



BY MARY WESTBROOK

# FLOWER LOVE FEST

**For the second year, the Society of American Florists led the industry in a feel-good giveaway that reminded consumers and reporters how great it feels to get and give flowers.**

The morning of the Society of American Florists' second annual Petal It Forward event, on October 19, one thing was certain: Americans needed a pick-me-up. The presidential election was grinding toward its conclusion and many communities were recovering from a devastating season of natural disasters.

"Our neighbors in the town about 25 miles to the north of us had experienced a devastating tornado the week prior and the election negativity goes without saying," said Natalie Rieger of Sunflower Flats in Tillamook, Oregon.

For Rieger and the Sunflower Flats team, the idea of giving people two bouquets, one to keep and one to pass on to someone else, was appealing — the kind of guerilla marketing effort that could help the shop build goodwill and brand recognition among new and existing customers. By the end of the day, the shop had passed out 100 bouquets, including to assisted living residents. At press time, they were still fielding messages of gratitude.

"[Petal It Forward] was a great reminder that it doesn't take much effort to brighten someone's day," Rieger said. "The surprised gasps, smiles and thanks that I received while delivering made my day as well. It was a reminder that it's always more fun to give than to receive."

Sunflower Flats wasn't the only shop to join in the fun. This year, more than 260 local florists worked together with grower, wholesaler and supplier partners to organize Petal It Forward giveaways in 234 cities in all 50 states. SAF kicked off the year's event with a giveaway in New York City that saw "happiness ambassadors" from Starbright Floral Design handing out 4,400 bouquets to busy (and very) surprised commuters. From there, the happy recipients shared their enthusiasm for the campaign and the flowers themselves all over social media.

"It was an incredible morning illustrating the Rutgers University research that flowers create true delight and enjoyment," said Jennifer Sparks, SAF's vice president of marketing. "As

much as people were thrilled to get flowers, being able to experience giving flowers to someone else excited them even more."

Indeed, the happiness Petal It Forward delivered, often to people in desperate need of a smile, seems to be the lasting message of this year's campaign. In Philadelphia, a recipient of a Petal It Forward bouquet contacted Ten Pennies Florist to share her gratitude (in a note the retailer later shared with one of its partner in the outreach, Pennock Floral.)

"I was in center city yesterday leaving a doctor's appointment. I've been struggling and going through a tough time," she wrote. Then, a Ten Pennies team member approached with roses and the Petal It Forward message.

"Before I left the area, a gentleman handed me a rose and told me now I have three, so when I petal it forward I'll have double the smiles," she explained. "Thank you so much for turning my frown upside down."



**SCIENCE SAYS** One of the messages shared as SAF handed out Petal It Forward bouquets: “Flowers are scientifically proven to make people happy.”



**ALL HANDS** “Petal It Forward is important because all aspects of the industry can help each other out to create a nationwide positive campaign,” said Ben Dobbe, COO of Holland America Flowers in Arroyo Grande, California, who donated flowers and assembled the 4,400 bouquets given out in New York City.



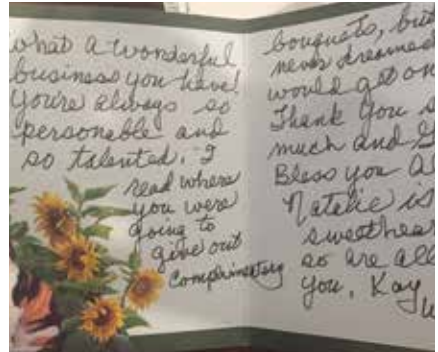
**CUSTOMER FEEDBACK** Sunflower Flats in Tillamook, Oregon, asked for suggestions for Petal It Forward giveaway sites. One overwhelming response: retirement homes.



**HAPPY, HAPPY** The feel-good Petal It Forward campaign builds on SAF research showing that 80 percent of people said flowers make them happy; 88 percent said giving flowers makes them happy.



**MORNING COMMUTE** SAF “happiness ambassadors,” including employees from Starbright Floral Design, hit Manhattan with 4,400 bouquets to surprise busy commuters with flowers and provide them with two bouquets — one to keep and one to “Petal It Forward.”



**HEARTFELT** A thank you note sent to Sunflower Flats in Tillamook, Oregon. “[Petal It Forward] was a great reminder that it doesn’t take much effort to brighten someone’s day,” Natalie Rieger said.



