

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Grower-Shipper Association Inaugurates Mayor of Salinas as New Chairman, Honors First Chairwoman

Salinas, CA -- The Grower-Shipper Association of Central California (GSA) reflected on a year of positive change under the leadership of its first female Chairperson and inaugurated the Mayor of Salinas as its new Chairman at its annual meeting yesterday. This marked a historical day in the organization's 78-year history as the first time a current city mayor held the organization's top position.

Kay Filice began the meeting with reflections on her year as the association's first Chairwoman. She highlighted the organization's new website, logo and increased communications with members, and partnerships with educational institutions, public service groups and legislators. She said her role with GSA was that of an educator, stating "We must continue to take responsibility for informing the people in our community and the nation's consumers about the tremendous health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables."

A San Benito County grower, mother and businesswoman, Filice brought a unique perspective to the Chairperson's role. She also spoke of her vision for GSA's future. "It is my hope that one day the Grower-Shipper Association will join with our trade partners across all commodities to create a national campaign where doctors, dieticians and nutritionists join together to verify the health benefits of fruits and vegetables." Filice focused on nutrition education and public outreach during her year as Chairwoman and will remain a member of the board for one more year, during which she will aid the board's transition and continue to focus on outreach projects.

Incoming Chairman Dennis Donohue lauded Filice's leadership, saying that she was the right leader at the right time, and the perfect person to step into the Chairperson role, stating "I truly believe if Kay didn't exist in our industry we would need to invent her!"

Donohue is both the Mayor of Salinas and President of Royal Rose, LLC, a local grower-shipper specializing in radicchio. He spoke of Salinas as the world's biggest fresh garden, and a driving force behind the local economic engine. He also touched on the idea of Salinas Valley Agriculture as the fresh laboratory of the world, tying into Dan Dooley's keynote address at the event. Dooley is the Vice President of Agriculture and National Resources at the University of

California and spoke about the importance of industry and university collaboration to further research for the benefit of the entire community.

Science and technology innovations in the industry were highlighted by Donohue throughout his speech and fittingly, Jim Lugg of Fresh Express was awarded the annual E.E. “Gene” Harden Award for lifetime achievement at the end of the event in recognition of his 45 year career and contributions to ag research, science, and technology.

Donohue also challenged the audience to think of the central coast as a fresh lifestyle destination, a community of glorious landscapes and rich history as well as the fresh produce capital of the world.

As the mayor of Salinas Donohue has focused much of his time on crime and violence prevention. He said that there is a role for the agricultural community in this fight, adding “Salinas needs your help along with the entire business community. The generosity of the local agricultural industry is unmatched however we need something else from our local growers and shippers. Schools have the kids, but work has the parents. We need more companies to invite the Gang Task Force to make educational presentations and hold public health fairs for their employees. We need everybody on board to be effective in our effort to squelch violence in our community.”

Donohue will lead the organization as its Chairman until May 2009. Lorri Koster of Mann Packing Company is the Chairwoman-elect for the 2009-2010 year.

The Grower-Shipper Association is an organization representing over 300 members throughout Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties. For more information or to learn how you can become a member contact Jim Bogart, President at (831) 422-8844 or jim@growershipper.com.

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