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Reaching Back & Reaching Forward

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During my first real experience of our industry at Cultivate'17 in Ohio, I stepped onto the trade show floor with the bearing of a professional, yet the wonder of a child.

In that singular moment, I encountered the expansiveness of this beautiful industry—and yearned to find my place in it. On one of the garden center tours, I decided to commemorate the trip with the purchase of a simple wooden sign: “May your trails be crooked and winding, leading to the most amazing view.”

Through the kindness of a flight attendant, I maneuvered that sign onto the plane and now see it every day above my patio door. The leaders of our industry today were once beginners and dreamers. They became trailblazers, showing us what vision, innovation and determination can create.

The work we do today is possible because they diligently tended the small seeds of big dreams—dreams that expanded to give us a place to stand. Many of us are now beginners. We are the learners, innovators and trailblazers who will carry our industry forward. Our great dreams will further expand to reach children, families, neighborhoods, communities and cities across the country with the wonder, worth and wellbeing that plants create in our lives.

As a multi-generational industry, filled with stories of simple farm stands and flower shops that eventually became strong businesses, our work is individual yet deeply interdependent. We get to reach forward to the leaders who inspire and challenge us to do our most exceptional work yet—and we get to reach back to mentor and encourage those whose developing passion holds the promise of our best days. We are in this together and we need each other.

Amid the deep challenges and uncertainties that we faced in 2020, millions of people turned to the garden for nourishment and hope. Together, we rediscovered what we always knew: nature sustains, comforts and steadies us. We'd been seeking to define our value to our customer, yet our customer defined our value to us. As an industry, our work leaves a mark for good on the lives of others. This is our time.

At every level within every team and every company, each of us has something specific to contribute right now in a way that no one else quite can. As we invest our individual best, our shared work becomes even better, making a real difference in a world that needs us. We don't work for awards in this industry.

That's what makes the Young Retailer Award so special. It's for those who would never expect to be recognized. For

me, the 2020 Young Retailer Award marked a milestone within a challenging year. I was astonished to be nominated and overwhelmed to be chosen. It encouraged me that sustained effort to make a difference really does. It reminded me how grateful I am to represent Tagawa Gardens and our strong team of dreamers and doers. It inspired me to think bigger, to imagine more and to reach further for my team, our business and this industry.

What impact might your thoughtful nomination have on someone's life? With one simple act, you could make an indelible impact on an emerging leader and the team they serve. Think of your own circle of influence. In whom do you recognize the future? Nominating a candidate for the 2021 Green Profit/The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award is a wonderful way to say: I see you. I believe in you. You make a difference. Keep growing. Keep going. **GP**

Lindsay Squires is our 2020 Young Retailer Award winner and Community Development Manager at Tagawa Gardens in Centennial, Colorado.