

IDEA



Floral Management's
18th Annual
**Marketer
of the Year**

Sponsored by
Design Master color tool, Inc.

IDEA HOUSE

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW Bachman's cashed in on the vintage craze by amassing flea-market- (or garbage-) bound wares, such as old buttons, umbrellas, spoons, citrus juicers and vintage watches. With a hefty dose of ingenuity, they turned them into marketable decorative accessories and housewares (left). Using an old family home (above) right next door to the main store to display the wares turned it from a great idea into an award-winning one.

Bachman's use of an old family home as a launch pad for "repurposing" ideas — and the double-digit sales increase that resulted — earned the retailer Floral Management's 2011 Marketer of the Year title.

BY KATE PENN



When Larry Pfarr watches a Minnesota Twins game at the at Target Field, rather than, say, checking out Joe Nathan's pitches, he might instead be thinking, "Stack five baseballs and you have the perfect base for a lamp." While the Twins fans are booing the ump's call on a strikeout, Pfarr is more than likely eyeing the catcher's glove for its potential as a shelf. The batboy cage? It would no doubt have Pfarr calling his welder, who's on speed dial, to see if he can transform it into a headboard.

Such musings may cloud Pfarr's head because of a nearly two-year-long mission that has had the director of merchandising at Bachman's and the rest of his visual merchandising team on the hunt for junk they can repurpose: glass citrus juicers that transform an otherwise plain light into a chandelier; old tractor seats they can turn into shelves; a mid-Century beverage cart that, when topped with a piece of wood, becomes a kitchen island.

These inventions make their way to Bachman's Idea House, the 125-year-old company's more practical, down to earth version of a



David Ellis

VISUALLY INCLINED The entire visual merchandising team at Bachman's gets involved in the Ideas House set-up. From left, Todd Fremling, Jennifer Rodriguez, Creative Director Lora Cherne, Amy Revak, Paul Anderson, Bachman's President Paul Bachman, Director of Visual Merchandising Larry Pfarr, Visual Merchandising Lead Designer Angie Grande, Paul Sternberg, Peter Gillmor and Daniel Varey.

decorator showhouse. Held at the start of each season, it's loaded with new merchandise as well as the used "stuff" to which Pfarr and his visual merchandising team have given a brand new life. The pressure to fill the Ideas House with an entirely new set of merchandise four times a year calls for a production of fresh trash-to-treasure finds. Yet each time company president Paul Bachman wonders whether his team's seemingly "bottomless pit" of ideas for the house is finally empty, they once again out-do themselves, for the next one.

The efforts have paid off in the form of a double-digit sales increase in 2010 over the previous year for the business's flagship store, tens of thousands of dollars worth of free exposure in the local media and an uptick in employee morale. And it's the Bachman's team's ability to know a great idea when they see it and add their own unique signature that got the attention of the Marketer of the Year judges.

Here's how they made it happen.



Germination

Founder of the gift and collectibles importer Department 56 (which went public in 1993), Bachman's has a long-standing reputation as a leader in floral and decorative accessory trends. So it's not surprising that the company was among the early marketers of refashioned "vintage" items or, as Pfarr explains, "something that's more than 20 or 30 years old, and in many minds junk, that you turn into something functional."

Sourcing and repurposing enough vintage inventory (or "vintage inspired," for items that are used but relatively "young") to fill shelves at the flagship location and 5 stores — wasn't just a matter of hitting the local flea market where markups would dampen profitability. "We needed to find it at its source," Pfarr said. The Twin Cities is home to a notable vintage guru, Kai Nassauer, who, Bachman said, "has a bit of a national following for her skills at repurposing stuff." So Bachman hired her to "show us the ropes on acquiring vintage products" and turning them into something useful (and salable).

As the ideas and merchandise began to accumulate, Pfarr could not help but think of Bachman's 1920s era, second generation family home. Directly adja-

**TIME TO
HOSE OFF?**
Garbage-bound
leaking hoses and vintage
(and not working)
clocks get a
fresh look
and a new
(floral) lease
on life.





David Ellis



DESIGNING DISPLAYS Visual merchandising designer Paul Sternberg makes sure all items shown in the Ideas House, such as the tractor chair-turned-shelves, and globe-turned-lampshade, find a clearly marked spot in the flagship store.

cent to the flagship store, the house had been occupied since 2006 by various international exchange students who worked at Bachman's. To Pfarr, it was the ideal place to launch the vintage line.

