



Recognition is hereby granted to

MIKE GIZA

of Big Y Foods

as Winner of the 5th Annual

RETAILER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Presented at the New England Produce Council Expo

April 1, 2009

by PRODUCE BUSINESS and the New England Produce Council

Excerpt from the speech by Ken Whitacre, publisher and editorial director of PRODUCE BUSINESS

Diligence. Integrity. Knowledge of the produce industry inside and out. These are just a few of the qualities recognized by colleagues, co-workers and competitors in this year's 5th Annual New England Produce Retailer of the Year award. This is an honoree that you — the members of the New England Produce Council have chosen — and that PRODUCE BUSINESS is pleased to award today.

Like the first four recipients of this award — Paul Kneeland, Jack Salamon, Domenic D'Antuono, and Will Wedge — this year's honoree began his working career early. He started in retail at the age of 12 in his father's pharmacy. Five years later, and still in high school, he entered the produce industry where, for the same major chain he now works, he climbed the career ladder from produce clerk to produce sales manager — the chain's corporate produce buying position.

As one nominator says, "Produce is in his DNA."

This evolutionary, professional journey is something the director of produce and floral — to whom our honoree reports — applauds and describes this way: "He always showed that he was capable of more and more responsibility. But, along the way, he never forgot his experiences in each position and this has allowed him to effectively develop and facilitate programs in the retail environment. This is an ability some people never attain, and greatly improves the sell-through of products to customers."

Competitors, as well as colleagues, recognize our recipient's job well done. In fact, one competitor who nominated this year's honoree says, "His produce knowledge and merchandising expertise have aided his company in growing market share. You can always count on this chain to punctuate quality and variety in the Massachusetts and Connecticut markets."

The cultivation of excellent relationships with growers,

processors, shippers and others is another trait for which this year's honoree is known. In fact, he gets an A for accessibility. As one major Northeast vendor says, "It's incredible to pick up the phone and immediately talk to a senior representative of a major retail chain and feel at ease. He's always there and always willing to listen."

Outside of work, our honoree currently serves on the board of the New England Produce Council and, as one co-member says, "He is always the first to raise his hand when the Council is having a major event."

Most recently, our honoree led the efforts to work with the Produce Marketing Association on the Education Foundation's hosting of 12 New England Agriculture students at the New England Produce Council's Expo.

Dedication is another of our award-recipient's outstanding qualities. In fact, his wife tells of the time he was hanging a banner in a store, fell off the ladder, broke his wrist and was back at work the next day.

Love of the produce industry often follows this year's award-recipient home and on vacation. For example, family trips throughout the United States and abroad always include a stop to check out the produce departments in local stores.

Beyond produce and family, our honoree does have one other passion. As his supervisor says, "All of us who work with him and the vendor community as well will also attest to his command of a wine menu. He can certainly take one through a flight of wines that makes the meal that much more enjoyable and the bill that much more expensive! But it's all worth the education!"

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in congratulating the 2009 New England Produce Retailer of the Year — Mike Giza of Big Y Foods.