

OAN honors the industry's best



Award winners pose after the President's Awards Banquet at the OAN convention at the Salishan Coastal Resort in Gleneden Beach. From left: Jeff Stone, Todd Nelson, Ellen Egan, Steve Shropshire, Janet Poot, Tom Brewer, Kyle Fessler, Ken Hector, Bob Terry, Erika Willis, Luke Staehely, Mikaela Eaton, Elizabeth Brentano, Emma Staehely, Skye Cuevas-Arevalo, Henry Golb, Dalton Dunn, Amanda Staehely, Grant Staehely, and Jerry Simnitt.

PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Several of the nursery and greenhouse industry's finest servants received their deserved recognition at the President's Awards Banquet, which concluded the annual 2024 OAN Convention on Saturday, November 16. The convention took place at Salishan Coastal Resort, Gleneden Beach, Oregon and had more than 200 OAN members in attendance.

The award winners included the following:
Retailer of the Year: Portland Nursery
Emerging Leader of the Year, sponsored by **AgWest Farm Credit**: Farwest Show Committee Chair Mikaela Eaton, **Eschenfelder Farms**

Member Group of the Year: NexGen
Distinguished Member of the Horticultural Allied Trades Award: Scott Renfro, Harrell's

Political Awareness Award: OAN past president Kyle Fessler, Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas

Special Service Award: Ken Hector, The Oregon Garden

Clayton W. Hannon Distinguished Service Award: Janet Poot, Grower's Nursery Supply

Outstanding Service Award: OAN past president Todd Nelson, Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.

Additionally, four OAN Honorary Life memberships were awarded for lifetime contributions to the industry. They were OAN past president Mike "Mac" McCarter (2004); OAN past president and AmericanHort past chair Bob Terry; Ellen Egan, retired owner of **Egan Gardens**; and longtime OAN legal counsel Steve Shropshire of **Jordan Ramis P.C.**

Finally, outgoing OAN president Amanda Staehely presented her traditional President's Five Star Performance Awards for key contributions to her year as president. They included Tom Brewer, **The HC Companies**; OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone; her father, Jerry Simnitt, **Simnitt Nursery**; and her family, including husband Wayne Staehely and their children Luke, Emma and Grant Staehely.

Portland Nursery was honored as Retailer of the Year for its overall industry contributions since its founding in 1907. The nursery was purchased by father and son Bob and Jon Denney in 1980 and they

took it to new levels of success. The nursery recently has transitioned to a new generation of leadership under Jon Denney's daughters, Jill Dunsmuir and Sara Ori, and their husbands, Troy Dunsmuir and Brandon Ori. They follow their family's legacy and new tagline, "We grow gardeners," as their guiding roadmap.

Eaton of Eschenfelder Farms was chosen Emerging Leader of the Year. Involved in the nursery industry since age 15, she moved to Oregon five years ago to manage Serendipity Nursery, where she helped the nursery expand its growth and sales. In 2023 she accepted the position of manager at Eschenfelder Farms. She has served in multiple roles with OAN, including secretary of the Clackamas Chapter (2019) and more recently, chairwoman of the Farwest Show (2024 and 2025).

NexGen was chosen Member Group of the Year. The group began when Elizabeth Brentano (**Brentano's Tree Farm**) and Trystan Lewis (**JLPN Inc.**) wanted to create a group to connect new and up-and-coming people of any age and any industry role, allowing them >>

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grow their networks. The group has held several social and networking events. In December 2023, NexGen became the OAN's first official Nursery Professional and Leadership Group, an arrangement that gives them access to support from the OAN staff and board, while keeping their identity and mission intact.

Renfro of Harrell's was chosen for the Distinguished Member of the Horticultural Allied Trades Award. Renfro's career path began as a production manager for Teufel Nursery and has since taken him to Wilco Agronomy, **Wilbur Ellis** and now Harrell's. He has been an active member of the OAN Research Committee from 2010–present, chairing it from 2013–2016. He served on the Willamette Chapter board in 2012 and the Government Relations Committee from 2016–2018.

Fessler was chosen for the Political Awareness Award for his longtime service as an outstanding advocate for the industry. He served as OAN president in 2020. His past awards received include the 2016 Emerging Leader of the Year Award and the 2020 Outstanding Service Award. His recognition this time is primarily for industry advocacy, and work to help elect nursery-friendly candidates to political office.