**PR PUSH** SAF implemented a strategic social media plan on all of SAF’s consumer channels, with paid promoted posts on Facebook and Instagram to take the Petal It Forward message viral, according to Jennifer Sparks, SAF’s vice president of marketing.



**BUZZ ALL DAY** Spreading the positive message about flowers, through the unique strategy behind the “keep one, give one” giveaway, as well as generating traditional news coverage and social media buzz on sites such as Instagram, is the goal of SAF’s Petal It Forward campaign.



**TEAMWORK** “We were absolutely thrilled with the outcome of the event,” said John Burk of DV Floral Group’s Philadelphia office, which supported 40 customers in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic who handed out a total of 8,000-plus bouquets, including Richardson’s Flowers in Medford, New Jersey (pictured). The company also provided transportation, delivery and on-site coordination of the SAF New York event product through its New Jersey office.

SAF'S NATIONWIDE EFFORTS GARNERED MORE THAN 67 MILLION IMPRESSIONS. COVERAGE OF PETAL IT FORWARD THROUGH LOCAL EFFORTS BY MEMBERS NATIONWIDE TOTALS MORE THAN 206 MILLION IMPRESSIONS.

## WORKING FOR EXPOSURE



**MEDIA MOGUL** Ericka So, a reporter in Sacramento, joined Jim Relles and staff members from Relles Florist for the giveaway. So posted about the event across her social media platforms many times.

On the morning of October 19, Jim Relles had something just about every local florist dreams of: Reporters from all three network affiliates were in Relles Florist, begging Relles to tell them more about his flowers, his business and why every person in Sacramento, California, should be buying and giving more flowers, more often.

The carrot that lured the journalists? Petal It Forward.

"The campaign worked really well for us," said Relles, who gave out about 700 bouquets in a four-hour period. and was also featured in the Sacramento Bee.

Even more amazing: That kind of story — glowing press coverage and happy, happy people — played out across the country, as florists of all sizes, with significant support from their wholesaler, grower and supplier partners, endeavored to make this year's campaign even bigger than the 2015 outreach.

In fact, local florists' giveaways, combined with the SAF kick-off Petal It Forward effort in New York City on the morning of October 19 and a strategic PR push by the

association, generated hundreds of high impact news stories in outlets such as CNBC, New York Business Journal, The Wall Street Select and The Miami Herald, along with the kind of goodwill and good feelings that advertising dollars can't buy, said SAF's Vice President of Marketing Jennifer Sparks.

"To see the amount of media coverage generated by members nationwide is so impressive," Sparks said. "It just goes to show that a little bit of time and effort to capture great PR can go a long way to increase visibility within the community."

Press coverage, of course, wasn't a guarantee. While SAF positioned the giveaway as an antidote to the negative news of the presidential campaign, a debate held on October 19 made it hard for some florists, particularly those in large metro areas, to attract coverage. That was the case for Chris Drummond, AAF, of Plaza Flowers who tried to get in touch with 30-plus reporters via email, phone and arrangement deliveries without much luck.

"The major affiliates in Philadelphia sent reporters to cover the debate, which left fewer staff to cover local stories," he said.

Despite the challenges, SAF's nationwide efforts garnered more than 67 million impressions, according to Sparks, who added that coverage of Petal It Forward through local efforts by members nationwide totals more than 206 million impressions.

**-M.W.**



**DOWNTOWN DELIGHT** The team at Allan's Flowers headed to downtown Prescott, Arizona, to hand out their Petal It Forward bouquets.



**EXTENDED SERVICE** Megan and Annie of "Team Blumz" (of Blumz by JR Designs) drove two vans of flowers to Campus Maritus Park in Downtown Detroit to hand out more than 1,000 bouquets. "We planned to be at the park for about three hours but all the bouquets were gone in less than 45 minutes," according to a shop blog post. "In fact, there was a large crowd of locals waiting for us and waving when they saw our vans pull up."



**A FRIEND IN NEED** Chester's Flower Shop and Greenhouses in Utica, New York, handed out 850 bunches of flowers, including some that ended up in the hands of a hospitalized senior citizen "who really needed to smile." "We had lots of PR and lots of smiling faces," said Bill Waszkiewicz.