"I had for a long time said that this house is the ultimate store prop," he said.

When Bachman showed Nassauer the house, she urged him to "turn this into something people can visit," Bachman recalled. The Ideas House was born. What better way to fulfill the business' tagline, "Beautiful Ideas. Real Value" and dovetail perfectly with its 2010 125th anniversary celebration, Bachman said.

Set-up and Installation

The 11-member visual merchandising crew "leapt at the chance" to transform the historic Bachman family home — in just three months — into a showcase for the vintage line as well as flowers and plants. It's a process they've since repeated six times, for each of the two- to three-week Ideas Houses that followed, each time coming up with a completely new color palette, décor theme, combination of new and repurposed vintage merchandise and creative uses of flowers and plants in every room.

flowerbuyer.com

Online Innovation



Significant Savings

Exceptional Customer Service

Visit today.

flowerbuyer.com

1.877.625.3243

David Ellis



David Ellis



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER The visual merchandising team, led by Larry Pfarr and Angie Grande, lead the effort to conceptualize each Ideas House color scheme and theme. They use pickers to source items as disparate as ladders (above), which get transformed into a picture holder in a girl's room, and baseballs, which provide whimsical support for a boy's shelf.

"After the first house, they were all eyes and ears for ideas for the next house," Bachman said.

It all starts when Pfarr and Angie Grande, visual merchandising lead designer, set the "look" for each Idea house, starting with the color palette, which is driven by whatever merchandise the buyers have brought in for the season. Then they come up with a theme. For instance, they called the Summer 2010 house, called "Fun Summer Outing," and it featured whimsical re-purposing of garden hoses (into wreaths), a teeter totter (into a sofa table) and a fishing boat (into a bedframe). The Fall 2010 Ideas house featured rich colors combined with an abundant use of woods and aged metals.

During the first year of the Ideas House, Pfarr and Grande came up with the theme for the next season's Ideas House not long before they were breaking down the previous one. By February 2011, however, with four successful Ideas Houses behind them, they had already set the color palette and themes for all four 2011 Ideas Houses.

About three weeks before the next Ideas House opens, Bachman's visual merchandising team begins installation, what Bachman describes as "a very exciting three weeks." They have a list of ideas they want to incorporate, "but once they start actual installation, all these ideas percolate to the surface, at least a third come up at the last minute."

And that's where having pickers and welders a speed dial away comes in

THE BOTTOM LINE

Just as any business reeling from multiple years of recession-weary sales, Bachman's needed to minimize costs on the Ideas House to maximize its profitability. No easy feat, given that project required an entire interior and exterior landscaping redo — four times in one year. But Paul Bachman, president, said the four-time frequency was critical to the financial success of the campaign. So was using the existing merchandising team to put each house together, so annual labor would not increase; the extra labor costs were only for dismantling each house. Bachman's succeeded in clearing more than \$87,000 in net profit from the campaign, a figure that would have been in the six digits had it not been for one unanticipated, and unavoidable expense: installation of a \$30,000 handicap ramp and door the city required them to install, a cost the company is amortizing over the first two years of the house.

Here's a breakdown of the 2010 Bachman's Ideas Houses revenues and expenses:

Income

Product Margin	.....	\$110,000
Ticket Margin	.....	\$50,000
(\$4 each, after \$1 contribution)		
Total Margin	.....	\$160,000

Expenses

Painting and fix-up	....	\$41,800
(including \$15,000 for ramp)		
Staffing	.....	\$21,800
Advertising and		
Public Relations	.....	\$10,000
Total Expenses:	.....	\$73,600

Net Margin \$86,400
—K.P.

Floral Management's
**18th Annual
 Marketer
 of the Year**
 Sponsored by
 Design Master color tool, Inc.



NEW SEASON, NEW REASON Each season, every room in the Ideas House takes on an entirely new theme. (Above) The boys room shifts from a boating theme in the summer to a sports theme in the winter.

handy. On an ongoing basis, Pfarr is in contact with any of about a half dozen pickers — people who make their living sourcing vintage items from around the country. He asks about their latest finds, or sends them on a mission for something he's envisioning for an upcoming House. Likewise, they regularly text Pfarr picture and prices. As Pfarr and his team come up with various ideas for repurposing the vintage items, they bring in welders (Pfarr's brother and nephews) and carpenters to make the products.

