



Recognition is hereby granted to
MR. PAUL KNEELAND
of Roche Bros. Supermarkets Inc.
as Winner of the 1st Annual
RETAILER OF THE YEAR AWARD
Presented at the New England Produce Council Expo
April 6, 2005
by PRODUCE BUSINESS and the NEPC

In conjunction with the New England Produce Council, PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine is pleased to initiate today the granting of its first annual Retailer of the Year award, given to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the New England produce scene.

To determine the very first honoree, we surveyed the membership of the New England Produce Council and asked people to submit their nominees. It was, to be blunt, over before it began. The choice was overwhelming . . . a winner practically by acclamation.

At first we considered the possibility that it might have been a vote of empathy. You see, this retailer is a big hockey fan and as you know, this has been a tough year for hockey fans.

Indeed, even his love for hockey has worked its way into his love for the produce industry and his job. When the young son of an associate at his company died of cancer, this retailer didn't just send flowers; he organized a Boston Bruins Alumni Hockey Game to raise money so the family of the boy could build a playground in his memory.

Well, even though the hockey pros may be out this year, this retailer is still an all-star on his league's team.

But though this retailer may play around on the ice, he is not playing around when it comes to doing his job. He has spent his entire career with one company, a kind of professional loyalty rarely seen these days.

Starting as a part-time service clerk back in 1981, he quickly found himself connecting to the fresh produce department. He became an Assistant Produce Manager, then Produce Manager.

Not long after that, he was promoted to Produce Merchandiser, and today is the Director of Produce/Floral at his chain.

Clearly nobody climbs all those rungs on a career ladder at one company without winning the respect of his co-workers and company executives.

Those who have worked for him describe it as a "privilege". They report things like "I wouldn't want to work for anyone else" and

explain that our retailer is the most unassuming of leaders — willing, without self-consciousness, to not only direct others but also to help unload a truck or sweep the floor.

He is truly a leader through quiet example.

His dealings with vendors are particularly important for his ability to influence the produce trade here in New England. Although the chain he works for is not the largest in New England, it is particularly supportive of both of Boston's terminal markets as well as of many locally grown produce promotions.

Both wholesalers and shippers appreciate his polite and calm manner and, perhaps, most telling, they uniformly declare our retailer to be a man of his word: He always does what he promises to do.

He supports 5-A-Day, has taken a leadership role in a share group his company participates in and, frankly, is one of the major reasons the New England Produce Council has had such success. He not only lends his name and his time to the board of this organization, currently as First Vice President, but he has chaired, since its inception five years ago, every single NEPC Expo. That is a commitment of time and energy that few others can match.

His life centers on his wife, Patty, and his children, Alyssa and Brendan, and we owe them thanks for sharing their father and husband with this trade.

We also owe his employer, Roche Bros., appreciation for letting our retailer be himself.

But mostly we owe this retailer a debt of appreciation for his enormous impact on our business and enormous support of our trade.

Please join me in congratulating Paul Kneeland on his being named, here at the New England Produce Council Expo, the 1st annual PRODUCE BUSINESS Retailer of the Year.

— Speech given by Ken Whitacre, publisher of PRODUCE BUSINESS, on April 6, 2005