**THREE'S COMPANY** Mike Mooney, sales manager at Dramm & Echter in Encinitas, California, hit the streets with John Hamala, account & sales specialist, and Lani Conklin, marketing manager & sales support, to give out 3,000 gerberas from their farm. The team shared funny videos of their interactions throughout the day, including a stop at the beach, where they gifted a bouquet to a lifeguard. "It was cool to see the community embrace our farming," said Mooney, president of the California Association of Flower Growers & Shippers.



**TEXAS TURNOUT** In downtown Dallas, Dr. Delphinium Designs & Events handed out hundreds of bouquets. The shop also scored some great press coverage for its giveaway, including coverage by the local CBS affiliate.



**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT** On Instagram, the civic group ThisIsBoise.com gave a shout-out to local florists handing out flowers, including Fifty Flowers, a shop that handed out 6,500 roses with support from its grower partners in Ecuador and Colombia, said Liza Roeser Atwood. Before the giveaway, Atwood and team rallied a group of florists to band together for the event. The group also reached out to the Ada County Sheriff Department and the Boise Police Department who came with their K9 unit. "Boise was fired up about flowers that day," Atwood said.



**GRATITUDE FOR HEROES** Both Flowers by George in Arlington, Washington, and Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop & Garden Center in Lafayette, Colorado, made sure to deliver bouquets to first responders.



**WINDY CITY GETS FLOWERS** Kennicott Brothers Wholesale, headquartered in Chicago, helped many of its retailers participate in Petal It Forward, including including K Mike Whittle Designs in Marietta, Georgia, which handed out 650 bouquets in 25 minutes.



**PICTURE PERFECT** "The shock and the joy... all in one shot," is how the team at Monday Morning Flower and Balloon Co. in Princeton, New Jersey, described a recipient's reaction to free flowers, when the shop shared the sweet series of images on Instagram.



**DRESSED TO IMPRESS** Team members with Oasis Floral Products sport Petal It Forward T-shirts while promoting the giveaway. Industry members across the supply chain worked together to make this year's event a success.



**GETTING SOCIAL** Staff members from Peoples Flower Shops handed out flowers in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and then shared images of happy recipients throughout the day on social media.



**VITAL AND VIRAL MESSAGES** SAF's social media campaign, funded by Asocolfiores, featured posts and tweets on SAF's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter consumer pages. To boost the reach beyond SAF's page followers, SAF employed paid promotion on Facebook and Instagram to take the message viral. Total social media impressions to date, generated by the SAF social media campaign is 1,006, 324, and 50,235 engagements (likes, comments, shares). Claudia Castellanos of Asocolfiores (pictured) joined the NYC Petal It Forward team.



**EDITOR'S CHOICE** While local florists handled their events and made a big pitch for press, often with the help of SAF support materials, SAF worked for national coverage. One example: First For Women did a live Facebook event from SAF's Petal It Forward effort in NYC. At press time, the event had been viewed by more than 5,600 people.



**PROMOS, PLEASE** The Bill Doran Company helped with promotion of the event and spent "several weeks encouraging our customers to participate," said Michelle Friebe. "We worked closely with our vendors to provide a great price-point for product." By the end of the day on October 19, the company had helped "put smiles on the faces of 11,238 Petal It Forward recipients," she added.



**GENEROUS GROWERS** "At the Sun Valley Floral Farms, we tallied up all the donations, to find we donated over 30,000 stems to Petal It Forward," said Bill Prescott, marketing communications specialist for the company, located in Arcata, California. The company also posted a detailed blog entry promoting the event (pictured). "By all accounts it was a great day, and we were very happy to support the SAF and all their members."



**SIDE BY SIDE** FTD partnered with City Scents Floral & Home in Chicago for Petal It Forward. The shop distributed bouquets on the Magnificent Mile.



**TALKING POINTS** City Line Florist in Shelton and Trumbull, Connecticut, hosted reporters in store for interviews about Petal It Forward (and then shared the behind the scenes footage of the interview via social media — smart!)



**LIVE AT FIVE** Flowers. When Botanica International Design & Décor Studio in Tampa, Florida, gifted Petal It Forward flowers to to Fox-13 reporter and anchor Jennifer Epstein, they ended up with a double PR win: Epstein later gifted a bouquet to another reporter and anchor, Anjali Davis.



**ON SET BLOOMS** Florabundance shared the message of Petal It Forward (and some beautiful bouquets) on the Fox affiliate in Santa Barbara, California. In a special video to viewers, two female anchors promoted the local giveaway and oohed and ahhed over the flowers.



