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## **Robert Shibata taking the helm as new president at WF&FSA**

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Robert Shibata, president at Mt. Eden Floral Co. in San Jose, CA, assumed the presidency at the Wholesale Florist & Florist Supplier Association, following the term of Alan Tanouye, general manager at Floralife, according to a news release.



Alan Tanouye passes the torch to Robert Shibata as

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the new president of WF&FSA. During his speech to members at the WF&FSA annual meeting Oct. 22 Shibata said, "I asked past president Pete Garcia if he had any advice for me about being WF&FSA president. He said, 'When I became WF&FSA president, I asked your father the same thing. And I'm going to tell you what he told me: 'Be inclusive.' Include everyone in the process and decision making because this is an industry association, not like running your own business. Yes, my dad was

WF&FSA president 43 years ago. I'm privileged to be in a small group of people who have been father-son presidents of the association. WF&FSA had just become an independent trade association. I recall him telling me many stories about the issues and challenges that the association was having:

"The wholesale industry was fragmented.

"They needed more members.

"They needed education and programs specific to the distributors.

"They needed to get the next generation involved in the business.

"All those things were true then and appear to be true today."

Shibata's speech focused on the theme that the floral industry has survived global competition, boom and bust economic regions, currency exchange fluctuations, the great recession of 2008, and changing or disappearing customer groups but "we're all still here."

"As a group, we are a tough, resilient, innovative, hardworking, adaptable industry," said Shibata. "We've had to change as business people and we've had to change as an industry."

He reminded members that WF&FSA "almost went off a cliff in 2010, drawing only 120 people to the convention." But the organization has rebounded and drew 780 attendees to its Floral Distribution Conference this year.

He also promised the "trade organization is working hard to provide services, products, information, and ways to communicate that are relevant to the floral industry today. Yes, the environment has changed since my dad was WF&FSA president," Shibata said. "As a trade association, WF&FSA needs to keep up with the changes that are going on in our businesses. I want you to know that the organization is moving into the future just like all of your companies are doing."

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