

Grower-Shipper Group Salutes First Female Chair

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When I "assumed the throne" ten years ago, there were a lot of "firsts" that I wanted to achieve on my watch. One of them was to have a woman serve as Chair of the GSA Board of Directors. I soon set my sights on finding the right one. As always, I set my goals high. A few years later I met Kay Filice, a San Benito County grower, and immediately I observed qualities that would serve any Chair of the Board in good stead: Intelligent, Articulate, Poised, Passionate, Patient, Organized, Astute, Exceptional People Skills and, most importantly, a Great Sense of Humor!

When I initially approached Kay about being the first Grower-Shipper Chairwoman of the Board, she characteristically downplayed her skills and experience. I refused to take 'no' for an answer; I knew I'd found our first Chairwoman. I persevered, pestered, pitched, wooed, and essentially made a pest of myself until Kay, in her own courteous and polite way said, "Good grief! Enough already, I'll do it!"

That was three years ago, and as most everyone knows, Kay completed her term as Chairwoman of the Board just a couple of weeks ago. I said at our Annual Meeting and I'll say it again - I set sizeable standards. I have incredibly high expectations. And I can honestly say, Kay Filice exceeded them all.

To say the Grower-Shipper Association achieved a lot under Kay's leadership would be an understatement. Time and space constraints prevent me from listing all of them, but here are just a few of her achievements:

A fresh new logo and website that's allowed us to better communicate with our members and the public.

A new member outreach program that includes a weekly e-news, bi-monthly newsletters and a continuously updated website, providing our members with the information they need immediately.

She led our board as we focused our efforts on issues of most importance to our members, including spearheading a committee made up of local farm bureaus and affiliated organizations to conduct a comprehensive review of the industry's needs and abilities in regard to sustainability.

She guided our board and staff so that we could effectively educate both legislators and the public in Washington D.C. and on the state and local levels with roundtable discussions and regular issues meetings.

She focused her talents on educating the public about the tremendous health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables.

So, as you can see, Kay Filice is not only an exceptional woman, she's an exceptional leader. I think the world of her and admire and respect her greatly. Most importantly, I have a good friend for life. As our current Chairman and Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue said, "If we didn't have Kay, we would have invented her!" I wholeheartedly agree.