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Southeast Produce Council announces 2020-21 officers

By

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The Southeast Produce Council has announced its officers for 2020-21. They are Harold Paivarinta of Red Sun Farms as chairman of the board of directors, Raina Nelson of Renaissance Food Group as vice chairman, Tim Graas of Associated Wholesale Grocers as secretary and Mike Roberts of Harp's Food Stores as treasurer.



Harold Paivarinta

Two new members of the board were also announced: Mark Shuman of Shuman Farms and Jeff Tant of Performance Food Group.

The announcements were made Wednesday afternoon, Sept. 23, via the SEPC Virtual Garden, during which outgoing Chairman Brandon Parker of Shuman Farms virtually passed the gavel to Paivarinta.

David Sherrod, the council's president and chief executive officer, opened the event by saying, "On behalf of the Southeast Produce Council, I would like to welcome you to our SEPC Virtual Garden. Here we will be cultivating ideas, growing relationships, and producing results."

He added, "I honestly believe that God put Brandon Parker in the role as chairman of the board at this time and season, as I believe He has for all who came before him. Brandon has a real skill set that has been a true blessing to the SEPC and to me personally. He has helped navigate and negotiate us through the toughest year in our history."

Parker spoke next, saying, "What a wild ride this has been. We left Nashville coming off the best Southern Innovations yet, then rolled right into the greatest Southern Exposure to date. We left the show setting out to 'Make a Difference.' Little did we know this show would likely be the last in person show of the year. We all know what happened next. As we left Tampa in early March, the words COVID-19 became very familiar to our vocabulary. The world as we once knew it changed forever. So much was out of our control, but there was one thing that COVID-19 could not take away from this great council: its heart."

Parker also noted the council's new headquarters.

"One of the most exciting events that took place was when David and I had the opportunity to sit in downtown Millen, Georgia, and sign the papers for our new SEPC home and procure the largest asset investment this council has ever purchased. With an opportunity that was almost too good to be true, God placed an extremely well-built, well-located, spacious office in our hands at an incredible value. Through numerous calls with real estate agents, architects and builders, the project is nearing

completion, and we are excited to be joining you from our new office today."

Incoming Chairman Paivarinta then stated, "I am honored to serve as chair of the Southeast Produce Council and blessed to be associated with a team who remains true to Terry Vorhees' vision and continues to elevate the value of this association. As I assume my duties as chair, I'm humbled to follow in the footsteps of so many hardworking people who've served before me, people I'm fortunate to also call friends."

He continued, "Brandon Parker, Steve Pinkston, Teri Miller, Andrew Scott and so many others who've led this council since its inception -- you've all blazed trails, added tremendous value to our members, and inspired not only myself, but countless others. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. David Sherrod, our president and CEO, for his outstanding leadership and support. The tireless efforts of you and your team are reflected in the success of each and every SEPC event."

He added, "Finally, I'd like to express my appreciation to the ownership and leadership teams at Red Sun Farms for their support in allowing me to serve on the board of directors for the past seven years."

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