program offered an advantage that she understands wasn’t available when they held the same training in-person during previous years. “The trainers were able to put us into separate rooms (on-line) and then jump into each room to give individual help. That was very good.”

She said each of the apprentices is reaching out to other members of the class and seemingly making friends. “We’ve done some get-to-know each other chats outside of the classroom that have been great and we are going to do another.”

McBride-Taylor added that the vast majority of the class are on the younger end of the spectrum and do appear to be technologically savvy, which has greatly helped in this year’s virtual program.

Luke Vitanza of The Wonderful Company used the same “exceeding expectations” qualifier to describe his experiences with the program. “I’m sure coming up with a program during a pandemic was not in the playbook, but we have pivoted and are flexible and it has worked very well. I have had unbelievable access to my mentors which I am sure I would not have had in any other way.”

Vitanza who lives in Northern California admitted that “absolutely I’d love to hop on a plane and get to meet all these great people in person but it’s just not possible at this time.”

He has chatted with everyone in the class in one way or another outside of the classroom and suspects that these connections he is making will live on beyond the program. “The produce industry is a relatively small group of people and I’m sure we will connect in-person after this is over.” 🌱



THE FPFC WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Dehart Construction Services

Sabrina M. Castillo
Fresh Directions International

Nestor Garcia
FreshMex

FPFC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council is to connect members to the information, education and professional network they need to increase knowledge, grow their businesses and collectively advance the industry.

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EDITOR'S VIEW

Continued from page 4

as I was in the previous 40 years. I thought the lack of deadlines in my retirement years would be the greatest advantage of kicking back, but I'm not so sure anymore. Deadlines have been a good thing, and I think I'll keep them in my life a while longer.

As for those of you who are younger and contemplating working at home full time even after this is over, I'm not sure it will work as well in the produce industry as it might elsewhere. We are a relationship business involved in a product that changes every day. It's hard to imagine forging those relationships without the lunches, meetings, golf tournaments and trade shows that are part of our everyday work life. And unlike most products built by a machine, our fresh produce is constantly changing. While consistency is always the goal, Mother Nature and the seasonality of our product means a grape in May does not taste the same as one in October. And a peach in June is literally different than a peach in August. These days, I do a lot of interviews from home but it's only because I have spent the previous 40 years touring farms, attending meetings, shaking hands and doing the groundwork. I can only do the former because I did the latter earlier in my career. You may be working at home more than you were in the past but those touch points -- with people and the product -- are critically important in our industry. Don't forget that. 🌱



COVID 19 and City of Hope: An Update

Covid 19 has impacted so much of our world and our everyday lives but one thing hasn't changed: cancer doesn't stop during a pandemic and neither does City of Hope.

They have not missed a step in continuing to treat cancer patients during this time but they have had to alter the way they conduct philanthropic activities in support of their mission by moving to virtual fundraising events as much as possible and postponing others where it has been necessary.

The Produce and Floral division was able to have a very successful golf tournament in February but unfortunately have had to postpone the raffle ticket sales and luncheon as well as the Boomer's family event for 2020. The good news is that this year's Walk for Hope will be conducted virtually on October 4 as will the Harvest Ball on November 7.

In other positive news, City of Hope is set to open its Orange County campus in early 2021 bringing the institution's world-class patient care and research to that area. Today, they provide expert care in more than 30 satellite offices to help serve communities and patients.

Our produce and floral industry is proud of the \$12 million over 10 years we have raised which has had a profound benefit for patients at City of Hope. With our collective efforts we will continue to support their important work. 🌱

Frieda's Salutes Working Parents

Back to school is upon us. However, this year working parents in the produce industry find themselves pulling double duty to make way for online and home-schooling. Frieda's salutes these working parents who are giving their all. According to The Brookings Institution, roughly 70% of all parents in the United States have no caregiver for their children, meaning parents who normally rely on school programs and childcare will now be balancing the role of caregiver and working professional due to COVID-19.

Sonal Sanghvi, national account manager at Frieda's—and mother of two—admits, "Being a dedicated mother of two and a full-time working professional is a lot at the moment. I am looking for shortcuts that will help us make it through the day and make online schooling feel more normal."

Frieda's suggests preparing meals ahead of time to help ease the mental energy of what's for dinner. Things like Hatch Chile Mac & Cheese is an easy make-ahead meal that freezes well and can be eaten anytime. Or make a big batch of Stokes Purple Power Breakfast Bowl on Sunday morning and wake up to something warm and nutritious all week long.

Looking for a silver lining? Take a mid-day break and enjoy lunch as a family to reconnect. Or perhaps packing lunch for your remote-learning kids is a good way to make

homeschool feel a little more like real school. Remember to add things like kumquats and sliced watermelon radishes to add some flavor and crunch.