"I had a bunch of vintage lemon juicers and was determined to find use for them," Pfarr said. Hung from a light as chandelier globes, they became the perfect whimsical addition to a Summer Ideas House kitchen.

When they source large quantities of an item, such as vintage watches that double as napkin rings, or vinyl records that turn into coasters (with the labeled center section popped out and felt applied to the bottom side), Bachman's offers it in multiples in the flagship store. But some of the rarer finds, such as an antique beverage cart that gets a new

SENDING FLOWERS ON A *Smartphone?*

WE HAVE AN APP FOR THAT.

And you can too!

Your customers are mobile. Now your shop can be too. Mobile apps accelerate the order process. More than a Mobile website, it's a Mobile APP!

**2 FREE
 Months**
 FOR SAF MEMBERS



floralapp™

It's a flower shop in your pocket.

800-560-0501 • www.floralapp.com



available on





DON'T EAT THE DAISIES Florals are worked into every single room in the Ideas House, giving visitors inspiration for incorporating easy-to-replicate ideas they see into their own homes.

life as a kitchen island — are one-of-a-kind pieces. Either way, everything in the Ideas House is for sale, and most of it can be found in the flagship store. While no merchandise gives a repeat performance in an Ideas House from one season to the next, Pfarr will continue to source and merchandise anything that sells out in a retail locations, such as record label coaster.

Use it or Lose it

Lest anyone — including the local media — have visions of uber-fancy and dream-inspiring “decorator showhouses,” Pfarr is quick to point out the practicality of the Ideas House.

“This is unlike any other decorated house done in the Twin Cities,” Pfarr said in a press release and emphasizes to the many reporters who covered the Ideas Houses. “The ideas presented are for the average person. Simple and easy decorating tips will be found in every corner of the house.”

With about 1,500 square feet, the house is at a size and scale that the average person can relate to, Bachman said. And each house is designed with an imaginary family in mind, with two parents and two kids, whose ages and interests change with each house. These imaginary family members’ presence can be felt, based on notes left on a chalkboard, age appropriate clothing in a closets, and a lemonade pitcher, paired with sugar and cut lemons out on the counter.

The realism goes a long way toward empowering customers to use what they see at Bachman’s in their own homes. “I can do that,” is a commonly heard refrain among customers — or “guests,” as visitors to the Ideas House are referred. Bachman’s makes sure they don’t miss an idea by providing a handy trifold black and white brochure with each house that features a room by room listing of many of the items found in each, along with the specific paint colors.

“So it’s almost like a scavenger hunt,” Pfarr said. “You see guests holding the brochure with both hands, walking through the house and trying to hone in on all of the ideas listed.” (The brochure also includes a nod to the house’s heritage, a photo and background information on Arthur Bachman Sr. and his wife Ernestine, who built the home in the early

1920s, and their son Art Jr., who lived in in the house until his death in 2001.)

Tailor-Made for the Media

Bachman knew the story of an old family home refurbishment with vintage products and clever ideas would be a natural draw to editors. "Especially given that we were holding four Ideas Houses during the year," unlike the decorator show-houses, which are typically held during the holidays

Local television stations, including Fox News, plus magazines and newspapers covered the first Ideas House, Spring 2010. With the ever-changing house themes, the story has yet to become too old to cover, Bachman said, based on the robust media coverage of subsequent houses. In addition, the Ideas House became the perfect fodder for vintage and home decorating bloggers.

Bachman's did its own social media, using both Facebook and Twitter to tease the in-progress house set-up and highlight noteworthy ideas from the home. And they share ideas from recent Ideas Houses in their e-newsletter, a strategy that has increased their online sales. Ads in local newspapers and magazines, launching each new seasonal home, supplemented the public relations and social media.

Old Products, New Money

All that advertising and publicity paid off, as a glimpse of Bachman's Ideas House on any day during the two- to three-week period it's open each season would show a throng of guests waiting to get into the house.

