
- Advertisement -

SEPC's first STEP-UPP Virtual Classroom a success

April 30, 2021

The Southeast Produce Council held its first STEP-UPP Virtual Classroom within the SEPC Virtual Garden on Wednesday, April 28. STEP-UPP, which is an acronym for Southeast Training Education Program for Upcoming Produce Professionals, is SEPC's flagship program giving retail and foodservice produce professionals a greater understanding of the industry through an emphasis on strategic orientation, personal leadership and hands-on field experience.



Mike Roberts

The session included a welcome by STEP-UPP Committee Co-Chairs Mike Roberts of Harps Food Stores and Gary Baker of Merchants Distributors, followed by an amazing series of virtual farm and facility tours hosted by Shenandoah Growers, Shuman Farms, Southern Valley, Fowler Packing, Giumarra Cos. and Chelan Fresh. Then after a break for lunch, the session resumed with an informative Farmers P&L segment by Adam Lytch of L&M Family of Cos. The session culminated with a testing period in which the 10 participating STEP-UPP Class members answered a series of questions drawn from the virtual tours followed by a review period to discuss the results and consolidate their learnings for the day.



Gary Baker

"Our first Virtual Classroom day was a huge hit with this year's class," said Mike Roberts, director of produce operations for Harps Food Stores. "I cannot say enough how great the content was that the

selected companies provided. What was even better was the engagement the class had with each presenter and the hard questions they asked! I think this new session within the SEPC Virtual Garden was another great platform that the SEPC and STEP-UPP can add to educate and invest in the future leaders of our great industry.”

“The SEPC’s first Virtual Classroom was a great experience and day for our STEP-UPP class! I thought it was a great way for these produce professionals to gain knowledge and communicate with our vendor community who gave great presentations," said Gary Baker, senior director of fresh at Merchants Distributors. "The level of engagement from each student was a true testament on why these students were selected as members of STEP-UPP. I truly enjoyed the day and look forward to continuing to use this format in the future for other classes.”

The graduation ceremony for the STEP-UPP Class of 2021 will be held during Southern Innovations Sept. 10 in Savannah, GA. For more information about the STEP-UPP program as well as other SEPC educational offerings, please visit the [Education](#) page of the SEPC website.

[Print](#)