

2023-2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Our industry embodies spirit of Oregon pioneers

My fourth grade son, Luke, has been playing the famous Oregon Trail video game.

Besides some updated graphics, the game is essentially the same one I played at his age.

For those unfamiliar with the game, you must embark on the Oregon Trail and hopefully make it to Oregon City before winter hits. Many obstacles and misfortunes await you along the way.

So far, he has attempted the game maybe four times and hasn't made it to Oregon yet. His party has died of rattlesnake bites, cholera, the wagon falling on him and he now has my 5-year-old, Grant, scared to death of dysentery (which honestly, isn't that bad if you knew him).

He finally asked me, "Good grief! Did anyone actually ever make it to Oregon?"

Without even hesitating, I replied: "Obviously, only the strongest pioneers."

But isn't that the truth if you look around our industry? We are all incredibly blessed to grow the most beautiful nursery stock in this fertile state we live in. I believe that Oregon nurseries produce an unmatched product. But just because it may be easier to grow a beautiful plant here, does not make it easy to own a nursery in this state.

We may not have rattlesnake bites and a wagon falling on us, but it feels like it at times when more and more legislation is passed that makes it harder for us to do what we love. It's not easy.

In the last few years, we have had to deal with minimum wage increases, ag overtime, a new Corporate Activity Tax, water rights changes, and constant new Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) rules just to name a few.

Aside from the legislative challenges, we have also endured record heat waves, horrific wildfires, and an ice storm that left many of us without power for weeks.

The cost of doing business in Oregon is undoubtedly higher than it is in many of our competing states. But I look around our industry, and see the MOST hard-



Amanda Staehely

working, patient, and focused group of people that are here because they love what they do, and they are the best at doing it.

Talk about that true Oregon pioneering spirit. I am a firm believer that you must love the work you do to do it well, and the people that make up Oregon's nursery industry inspire me constantly with their perseverance. The people within this organization are what makes Oregon "Nursery Country."

As I start my year as OAN president, I see many goals ahead of me, but a few stand out today.

I would encourage everyone to take part in an upcoming advocacy training. It is incredibly helpful to learn how to use your knowledge to enlighten legislatures. I am excited and ready to tackle some political challenges ahead. I promise to speak and represent the organization as a whole — and not for the betterment of my personal business — as I know that our voices are so much stronger when we speak as one.

And finally, I hope to meet as many of you as possible and earn your respect and friendship over this upcoming year. It is an honor to represent this group of talented growers, business owners, and individuals that share that Oregon pioneering spirit and make this amazing state truly "Nursery Country." ☺

Amanda Staehely