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Kennedy's Flowers & Gifts Wins SAF's Marketer of the Year Award



ALEXANDRIA, VA – AUGUST 20, 2025 – A marketing campaign built on generosity, customer connection, and operational savvy earned Kennedy's Flowers & Gifts in Grand Rapids, Michigan the floral industry's top marketing honor.

The shop's refillable vase program was named the winner of the 31st annual Society of American Florists' Marketer of the Year award, presented at SAF's 140th annual convention in Scottsdale Aug. 11-14. The honor includes a \$5,000 prize sponsored by Design Master, a division of Smithers-Oasis.

"Winning Marketer of the Year was actually a huge thrill because it came from an altruistic place of doing something for our customers and having fun at the same time," says co-owner Lori Haveman.

A Birthday Idea Turned Marketing Powerhouse

The program traces its roots to a birthday celebration. In 2016, to mark her 60th birthday, Lori and her daughter, Holly Haveman, CF, PFCI, gave customers who spent \$50 or more a small vase filled with flowers and a promise of free weekly refills for a year.

That single giveaway inspired repeat traffic, sparked word of mouth, and soon evolved into a central part of Kennedy's brand.

Over the years, the Havemans expanded the concept into themed refillables such as the Magic Vase, Gift of the Seasons, Magic Mama, and Scatter Joy, all designed to bring customers back into the store more often.

Strong Results and Scalable Systems

The program's success lies not only in its appeal to customers but also in the shop's careful operational planning. Last year, Kennedy's tracked more than 11,000 refills, which generated over \$182,000 in additional sales on top of the initial vase purchases.

"There's nothing fancy or high tech with this campaign," Lori says. "It's just old-fashioned great service that makes people intrinsically connect our store to feel happy and want to come in and do business with us."

Customers were encouraged to shop while waiting for their refills, often spurred by exclusive coupons and in-store offers. The strategy addressed common retail challenges — from boosting foot traffic to maximizing aging inventory — while building a loyal fan base.

“It was amazing to listen to our customers and let this project morph to a place where we could use it to control waste and bring 200 happy people into the store weekly,” Lori says.

Judges Praise Innovation and Authenticity

A panel of six judges — five floral professionals and one outside marketing expert — reviewed 12 entries before selecting Kennedy’s. They praised the campaign for its adaptability, low upfront cost, and strong return on investment.

“It was very clever for minimal cost,” said judge Becky Applegate, a marketing specialist who works outside the industry for a manufacturer. “There was very little investment driving impressive return traffic.” SAF President and judge Lori Wheat, AAF, agreed. “You can take that idea and roll with it.”

Kennedy’s Flowers & Gifts joins a distinguished roster of past Marketer of the Year winners, including the “That Flower Feeling” campaign, a wholesaler’s employee-driven digital content strategy, and a retailer whose community-based marketing helped sales soar.

Read more about Kennedy’s award-winning campaign in the upcoming September/October issue of [Floral Management](#). Event photos will be available here: [SAF Photo albums](#) | [Flickr](#)

About The Society of American Florists

The Society of American Florists is the association that connects and cultivates a thriving floral community through training, education, marketing resources and advocacy. Our vision: The power of flowers in every life. For more information, visit safnow.org.