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Mike Black Receives the Paul Ecke, Jr. Award at SAF Phoenix 2023

ALEXANDRIA, VA — Sept. 13, 2023— Mike Black is the 2023 recipient of the Society of American Florists' Paul Ecke Jr. Award, which recognizes exemplary devotion to profession, industry, and community. The award was presented on Sept. 9 during the Stars of the Industry Awards Recognition at SAF's 138th Annual Convention.

For the past 15 years, Mike Black has been at the helm of Jet Fresh Flower Distributors, a business famous not only for quality product and customer service, but also a beacon of company culture and philanthropy. Since November 2021, he has co-hosted a weekly podcast, “2 Fat Guys Talking Flowers” with various industry guest speakers to educate and connect people from all walks of life.



“Mike is a true floral industry leader,” says Corinne Heck, PFCI, CEO of Details Flowers Software. “He sees the value in startups and has been an early adopter of innovation. From supporting friends’ ideas and helping people network to sponsoring floral events, “he goes above and beyond for the profession,” says Heck.

A third generation “flower hustler,” Black grew up working alongside his father Eddie at A. Black and Co. at the 28th Street New York Flower Market. He held various positions at the family company and traveled to the Netherlands to learn how to properly handle and sell flowers. In his late 20s, he started his own company, Skyline Bouquet Co., which created handmade bouquets for the mass market.

In 2000, Black packed up his wife and five young sons and moved to Miami, Florida, where he reunited with his father, then at Olamor Flowers. Sadly, Eddie Black passed away that same year. Black continued at Olamor Flowers until 2008, when a colleague asked for help selling a shipment of canceled flowers. A few phone calls and “a couple hundred bucks” later, he had an idea and the confidence to start his own wholesale company.

Starting with just a phone and a desk in a dark warehouse, he’s grown Jet Fresh Flower Distributors into a powerhouse supplier for local wholesalers, event planners and retail florists across the country.

In 2018, he purchased an Ecuadorian rose farm and established an office in Quito, where his global trading sales team and farms relations director work closely with Central and South American growers. In 2022, Jet Fresh won SAF's Marketer of the Year award for its playful videos, emails and advertisements that helped build relationships with customers.

"There is hardly any turnover at his business," says Nicole Palazzo, AAF, marketing director of City Line Florist in Trumbull, Connecticut, and a founding member of SAF's Next-Gen Professionals group. "He takes great care of his people."

Black coordinates social events for his staff as a thank you for their dedication. In Ecuador, he started a laundry program for the hundreds of people he employs on his farm. He also brought in a scientist to discuss an active volcano and recommend safety and evacuation protocols for his workers and their families.

"Mike's dedication extends beyond his team members," Heck says. "He is deeply committed to those who use flowers for positive purposes. For instance, he donated more than \$3,000 worth of flowers to a women's group I'm involved with in Volusia County (Florida), which they then sold over Mother's Day to raise money for homeless mothers and their infants."

Black is a regular participant in Petal It Forward and Memorial Day Flowers, a contributor to industry marketing efforts, such as SAF's PR Fund and CalFlowers' "That Flower Feeling" campaign, as well as an advocate for a range of groups, including the Association of Floral Importers of Florida, the Wholesale Florist and Florist Supplier Association and the National Association for Catering & Events.

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.