**SHARED EXPOSURE** Jefferson City Magazine, in Missouri, promoted the Petal It Forward efforts of Longfellow's Garden Center in an Instagram post.

## PR FOR THE PEOPLE

The planning, media relations, overall promotion of the Petal It Forward event, and the online tools and advice offered to local participants, is a direct result of the SAF Fund for Nationwide Public Relations, which encompasses a percentage of retail dues and voluntary contributions by forward-thinking companies.

For a list of SAF PR Fund supporters, check out [safnow.org/more-online](http://safnow.org/more-online). If your supplier is on this list, please thank them for their leadership in industry promotion.

**-M.W.**



**SUNNY DAYS** “We’re bloomin’ thrilled to be surrounded by roses,” wrote Sue Serio, the weather anchor of Good Day Philadelphia. Her post included lots of love for the local florist behind the generosity (and the savvy media placement): Ten Pennies Florist.



**PETALS IN PRINT** Sharon Grubbs of Foisters Flowers in Muncie, Indiana, was featured in the Muncie Journal. “We see the positive impact day in and day out when we make our flower deliveries,” said Grubbs. “People love flowers ‘just because’ so we wanted to create random smiles, and give people a chance to do the same for someone else.”



**RADIO STARS** In the Washington, D.C., metro area, Palace Florists teamed up with well-known personalities from Hot 99.5 radio to surprise commuters and passersby with flowers. The smart pairing meant that the radio station and its hosts were sharing and reposting their own Petal It Forward messages throughout the event.



**MEDIA STAR** Former SAF President Shirley Lyons, AAF, of Dandelions Flowers & Gifts in Eugene, Oregon, was featured in a number of local outlets, including The Register-Guard newspaper.



**BOSTON LOVE** The radio station Hot 96.9 plugged Roche Bros.’ downtown giveaway of 1,700 bouquets in Boston. Roche Bros. scored a number of great media hits, including a mention in the Boston magazine blog.



**SURPRISE AND DELIGHT** York Flowers in Annapolis saw “great turnout” and got some great coverage for its Petal It Forward efforts, according to Anna Deriquito. “People loved this idea. Of course they thought we were selling [the flowers], but they were pleasantly surprised when we said, ‘They’re free!’”

## BRAVO! BRAVO!

SAF thanks the following companies for providing product donations, shipping and other support for the New York City event:

- Asocolflores
- Delaware Valley Floral Group
- Dramm & Echoer
- Dos Gringos
- Holland America
- Mellano & Company
- Floral Trade Distributors
- Flores El Capiro
- Smithers-Oasis
- Starbright Floral Design

In addition to these companies, participating local florists said they are indebted to the many wholesalers, growers and suppliers who supported retailers with donated or discounted product and logistical help.

“Without these partnerships, Petal It Forward would not be possible,” said SAF’s Vice President of Marketing Jennifer Sparks. “This year’s event is a great representation of what SAF is all about — bringing all segments of the industry together to promote flowers. Whether taking to the streets or working behind the scenes, everyone played a part.”