Hector was chosen for the Special Service Award for his work in founding and elevating The Oregon Garden. He supported the garden as mayor of Silverton in 1997, when he was present for the groundbreaking, and served on several of its committees during its early years. He was appointed chairman of The Oregon Garden Board in 2020 and has played a key role in repaying the garden's debts from its early years. He has also rekindled the garden's relationship with the Oregon Association of Nurseries, including adding two OAN members to the garden's board. Under his leadership, the garden has added an oversight board which includes a landscape gardener to fine tune the garden and return it to a world class status.

Poot was chosen for the Clayton W. Hannon Distinguished Service Award, which is named for the former executive direc-



Marika Sitz of Jordan Ramis PC points to attorney Steven Shropshire as he shows off his llama tie, a commemoration of his experience handling contractual matters involving the appearance of Caesar the No Drama Llama at the 2023 Farwest Show. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL



J. Frank Schmidt III and his wife Barbara enjoy cocktails at the awards banquet. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

tor of OAN. She has worked for Grower's Nursery Supply since 2003. She joined the Willamette Chapter board in 2011 and served as secretary and then vice president before becoming president in 2017 for an unprecedented six-year stint. She provided continuous leadership to promote chapter activities and events, helping the chapter win Chapter of the Year in 2018.

Nelson, owner of Bountiful Farms

Nursery Inc., was chosen for the Outstanding Service Award. He and his nephew and business partner, Blake Nelson, have led Bountiful Farms to new levels of success. Nelson served as OAN president in 2023, has lobbied in the state and federal capitals, and has chaired the OAN's Revenue Restructuring Task Force the last two years.

McCarter, past OAN president from 2004, was honored with an OAN Honorary Life Membership. He served on several OAN committees including the Yard, Garden and Patio Show committee and more recently has been an advocate for the Greater Idaho movement.

Terry, past OAN president from 2008, was honored with an OAN Honorary Life Membership. Bob has been involved with several businesses throughout his career, including as owner of Fisher Farms. He served as chairman of the American Nursery and Landscape Association as it was becoming AmericanHort, and was elected to serve on the Washington County, Oregon Board of Commissioners. Over the years, Terry received numerous OAN awards, including the Special Service Award in 1998, the Political Awareness Award in 2011, the Pacific Coast Nurseryman Outstanding Service Award in 2009, the Outstanding Stewardship Award in 2011,



Randy Skinner shows off James Bond-themed posters of Jeff Stone and Chris Robinson at the Leonard Adams Insurance hospitality suite at the OAN convention. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

and President's Five-Star Performance Awards in 2006 and 2012. He has served on several OAN committees, including Government Relations, the Oregon Nurseries Political Action Committee, Insurance Committee, Nominating Committee and Finance Committee.

Egan, former owner of Egan Gardens and now retired, was honored with an OAN Honorary Life Membership. Starting in 1982, she worked at Egan Gardens under her father, Bill, and helped transition the nursery from wholesale only to wholesale and retail. She was honored as Young Nursery Person of the year in 1989 and Retailer of the Year in 1993. She took over the nursery in 1994 when Bill passed. She maintained her involvement with various chapters and programs and often partnered with charity groups to help them raise money through plant and poinsettia sales. She retired and sold the business in 2023.

Shropshire, a partner at Jordan Ramis PC and longtime legal counsel for OAN, was honored with an OAN Honorary Life Membership for his decades of advice, support and leadership for the OAN Board of Directors, the OAN Government Relations Committee and OAN members generally through the Legal Access Program. He's been an invaluable guide and friend of the industry on numerous issues, including most prominently the critical issue of water law and water rights.

Brewer (The HC Companies) was honored by outgoing president Staehely with a

President's Five Star Performance Award. She selected him due to his support and encouragement to get involved at the board level, as well as his continued support and guidance as she served in leadership.

Nelson (Bountiful Farms and Nursery Inc.) was also honored with a President's Five Star Performance Award, for his support throughout president Staehely's year.

Stone, OAN executive director, was also honored with a President's Five Star Performance Award for always going the extra mile for the industry and serving as a strong advocate and defender.

Staehely also chose her father, OAN Past President (2012) Jerry Simmitt of Simmitt Nursery, to receive a President's Five Star Performance Award, for providing an upbringing on the farm that she still treasures, and for providing support and guidance for her on her journey as a nursery owner and OAN president in her own right.

Staehely's final Five Star Performance Award went to her husband, Wayne Staehely, and their children, Luke, Emma and Grant Staehely, for their support and encouragement during her year as president. ☺

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