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SAF Congressional Action Day

By

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This was my first experience with SAF CAD. I was not sure what I was in store for. What was awaiting me was an experience I will remember for a long time. SAF (Society of American Florists) is a national US trade association that represents the floral industry in the US. All are members, from retailers, wholesalers, and manufacturers to growers, educators, and students. SAF CAD aims to provide marketing, government advocacy, industry information, and best practices for members of the US floral industry.

It was SAF's 42nd congressional action day, and I had interviewed various representatives from all over the world; everyone was kind enough to answer all my questions and provide behind-the-scenes information about the industry and the problems they are facing, and the actions being taken.

This blog will provide an insight into the current challenges in the floral industry and how every member in the community, from the grower to the legislative, has come together to create a solution, and how SAF CAD allows for a platform for our voices to be heard.

Kate Penn

I asked Kate Pen to give us insight into the council meetings and how they work out. Kate shared with us that SAF has 3 grower's councils; wholesalers, importers, and retailers. All positions are made up of volunteer leaders in the industry, and they get together and discuss about the challenges, the current trends, and most importantly, how SAF can help tackle these challenges.

The council has also started different task forces to help in multiple aspects of the industry. Currently, there are 4 task forces:

- Future task force: helps set up strategic goals, modify the current model, and include topics like artificial intelligence, cryptocurrency, and how it affects our industry.
- Career Development task force: figure out what kind of training is needed and how we can drive more people to the industry.
- Connections task force: gives us guidance on our projects and how to handle them and increase profit
- Sustainability task force: focused on the organization's sustainability and decisions about which market to target, who to invite, membership structure, etc.

The growers' councils aim to bring the industry together, offer strategic goals and solutions, and pipeline talents to strengthen the industry.

Danny Sanchez from South Florals

It was Danny's 3rd time attending the SAF CAD. When asked what his favorite thing about this event was, he said it was relationship building. You get to meet many people in the floral industry and share

your issues that growers or retailers might not be aware of and bring effective solutions that can help the community as a whole. For instance, they import roses from Ecuador, which increases the gross price, and we are trying to change that, which is a huge task.

The event also organized some activities, such as the scavenger hunt. And tomorrow, the councils will go to the Capitol to discuss current issues with the Congressman and the local senators.

Amanda Jedlinsky - SAF Senior Content Strategist

Amanda Jedlinsky is SAF's senior content strategist and works on the magazine and newsletter.

According to Amanda Jedlinsky, the main issues discussed in this year's SAF CAD are the reauthorization of GSP, labor, and research for floriculture. All members must be on the same page and know what issues are being discussed and how they need to be discussed. First-timers or regulars can also use this event as a networking opportunity to build relationships with the legislators and the floral community by discussing business and technology. From the florist to wholesalers, you can benefit from a plethora of information with this diverse group and build connections on a personal level.

Renato Cruz Sogueco from BloomNet

Renato is the vice president of BloomNet and is responsible for the digital strategies for all their brands, such as NAPCO, Farm to Forest, etc. According to Renato, he had formerly worked as a staffer in the Society of American Florists, but this was his first time as a member.

Despite being extremely nervous and spending most of the night studying the position papers, Renato met Congressman Greg Steube, a republican. He indulged in a thoughtful discussion where their issues were heard and followed upon.

The best thing about this experience is the diversity and the openness of communication. Any member, be it in the retailer council or grower council, is welcome. Their insight and opinions are appreciated to bring about the best course of action because it's all interconnected.

Corrine Heck from Details Flowers

When I asked Corrine why she kept returning to these events, as it was her fifth time, she mentioned that the communication and learning experience was incomparable, and I agree. You can enjoy the political process and see what the Congressman and senators face and what actions are being taken for the greater good.

According to Corrine, "All we are trying to do is share flowers with the world and make sure that people know how they need to do that."

Corrine also mentioned that she got to meet representative Stevie, and it was a positive experience. Because most of the time, you don't get the opportunity to meet with the actual representatives and chit chat with them.

Austin Bryant from Heart of Florida Greenhouses Inc.

The Heart of Florida Greenhouses is a foliage nursery in Central Florida, and they grow interior house plants and tropical foliage. Despite being a part of the grower industry, Austin believes it is important to be part of the technology discussions prevalent in SAF CAD because any issue on the consumer end trickles down the chain and affects every part of the floral industry, from grower to retail.

When asked about his experience representing his district, Austin replied that he was very nervous initially. Still, once a personal connection was developed based on the same districts, the representatives were keen on listening to the community's issues, be it water issues or labor-driven. So, they could provide an effective solution before it gets out of hand.

I also wanted to know more about the grower's council, and Austin was more than happy to educate me. According to Austin, "The grower's council is a collaboration of a wide assortment of growers; anyone from like me, who is an interior house plant grower, to international growers that have cut flowers from Colombia or Ecuador; have the privilege of sitting on the grower council and connecting and understanding the community worldwide."

Final Thoughts

CAD was one of the most rewarding experiences since coming into the floral industry. From getting insights into the floral industry, walking the halls of the hall, supporting change, and creating meaningful relationships with people I have respected and looked up to for years, I will certainly do it again next year and welcome you to join me..

SAF's CAD provides a new perspective to the floral industry and is a must-visit event for entrepreneurs, students, and anyone related to the floral industry. I will continue to share insights and help the floral industry innovate, connect and bloom through community communication.

[Sahid Nahim](#)

About Sahid Nahim |

With over two decades of cross-segment experience, Sahid has witnessed the flower industry's metamorphosis first hand. From the introduction of digital commerce, social media, and venture innovation. He founded New Bloom on the firm belief that it is those that best understand each corner of this industry who will be most apt to transforming inefficiencies into innovation—and delivering long-term, sustainable growth.

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