The 2010 spring, summer and fall Ideas Houses drew more than 2,500 visitors each, and the Holiday house more than doubled that, with more than 5,500. The \$5 tickets were available in advance and designated for a specific time slot — 25 on the hour and 25 for the half hour — and many of the time slots sell out. Walk-in browsers could also buy tickets, "but you may have to wait a few hours," Pfarr said, adding that customers are happy to kill time browsing the main store and hanging out in Patrick's Café, the in-store restaurant managed by a local restaurant owner. No sweat, apparently, given that café business was up 50 percent during Ideas House periods



NUCLEAR FAMILY

Each Ideas House is designed for an imaginary family with two parents, a boy and a girl, which the visual merchandising team brings to life with small details throughout, such as a chalk board tracking each family member's height.

Incorporate
for as little as **\$99**

Visit www.incorporate.com
or call 800-643-6583

— THE —
COMPANY
CORPORATION®

INCORPORATING WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

alexandra
FARMS
Exceptional Garden Roses

“Baronesse”

Exclusive Nostalgic
Garden Roses,
available
year round




**OUTSTANDING
VARIETIES
COMPETITION**

For more information,
please contact your
favorite wholesaler,
or visit our web page at
www.alexandrafarms.com
or Call Joey at 305-528-3657.
marketing@alexandrafarms.com

 Check us out on Facebook

WHAT MAKES A MARKETER OF THE YEAR?

When Floral Management launched the Marketer of the Year Award in 1994, we hoped to draw attention to some of the industry's outstanding marketing efforts — and inspire the rest of the industry with their ideas. Floral Management invites, retailers, wholesalers and growers to take part in the contest, luring them with the prospect of a \$5,000 cash prize. For the 18th year in a row, that cash prize is sponsored by Design Master color tool, Inc.

The Criteria

What constitutes an outstanding marketing effort? The judges are charged with reviewing the entries and rating each entrant in the following four categories: effectiveness of campaign, originality, professionalism and overall excellence.

The Judges

We know that only experienced marketers with a track record of success are qualified to judge other marketing efforts. So, each year we choose a panel of seasoned professionals within and outside the floral industry.

Rick Canale, co-owner, Exotic Flowers, 2008 Marketer of the Year

Kathy Dudley, co-owner, The Bloomery, Butler, Pa., Chair Floral Management Advisory Board

BJ Dyer, AAF, AIFD, & Guenther Vogt, AAF, Bouquets, Denver, Colo.

Marty Loppnow, Waukesha Floral & Greenhouse, Waukesha, Wis.

Danielle Mackey, marketing director for Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, the agency that handles the consumer relations campaign for the Society of American Florists.

Rod Saline, AAF, Engwall Florist & Greenhouse, Chairman of the Board The Society of American Florists (SAF).

How to Enter

Want to be an entrant in Floral Management's 2012 Marketer of the Year?

Call, fax or e-mail a request for an entry to Kate F. Penn, at Floral Management, (800) 336-4743; fax (800) 208-0078; E-mail kpenn@safnow.org

Past Winners

- 2010** Oralia and David Espinoza, Spring Garden Flower Shop
- 2009** BJ Dyer, AAF, AIFD and Guenther Vogt, AAF, Bouquets, Denver
- 2008** Rick Canale Exotic Flowers, Boston, Mass.
- 2007** John Baisch, Baisch & Skinner, St. Louis
- 2006** Lyn and Skip Shipman, Brenda's House of Flowers, Woodstock, Ga.
- 2005** Frances Hopkins, Under A Foot Plant, Co., Salem, Ore.
- 2004** Marty & Jane Loppnow, Waukesha Floral & Greenhouse, Waukesha, Wis.
- 2003** Scott Carlson, Florabundance, Miami
- 2002** BJ Dyer, AAF, AIFD, and Guenther Vogt, AAF, Bouquets, Denver
- 2001** Andrew Manton-Zamora and Rutger Borst, Apisis Group, Miami
- 2000** Southern California Plant Tour Days
- 1999** Greg and Heather Katz, Al Manning Florist, Kansas City, Mo.
- 1998** Bill Cutting, Kuhn Flowers, Jacksonville, Fla.
- 1997** Brooks Jacobs, Greenbrook Flowers, Jackson, Miss.
- 1996** Sylvia Nichols, AIFD, The Window Box, Cheshire, Conn. United Floral Exchange, Carlsbad, Calif., and Denver.
- 1995** Mary Dark, Broadmoor Florist, Shreveport, La., Greg Royer, Royer's, Lebanon, Pa.
- 1994** Mary Lore, McFarland Florist & Greenhouses, Inc., Detroit Tom Aykens, AAF, Memorial Florist & Greenhouses, Appleton, Wis.

and 10 percent overall for the year, giving Bachman's rental income stream, which are based on the cafe's sales, a healthy 10 percent increase for the year.

