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Leanne Kesler, AAF, AIFD, FDI, PFCI, Receives the Tommy Bright Award at SAF Miami 2024

Alexandria, VA. — Aug. 12, 2024 — Leanne Kesler, AAF, AIFD, FDI, PFCI, the education director of Floral Design Institute (FDI), is the 2024 winner of the Society of American Florists' Tommy Bright Award. The award, which celebrates exemplary members of Professional Floral Communicators - International who are known for their roles as teachers, educators, and professional communicators, was presented during the Stars of the Industry Awards Experience at SAF Miami 2024, SAF's annual convention.

The award is named after Ethel "Tommy" Bright, whose motto "Learn More, Teach Others" reflects PFCI values as the floral industry's speaker's bureau and the only network of professional floral business educators certified by SAF.



About Leanne Kesler, AAF, AIFD, FDI, PFCI

Kesler was introduced to the industry through a high school floral design class in the late 1970s. She soon developed into an accomplished floral designer and began sharing her skills and knowledge as a part-time instructor at FDI. In 1988, she — along with her husband David Kesler, AAF, AIFD, FDI, PFCI — purchased FDI. Over the years, they have expanded the school's footprint and reach, helping thousands of floral designers improve their skills and work toward industry certifications. At FDI, Kesler creates and designs the educational programs and classes, some of which she also teaches. A past student describes Kesler as "the lady who makes floral design fun and easy."

In addition to floral design, Kesler has taught business and finance to aspiring shop owners. She has even helped students who lacked high school diplomas to learn basic math, reading, and writing skills so they could go on to earn their GEDs. She also encourages, motivates, and assists them as they earn college degrees and advanced industry certifications.

Kesler was an early adopter of distance learning. In 1999, she created myflowerschool.com, which mailed instructional videos, supplies, and instructions to students around the world. Kesler still is creating instructional videos, although the medium has changed. Since 2008, she has posted more than 1,000 instructional videos online, offering design ideas, tips, and techniques alongside practical tips such as hot glue gun burn prevention or how to generate holiday orders through personalized courtesy calls to past customers. These videos are available for free on FDI's YouTube channel, which has amassed more than 111,000 subscribers, earning it the silver YouTube Creator Award. The channel has generated more than 15.7 million views.

The joy, confidence, and kindness that shine through Kesler's instructional videos are also evident in her personal interactions with students, mentees, and fellow industry professionals. "She is a beacon of positivity," says Laurie Lemek, AAF, AIFD, PFCI. "She's always there with a helping hand, or a smile, or a word of encouragement."

As fellow florists prepare for certification tests or design competitions, Kesler can be seen coaching and encouraging candidates and competitors. Lemek says it's not uncommon to see Kesler sitting with designers, offering comfort and reassurance to erase their fears and self-doubt. Kesler's empathy and personal touch are hallmarks of a true teacher, Lemek says.

In addition to her role as an educator, Kesler has been active within floral industry organizations. She has been a member of the American Institute of Floral Designers since 2005, serving on its membership committee, including as its chairperson. She is an AIFD certified floral evaluator and judge, serving as chairperson of that committee as well. Kesler also served as chairperson of AIFD's National Symposium in 2011. She has been active in her local Teleflora unit, serving as its president in 1986. She also is a longtime member of the Northwest Florist Association, holding positions including president, education coordinator, and retail director.

In so many aspects of Kesler's life, she has affected the people around her. As a floral designer, Kesler's work has been enjoyed by the masses at events such as the Portland Rose Parade and the Portland Chrysanthemum Festival. As a retail business owner, she has operated both a flower shop and a coffee shop, delivering smiles through blooms and caffeine. As a philanthropist, she has helped raise millions for Our House of Portland, a nonprofit that provides services for people living with HIV/AIDS.

"She doesn't even see the impact she's had on so many people's lives," Lemek says. "I can't think of another person this year who would be a better candidate for the Tommy Bright Award."

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.