



Professional

An in-depth look at the ed

BY HEIDI ANDERSON, EDITOR

What is the MFA?

The Michigan Floral Association (MFA), founded in 1920, is a full-service trade association representing florists, growers, suppliers, wholesalers, educators and students. Located in Haslett, Mich., MFA provides educational and professional partnerships, which help to position the members of MFA at the forefront of the floral industry. It is the sponsor of the Michigan Certified Florist (MCF) program; creates and hosts an annual conference and trade show; conducts educational seminars throughout the year at the Professional Education Center located at the association headquarters; partners with local wholesale houses around the state to produce design seminars and product reviews, publishes the *Michigan Florist* magazine; hosts the MFA Web site, www.michiganflora.org, and interacts with state/federal government agencies.

MFA Mission Statement

To provide educational and professional partnerships which help to position MFA members at the forefront of the floral industry.

Michigan Floral Association Education Benefits

Membership in the Michigan Floral Association comes with educational benefits that cannot be beat. From the annual Great Lakes Floral Expo and the Professional Education Center to the Michigan Certified Florist (MCF) program and Michigan Florist magazine, learn more about these benefits and the professionals who serve as chairperson of each committee. The MFA uses a committee structure to accomplish these projects. The MFA president appoints each chair.

Benefits of MFA's Great Lakes Floral Expo



By Chairwoman Gina Masterka

General manager and buyer for Sofia at the Radisson Plaza Hotel and Suites in Kalamazoo, Mich.

The 2009 Great Lakes Floral Expo's theme is "Talent... Discover, Inspire, Promote." The Expo brings together florists, vendors, students and educators to discover new ideas, be inspired by industry professionals, and promote new products and services while networking with old and new friends. The tradeshow floor offers the latest fresh flower varieties, design room supplies and new product reviews. Attendees can meet face-to-face with the MFA professional partners listed in this article. Attendees also will have access to

top-notch business sessions, main stage shows and hands-on workshops. The cyber café and very popular progressive dinner and shop tour also are on tap.

"Some of the many benefits are the low-cost business and design educational seminars, the networking opportunities, the marketplace and tours of other businesses," said Gina Masterka.

Don't miss the endless benefits of the 2009 Great Lakes Floral Expo, March 6, 7, 8, at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, DeVos Place, in Grand Rapids, Mich.

For more details on the Great Lakes Floral Expo, please see page 5.

Benefits of MFA's Professional Education Center



**By Chairman Robbin Yelverton,
AIFD, MCF, PFCI**

*Co-owner of Blumz... by JRDesigns,
in Detroit and Ferndale, Mich.*

When was the last time you visited Greenfield Village or any of the many historical recreational venues in our lovely state? It can be both educational and entertaining. The visit also can remind us of how things were and how far we have come. I love spending time going through the old artifacts and displays, reminiscing about "the good ole' days." However, it's quite sad to walk into a flower shop doing business today and have a "flashback" to yester-year because it is so obvious that the shop is being run the same way it was a century or more ago! Even sadder is to realize that there are so many opportunities, especially in Michigan, that allow shop owners and employees to stay current and up-to-date with materials, techniques and design styles. Having come from another "M" state in our nation where the state floral association and educational opportunities have degenerated, to a large degree into a less-than-stellar condition, I am amazed at the level of floral education available to anyone here in Michigan.

Just to list a few of the many opportunities: the Great Lakes Floral Expo, MFA Professional Education Center classes, MSU classes, local/regional colleges, O-Tech classes in high schools, adult continuing education programs, wire service educational programs, local wholesale shows. WOW! With options like these, there is no reason why Michigan shouldn't be the Mecca of top-quality floral businesses.

As chair of the MFA Professional Education Center, I look at the classes offered as a huge benefit for the MFA member. With subjects ranging from basic floral to wedding and sympathy, there are opportunities for skill-enhancement and growth, both personally and professionally in our industry. Each year, the Ed Center offers, on average, a dozen classes. Unfortunately, due to low registration, half of the classes are inevitably cancelled. What a shame to allow that opportunity to pass and not take advantage of it. Many say that it is simply a matter of not being able to afford the class. As we are painfully aware, it is a difficult economic environment we are in, both nationally and even more so here

Partnership Benefits

Education and insurance benefits for MFA members

in Michigan. Please allow me to remind you, though, that scholarships are available to anyone who applies and is accepted. These scholarships are another wonderful benefit to being an MFA member. In this economically depressed time, if you are sitting still, doing the same thing you always have, you're probably setting yourself up for failure, or at the very least, stagnation. To succeed in challenging times, action, new ideas, new information and new skills are required. Just like gardening, in order to induce a flush of new growth, you must first prune away some of the old plant, then fertilize and water. Are you and your business due for a good pruning and fertilization? I challenge you to take a moment, fill out a scholarship form, and call the MFA office to register for a class. Set aside some time to invest in yourself and your business. As we have been reminded so often during this election season: CHANGE is necessary, CHANGE is good. When you think about it, the classes offered through the Ed Center are really only a benefit to being a member if you take one.