Know a working parent in the produce industry? Don't hesitate to reach out and let them know that they're doing a great job. And call your Frieda's account manager today for ideas on how to make your produce department a destination for time-pressed parents. 🌱

Good Foods Wins Award

Good Foods, a category leader of plant based dips and good-for-you products, has been named Food Processing's 2020 "R&D Team of the Year" in the medium-size category. Katie Schmits, director of innovation for R&D at Good Foods, and her team of six have various backgrounds that range from culinary expertise to biology and food science. In the past few years, the team has collaborated to launch various new products, such as the plant based dip line that includes popular flavors like Queso and Buffalo, as well as the salad dressing line, which includes both classic and plant based options.

"What makes our team so special is that while we have different backgrounds and experiences, we have the same shared mission of providing consumers with simple, safe and delicious products," said Schmits. "We're so honored to have our work recognized as Food Processing's R&D Team of the Year." 🌱

CORRECTION

Because of a production error and similarity in names, the photographs of two apprentices were inadvertently swapped last issue. Below is the correct photo with each biography.

Allie Fafard

Associate Produce Buyer

Frieda's Inc.

Los Alamitos, CA

Background: I have lived in the South Bay area my entire life apart from my undergraduate studies in Davis, CA. Memories from childhood include outdoor activities such as hiking, sports, and many beach walks, typically followed by cooking and sharing meals with loved ones. I explored my interests in protecting earth, creating food, and contributing to a better society at UC Davis, where I earned a B.S. in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems and actively participated in the community. Aside from my great uncle, who grew strawberries and corn a few generations before me, I am the first in my family engaged in the produce industry. My passion for produce stems from my roots and grew in my studies, and my daily appreciation comes from the energy of those around me at Frieda's. I transitioned from an internship in production to product growth analysis and planning, and now continue to learn and grow in my current role as associate produce buyer.

FPFC Connection: An eager group of about 40 people came into the office in fall of 2018 (one of my colleagues, Paula Metheny, included in the group) to learn all about Frieda's. I shared my background and experience as a panel participant for this FPFC class touring that day. The bright and energetic apprentices were eager to learn, just like me. I participated in the panel the following year when the 2019 class toured, and began attending FPFC luncheons and connecting with previous apprentices. I knew this program would be an incredible opportunity to learn about the industry and develop the professional network and skillset that align with my career goals. Frieda's gladly supported me in pursuing this program, and I am beyond thrilled to participate in this year's class.

Fun Fact: Music is a hobby of mine. I love to dance, sing, and am learning to play guitar. I was in an acapella group in college (yes, it is just like Pitch Perfect). A dream of mine is to have a weekly gig at a local restaurant or coffee shop where I could provide music while people enjoy food and conversation.



Ali Romero

Account Manager

Torn & Glasser

Los Angeles, CA

Background: I grew up in the South Bay, and still reside there today. My family and I really enjoy the cool ocean breezes and laid back vibe. My mother, Cookie, along with her cousins came to Los Angeles from Egypt in the '70s, where she later met my dad while working for a boutique shop on Rodeo Drive. My family has always been in the restaurant industry, and I always found myself working for them -- whether serving kabobs, hosting events, or occasionally getting on the grill. I've always had a strong affinity for food, I remember as a child, opening the cupboards in the kitchen and smelling almost every spice jar we had, getting lost in the aromas. Fast forward 20 years, I had my son, and life officially began for me; working part time for my uncle wasn't going to cut it. So through a recommendation from a friend, I began working for Torn & Glasser, going up the ladder, and eventually settling into my current position as an account manager. I've been on the production line, manned the continuous roaster, loaded/unloaded trucks, and audited LTL orders. Sometime in my second year I had been advised that a sales position opened up, I applied, and thankfully the company offered me the position. Being situated across from the Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Market was an eye opening experience. I really didn't have an idea that there is a whole other world starting up at midnight, every night. We open at 2 a.m., so I get a little more sleep, but coming in at that time, complemented with working next to the legend, second generation owner Robert Glasser, who's been doing this his entire life. There is nothing he doesn't know. I'm utterly grateful for being in this industry and really looking forward to see what the future holds.

FPFC Connection: Torn & Glasser, and more specifically, our sales manager Chris Large, have been members, as he likes to say, since "the good ol' days." Chris would invite me to the monthly luncheons, and we would have a chance to talk shop, family, and just get to know each other more personally. Once we arrived, I really felt the love, all these industry powerhouses coming together, catching up with one another, introducing new ideas and partnerships. It really struck a chord with me, and I knew I really wanted to be part of it. That's where I learned about the Apprentice Program. I applied last year, and didn't get it. I took the somewhat disappointment in stride and came back stronger.

Fun Fact: All through middle school, high school, and a little in college, I was big time into sneakers. My friends and I would go line up at the mall, waiting for Foot Locker to open. We would be scanning everyone's shoe size in front of us, trying to figure out if they'll have our sizes available. Since then, the shoe game has completely changed, and it's nearly impossible to find what you like, without paying double or triple the actual retail price. To this day, my mom still jokes about my response when asked as a teenager, what I would do with a million dollars, my answer, buy more shoes! Maybe with that 100 to 200 percent markup, that wasn't such a bad idea!





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