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Robert Williams II, AAF, PFCI Receives Paul Ecke, Jr. Award

ALEXANDRIA, Va.— Sept. 24, 2021— Robert “Bob” Williams II, AAF, PFCI, is the 2021 recipient of the Society of American Florists' Paul Ecke Jr. Award, which recognizes exemplary devotion to profession, industry, and community. This award is given to one recipient each year during the Stars of the Industry Awards Dinner at SAF's Annual Convention.

Williams was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) in March 2020 and was unable to attend the Stars of the Industry Awards dinner during SAF Orlando 2021, the association's 136th Annual Convention. The SAF team and other industry leaders presented him with the award at a [private ceremony](#) on August 26, 2021.

Williams II, passed away with his family by his side on Sept. 27, 2021, at the age of 75.



In 1997, Williams went to work for Smithers-Oasis, a global manufacturer and marketer of floral foam, postharvest products, temperature-controlled packaging, and floral accessory products. Over the course of 19 years, he rose the ranks from director of sales and marketing to general manager of North American operations to vice president of North American operations and co-owner. “Whether I was Bob’s subordinate, peer, or boss, his character was consistent,” says Robin Kilbride, Smithers-Oasis president and CEO. “Whatever the challenge, Bob will find a way to always look at the glass as half full. And he has a heart for making the world a better place by helping others be successful.”

Throughout his career at Smithers-Oasis, Williams was deeply involved with SAF, serving on committees, councils and, eventually, the executive board. His commitment to helping SAF achieve its goals and objectives was extraordinary in every sense of the word says SAF staff. As a volunteer leader for SAF, Williams was instrumental in advancing the association’s government relations objectives. An enthusiastic participant of Congressional Action Days, Williams arrived on Capitol Hill energized to discuss matters important to the floral industry. In Washington, he helped

less-experienced lobbyists hone their elevation pitches, guided event programming, introduced speakers, and advocated for SAF and the industry at dinners and receptions. He kept in contact with members of Congress throughout the year — keeping the industry’s interests top of mind.

Williams also played a key role in developing SAF’s 1-Day Profit Blast program — an affordable traveling seminar designed to help more local retailers interact with SAF in person.

“Anyone and everyone who knows Bob is aware that he is all about relationships and connecting with people,” says Kilbride. “Even though Bob officially retired five years ago, he maintains these relationships and continues to share ideas with floral industry leaders.”

The American Floral Endowment (AFE) has announced a new memorial tribute in memory of Robert “Bob” Williams II. Smithers-Oasis CEO Robin Kilbride, along with Red & Katie Kennicott of Kennicott Brothers Co., established the fund. Learn more [here](#).

For more information about the Gold Medal Award or to submit a nomination, visit safnow.org/awards or contact awards@safnow.org.

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Editor's Note: Images from the SAF Awards presentation will be posted at [Flickr.com/SocietyOfAmericanFlorists](https://www.flickr.com/photos/SocietyOfAmericanFlorists/).

About The Society of American Florists

The Society of American Florists is the association that connects and cultivates a thriving floral community through training, education, marketing resources and advocacy. Our vision: The power of flowers in every life. For more information, visit safnow.org.