

Front Lines

5/1/2020

Proud Parent

Jennifer Polanz



Online sales are working for garden centers, especially those who already had some online sales capabilities. Case in point, the folks at Boulevard Flower Gardens in Colonial Heights, Virginia. Mark Landa, proud father of co-owners (2019 Young Retailer Award winner) Madison and Casey, wrote to us about how, when the world had to turn to online sales, his daughters had already hit the ground running. Here's an excerpt of that letter:

"Last year at Cultivate, my daughter Madison received the award as 'Young Retailer of the Year.' I was so proud, as any father would be of such a brilliant young

woman, but I was always thinking, 'But what is she going to do now?' I love all these ideas about working smarter and not harder, as I believe it was done totally opposite with my generation. This is where things started to change. Madison started working on this ecommerce website with a goal of being able to sell our local homegrown plants and goods locally over the Internet. I never thought it was going to take off and sure enough, an order here and there came in over the next few months ... When I asked about it from time to time, she said she was working on it and it was going to take time.

"The next thing to put a challenge on a garden center business was coronavirus, as if we needed another challenge. Madison again went to work along with her sister Casey, who is the manipulator of Facebook and social media. I was the one that thought business as usual was to go on, but was I ever wrong ... On Friday, March 13, the governor called for a stay-at-home order. We had been pretty steady to this point and we were still considered essential so we could stay open with a few stipulations. Madison decided now was the time to promote this website that she had put so much time into. She got with her sister, worked out a plan of attack and started promoting it immediately.

"She had offered all of our products that we had online to be purchased and free local delivery for one week. There were no exceptions, which I thought was just crazy! The phone started ringing and Internet orders started coming in. We added a second delivery team and then a third. We had an order that was called in by a past high school friend of Madison's that lives in a really nice subdivision, but it is just out of our delivery area. She pleaded a little bit and we said okay because it was a \$200 order. She said she would also promote it to her neighbors to see if they needed anything. She did promote it to her neighbors over Facebook through their homeowners association and the calls

started coming. We filled that truck with a little over \$2,500 and sent it out that next day. All orders were paid for in advance. The following day, we starting getting calls from that same neighborhood and now from the neighborhood that is adjacent. Again, the orders started coming in and truck #2 left with about the same amount of product as the first ...

"Deliveries continued to stay on track for us and our customers are happy and content. Madison and Casey continue to work as a team to keep these promotions going. It has been an unbelievable ride for us through March and we are very blessed! I could not believe how this had worked out with all the doom and gloom, and fear in the world and country right now. This story is of two very extraordinary young retailers that thought out-of-the-box enough to think this through in a safe and receptive manner.

"With all that's happening, thanks to these young ladies we were able to grow our sales by 54% over the past March sales. I am so proud of what they have done, just to let you and the Young Retailer Award judges know that this time they made the right choice!" **GP**