Three couples awarded OAN Honorary Life memberships

BY CURT KIPP

At the 2026 OAN Convention, three couples — **David and Kristin VanHoose, Amethyst Hill Nursery and Hydrangeas Plus®** (Aurora, Oregon); **Pete and Wendy Brentano, Brentano's Tree Farm** (St. Paul, Oregon), and **Jerry and Roberta Simnitt, Simnitt Nursery** (Canby, Oregon) — were awarded Honorary Life memberships in the association.

The VanHooses were recognized for their 27 years of nursery ownership, as well as for Kristin's service as OAN president in 2010–11, and their involvement in many other capacities over the years. They purchased the former Bell Family Nursery and grew it into VanHoose Enterprises, which includes the wholesale Amethyst Hill Nursery and the retail Hydrangeas Plus. They specialize in hydrangeas and have one of the largest selections in North America.

The award was presented by Wendy Brentano. "[Kristin's term as OAN president] was defined by strong advocacy for Oregon's nursery sector, proactive policy engagement, and a commitment to supporting both members and the recovering industry from the Great Recession," Brentano said.

David VanHoose stayed on stage to present the next Honorary Life Membership award, which turned out to be for the Brentanos. The two couples have been longtime friends. Each knew ahead of time the other was getting an honorary life award, but neither knew they themselves were also getting one.

The award for the Brentanos was presented for their longtime ownership of Brentano's Tree Farm, for Pete's OAN presidency in 2005–06, and also for their longtime association involvement in many other capacities.



From left: Kyle Fessler, David and Kristin VanHoose, and Wendy Brentano. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



From left: Kyle Fessler, Wendy and Pete Brentano, and David Van Hoose. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



From left: Kyle Fessler, Jerry and Roberta Simnitt, and Amanda Staehely. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

"The legacy of the Brentanos is not in doubt — [daughter] Elizabeth winning the emerging leader award tonight is proof positive of the impact and future impact of this family to the industry," David said. "Pete and Wendy and their entire family are just good people."

OAN past president Amanda Staehely (**Columbia Nursery**), who recently was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives, presented the honorary life award to her parents, Jerry and Roberta Simnitt, who co-own Simnitt Nursery along with her uncle, Jim Simnitt, and Jim's wife, Caroline. The nursery was founded in 1978 by Jim and Jerry's parents, Jerry Sr. and Janice Simnitt. Jerry Simnitt served as OAN president in 2011–12.

"Growing up in a household that was family and faith, politics and potlucks, health challenges and economic stress — it made my parents resilient," Staehely said. "My father's involvement in the OAN and leadership was a direct inspiration for my uncle Jim and myself to get involved in the OAN."