For detailed information on the MFA Scholarship Program, please see page 18. For a complete listing of 2009 Professional Education Center classes and registration form, please see page 30.

Benefits of the Michigan Certified Florist Program



**By Chairwoman Kathy Petz,
AAF, MCF, PFCI**
National account director at Teleflora

The Michigan Floral Association has so many wonderful benefits that can have such a positive effect on the bottom line. Each one has an important impact on the success of each florist. Near the top of that list is the

Michigan Certified Florist (MCF) Program! In order to have the MCF designation, an individual must study our manual which educates in a multitude of areas including:

- Care and handling of plants and flowers
- Product identification
- Basic floral design
- Merchandising and display
- Advertising and promotion
- Sales and customer service

We are in the process of developing a revised manual that will be updated in all areas, and have additional sections on delivery and basic business procedures. Wouldn't we all love to have employees who were educated in all of these areas? Well, you can –just hire a Michigan Certified Florist!

There are so many reasons that MCF is such a great member benefit. Advertising that a shop has a Michigan Certified Florist on staff is kind of like the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval:" it means you have a more educated staff; you have something your competition does not have. When an individual earns the

title of Michigan Certified Florist, it sets them apart from the competition! It means they cared enough in their advancement to study the manual and take a very difficult test that includes questions from all of the areas listed above.

Anyone who has the designation of MCF takes it with them wherever they go! As national certification becomes a reality, it has been grandfathered in for you; you are automatically certified nationally! If you move to another state, florists there will know that you are 'a step above' anyone else who might be applying for a position. For a shop owner, hiring an MCF florist means you have someone who has perseverance and respect enough in themselves to work for this certification. This is an employee who should be able to be a right-hand in a multitude of areas!

“The many member benefits offered by MFA are cost-saving programs that every florist of any size can utilize.”

*–Jim Schmidt, benefit committee chairman,
MFA treasurer, Hyacinth House, Lansing, Mich.*

The MCF manual is very professional looking and included is a wealth of information! It is something you can feel proud to have on your counter, and provides much-needed information. Many shops purchase this manual as a resource tool and tell us it has been an invaluable resource in answering customer questions in the area of care and handling, etc. It is especially helpful for new employees!

As chairwoman of the MCF committee, I encourage you to examine all of these areas and see how MCF can benefit you as an employee or an owner! Please feel free to contact me or any other committee member who would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

For more on the MCF program, please see the MCF Report on page 26.

continued on next page →

PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Benefits of MFA's *Michigan Florist* magazine



By Chairwoman Connie Adamo
Conner Park Florist, Detroit

One of your MFA member benefits, *Michigan Florist* magazine is published bi-monthly and keeps us all current on trends and happenings in the industry, both regionally and nationally. It is the magazine to voice your opinions or show off an event that your shop completed, or just to let others know what has been happening in your shop or area. We enjoy the input of florists; we feel it keeps us all in touch and connected with the floral industry. *Michigan Florist* is a great calendar of events. It is a place to watch for upcoming educational classes, for details on the Great Lakes Expo weekend and best of all, it details the many benefits MFA members can take advantage of. *Michigan Florist* recently won its third consecutive Diamond Award from the Michigan Society of Association Executives. More than 45 entries competed for top honors in nine categories, with MFA taking top honors in magazine publishing. *Michigan Florist* is a 36-page, four-color magazine and is published six times per year. It serves the membership of the Michigan Floral Association, Wisconsin Upper Michigan Florists Association, Illinois State Florists Association, State Florists' Association of Indiana, Colorado Retail Florists Association and the Tennessee State Florists Association with timely educational editorial and promotes professional partnerships.

Readers always are welcome to contact me at connerpark@aol.com, Editor Heidi Anderson at mrsheidianderson@hotmail.com, or Rod Crittenden at rod@michiganfloral.org with any suggestions or to have your shop or any happenings featured in the magazine.

For details on Michigan Florist's Diamond Award win, please see page 5.

Michigan Floral Association Insurance Providers

As members of the MFA, you have access to top-of-the-line insurance providers and discounts for your business. Many members already utilize these services, but for those of you who don't, following is detailed information to help you better your business.

Benefits of Workers Compensation



Dawn Feldpausch,
marketing representative
Regency Group Administrators
1690 Watertower Place, Suite 500
East Lansing, Mich. 48823
(800) 686-6640, ext 246
www.regency-group.com
dfeldpausch@regency-group.com

The Michigan Horticulture Industries Self Insured Workers' Compensation Fund (MHI Fund) is a member-owned workers' compensation program that exists for the exclusive benefit of the horticulture industry and offers substantial savings to its members. While it has several distinct advantages over other workers' compensation programs, most members would agree

that one of their biggest benefits is the profit returns they receive. This year alone the State of Michigan authorized the MHI Fund to distribute more than \$1.4 million back to its members, bringing the total returned to \$12,460,657 since the Fund's inception in 1995. Right now, more than 70 percent of the members are receiving returns equal to 45 percent of their premium.

