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Contact: Elizabeth Daly

703-838-5235

edaly@safnow.org

Nicole Palazzo, AAF, Receives Inaugural Next Gen Rising Star Award at SAF Phoenix 2023

ALEXANDRIA, VA — Sept. 13, 2023— Nicole Palazzo, AAF, is the inaugural winner of the Society of American Florists' Next Gen Rising Star award, which recognizes a young industry professional (45 and under) for their professional achievements and commitment to the industry. The award was presented on Sept. 9 during the Stars of the Industry Awards Recognition at SAF's 138th Annual Convention.

Palazzo is a fourth-generation florist and the marketing specialist at City Line Florist, her family's 101-year-old retail flower shop in Trumbull, Connecticut. She has spent years attending every industry event her schedule would allow, making friends with professionals of all segments, locations and ages; volunteering for various committees; recruiting more young people to the industry, helping them build connections and ultimately empowering future leaders.



Palazzo is a member of SAF's Convention Task Force and Retailers' Council and the founder and chairperson of its Next Gen Committee, a group of several hundred SAF members under age 45 who engage regularly on Facebook, participate in monthly Zoom happy hour brainstorming sessions, and gather annually at their own conference in Miami.

"She championed the idea of Next Gen for years," says Carrie Moore, AAF, owner of Jenny's Floral in Custer, North Dakota, who praised Palazzo's devotion to her floral friends, communicating frequently on social media and visiting their businesses during her personal travels. "It's been rewarding to be a part of the group and to see her dream come to life. I know the future of our industry will be brighter because of Nicole."

Erin Bruno, AAF, marketing director at McNamara Florist in Indianapolis, echoed this praise. "Nicole is the industry's best and brightest advocate," she says. "Within all segments of the industry, she has made meaningful connections and uses them to better the industry."

Sam Bowles, AAF, who led a program on customer service at the latest Next Gen conference, called Palazzo "our de facto leader."

“She has worked tirelessly to help establish NextGen and to foster community among the demographic throughout the year,” he says. “She is always trying her best to help SAF get a new generation excited about their profession and ongoing educational opportunities. It would be a travesty if Nicole is overlooked for this award. In fact, I think the award should be named in her honor.”

In addition to her many contributions to SAF, Palazzo is the past president of the Connecticut Florists Association and a board member for the Teleflora Connecticut Unit. She attended the Teleflora Scholarship Academy design class and was named “35 under 35” by Florists’ Review and “40 under 40” by the Fairfield Country Business Journal.

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.