"It's unbelievable," Pfarr said about the uptick in store traffic the Idea House generates. "It's like turning a light switch on for three weeks — longer for the holiday house," which lasts four weeks.

Many of the visitors to the Ideas House are women — you see mothers with daughters, grandmothers with granddaughters, coming together. "It has become the ultimate girlfriend event," Pfarr said. "That was something we didn't anticipate." Nor did he realize they'd be keeping score. "I hear them say things to each other like, 'I've been to all seven, how about you?' 'I started last fall,' to which the friend replied that she 'missed a few.'

And those girlfriends are buying, evidenced by the 11 percent increase in 2010 floral gift counter sales — not including garden and phone sales — for the flagship store, while the other stores experienced flat sales the same year.

"We attribute this increase to the addition of many new customers to this store who returned to the shop regularly during the year," Bachman said. Ticket sales added an additional \$50,000 in revenues in 2010 and based on the way ticket sales are tracking, 2011 Ideas House ticket sales will do the same.

Everything in the house is priced for sale: One of a kind items, identified by green dots, can be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis and picked up after the house closes. Everything else can be found at Bachman's flagship store, just steps away across the parking lot.

Despite the close proximity between the house and the main store, excess inventory left after the first Ideas House closed indicated a possible disconnect.

"We realized the merchandise was hard for customers to find and hard even for our own people to know where everything was," Bachman said of the 50 to 60 different SKUs from the house available for sale in the store. So the visual merchandising team put more effort into making it user-friendly, with large "As Seen in the Ideas House" signs on corresponding displays. And they gave the staff working in the main store a full overview of all of the House



CROWD CONTROL The local broadcast and print media have covered each of the six Ideas Houses Bachman's has held to date. And customers — or guests, as visitors to the house are called — are willing to wait in line to see how Bachman's has once again completely transformed the house with new colors and decorative accessories in each room. Fortunately — for guests and Bachman's — the store is just steps away, across the parking lot, where merchandise shown can be purchased.

items available for sale in the store. "By the third house, we figured (the signage and staff training) out and it was much smoother," Bachman said. "If they come to the store asking for a particular item," they find it either through the signage or by asking a staff member.

The Ultimate Payoff for Ideas

As gratifying as the increased revenues resulting from the Ideas House campaign are, the Bachman team is especially satisfied by the generous check they could present to the Children's Home Society: \$12,596, from the \$1 donated from each ticket sold in 2010. "We have teamed up with this organization for years to support the work they do with family services and adoptions," Bachman said. "The Ideas House income was a significant increase over past years, and couldn't have come at a better time."

Sales increases may sound like standard fare for the nation's largest family-owned retail florist and garden center — or "holistic lifestyle destination," as the business aspires to be known. But Bachman doesn't take it for granted. "I'm never shy about saying we've been right with everyone else, watching our sales drop year after year," he said, referring to the company's overall sales since 2007, when the economy started to tank. "We have a long way to go to catch up to what 2006 was like." But Bachman is enjoying the momentum created by the Ideas House campaign and its impact on everything from the balance sheet to the break room. "Just the idea that we were successful in boosting that store traffic was a huge morale booster," Bachman said. "To be heading in the right direction, it just feels good."

And the entire staff is basking in the renewed energy created by the success

of the house — something that each staff member had a role in making happen, whether in creating ideas for and merchandising the house itself, or keeping the main store's showroom running smoothly during showhouse time.

"After some difficult years," Bachman said, "they really appreciate the added business activity, and we see it reflected in their smiles and newfound energy."

Kate Penn is editor in chief of *Floral Management* and SAF's vice president of publishing and communications. Email: kpenn@safnow.org