Also, a variety of safety resources and loss control programs, specific to the floral industry, are available to help members to further reduce their premiums. The MHI Fund works with loss control specialists who provide sound guidance and cost-saving solutions on maintaining a safe workplace. In addition to safety, workers' compensation claims are handled with great scrutiny. The MHI Fund controls costs by fighting fraudulent claims and requiring claims settlements to be authorized by the MHI Board of Trustees, comprised of Fund members.

Keeping the total cost of workers' compensation down means more money returned back to the Fund members and lower premiums. The MHI Fund proves to be a true member benefit!

Benefits of Auto Owners, Business Property & Liability Insurance



Steve Grinnell
David Chapman Agency
5700 W. Mt. Hope Hwy.
Lansing, Mich. 48917
(517) 321-4600
www.davidchapmanagency.com
sgrinnell@davidchapmanagency.com

The David Chapman Agency has been offering Auto Owners Insurance to MFA members for five years. Automobile, business and property liability, workers' compensation, umbrella liability and all lines of personal insurance are offered. Loss-of-income insurance also is available. It is to MFA members' advantage to package all insurance with one company because multi-policy discounts are offered that can add up to 15 percent or more off of each line of coverage. Multi-policy discounts also are available for personal policies.

The David Chapman Agency services accounts in every county in the Lower Peninsula and in 26 states. They are the largest Auto Owners agent in the country. One of the main reasons the MFA chose to work with Auto Owners exclusively is because they are represented by more than 2,000 agents in Michigan. There are more than a dozen claim offices throughout Michigan waiting to offer these benefits to you.



PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Benefits of Local and Long Distance Communications



Scott Shy, senior account executive
PAETEC
30800 Telegraph
Suite 4775
Bingham Farms, Mich. 48025
(248) 530-2149
www.mcleodusa.com
scottshy@mcleodusa.com

McLeodUSA has merged with PAETEC to offer even more benefits to MFA members. The company operates in 41 states and has a product and feature suite that cannot be beat for local and long distance communications. Most equipment needed for the vast majority of installations is included. It belongs to PAETEC and is their responsibility. They ping the router at the customer site every four minutes to ensure that it is communicating. The largest Competitive Local Exchange Carrier in the nation, PAETEC provides a commission to MFA for all deals. This helps to strengthen the MFA while increasing revenues.

Founding Principles

PAETEC was founded in 1998 when CEO Arunas A. Chesonis and a core team of executives recognized that existing telecommunications providers were failing to respect the most important factor governing the long-term success of any business – first-rate customer service.

Who We Are

Today, PAETEC delivers personalized communications solutions and unmatched service to business-class customers in more than 80 percent of the nation's top 100 metropolitan areas. We are the premier alternative to the ILECs, based on our nationwide footprint, breadth of products, and quality of service. PAETEC's data and voice products – and our unique value-added offerings – help customers achieve cost-effective solutions.

Corporate Mission

PAETEC's corporate mission is to be the most customer and employee-oriented communications provider.

Corporate Values

Our dynamic growth has been achieved by adhering to basic values that will continue to define PAETEC in the future: The essence of the PAETEC Experience can be summarized in the following four Corporate Values:

- Caring Culture
- Open Communication
- Unmatched Service
- Personalized Solutions

Every aspect of our company is aligned with at least one of these four values, whether it is how we run our business, satisfy our customers, or treat our people. There are many reasons why customers initially select PAETEC; however, the relationship established is what keeps them with us.

Benefits of the ALL NEW MFA Membership Coupon Book

By Rodney P. Crittenden, MFA executive vice president

The all-new, 2009 MFA Professional Partners Coupon Book is filled with valuable coupons from MFA Professional Partners. MFA Professional Partners are companies that exhibit at the Great Lakes Floral Expo, advertise in *Michigan Florist* magazine or have programs or services that are endorsed by the MFA.

Each Professional Partner has the opportunity to provide a coupon to the MFA for discounts on their products or services. The coupons will be valid and redeemable by the MFA member only, anytime during the upcoming year. MFA will collate and print all coupons into the MFA Professional Partners Coupon Book.

When a florist joins the Association they will receive the coupon book with their new member packet. Current MFA members also will receive the coupon book when they renew their membership every year. Coupons could be for a specific cash dollar amount or a percentage off on the purchase or another offer.

This is just one more way the MFA is helping you to keep the professional retail florist coming to you for all their floral needs. Please feel free to e-mail me at rod@michiganfloral.org or call me direct at (517) 575-0110 with any questions you may have.

Benefits of Office Depot Discounts

Membership in the MFA provides these discounts:

- More than 100 items on your 'best buy' list, including paper and an extensive toner list
- An additional 5 percent off the lowest price listed on the retail Web site on standard office supplies
- Free next-day delivery of in-stock items for order of \$50 or more
- In-store discounts with registered cards
- Office supplies, furniture, business machines, copy, print and promotional items
- Access to a private Web site for order placement
- No contract and no sign-on fees

For more information on any of MFA's member benefits, please e-mail Rod Crittenden at rod@michiganfloral.org or call the MFA office at (517) 575-0110.