**-M.W.**



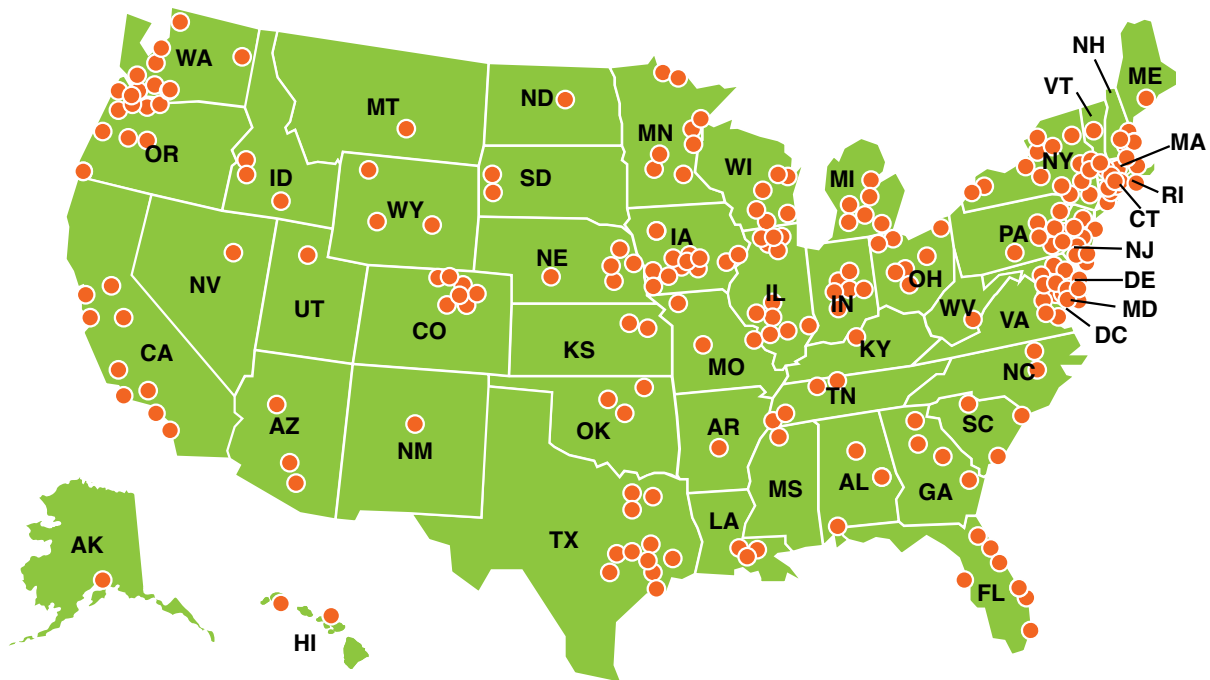
**MICHIGAN MENTIONS** J Schwanke, AIFD, PFCI, of uBloom.com, helped get coverage for Petal It Forward from many high profile outlets in the Grand Rapids area, including a spot on a lifestyle morning show and a live event during the nightly news. 🌸

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# #PETALITFORWARD

## Floral Industry, you did it!

262 Events in 234 Cities in all 50 States



On October 19, 2016, the Society of American Florists and florists nationwide randomly surprised people on the street with flowers. Lucky recipients received two bouquets — one to keep and one to share. This effort created a lot of smiles and positive feelings as the country experienced the power of giving and receiving flowers. Read about Petal It Forward at [safnow.org/petalitforward](http://safnow.org/petalitforward) and watch and share the video at [aboutflowers.com/youtube](http://aboutflowers.com/youtube).

SAF's Petal It Forward is possible thanks to the voluntary contributors of the SAF PR Fund. Find out if your supplier is a PR Fund supporter at [safnow.org/prfund](http://safnow.org/prfund).

# 1.76 BILLION AND COUNTING

That's how many consumer impressions have been generated by SAF's public relations and social media programs, such as the Petal It Forward campaign.

**And these supporters helped make it happen.** Read about Petal It Forward at [safnow.org/petalitforward](http://safnow.org/petalitforward) and view the video at [aboutflowers.com/youtube](http://aboutflowers.com/youtube).



## IF YOUR SUPPLIER IS ON THIS LIST, THANK THEM!

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#### **Growers**

Asocolflores

#### **Suppliers**

Smithers-Oasis USA/  
Floralife

### **GOLD:** **\$15,000 - \$19,999**

#### **Suppliers**

Syndicate Sales, Inc.

### **SILVER:** **\$10,000 - \$14,999**

#### **Wholesalers**

Delaware Valley Floral  
Group  
Kennicott/Vans/Nordlie

### **BRONZE:** **\$5,000 - \$9,999**

#### **Wholesalers**

Pennock Co.

#### **Suppliers**

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#### **Growers**

Equiflor/Rio Roses

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Highland Supply  
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CSS Industries, Inc.  
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### **CONTRIBUTOR:** **\$50 - \$99**

#### **Wholesalers**

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LaSalle Wholesale  
Florist, Inc.  
Younger & Son Inc.

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We thank these companies who voluntarily contributed \$135,000 in 2016 to the SAF Fund for Nationwide Public Relations, which promotes flowers and florists to consumers through groundbreaking research and media outreach as well as Aboutflowers.com, AboutflowersBlog.com and NationalFloristDirectory.com. A special thanks to Asocolflores for the contribution of \$30,000 in 2016 to enhance SAF's Petal It Forward campaign through social media efforts.



**Want to help sell more flowers  
(and see your name on this list)?  
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