

President's Message, June 2017

First of all I'd like to express my gratitude to all of those who voted in favor of the Pennsylvania Apple Program. Hopefully you've all heard by now the referendum vote passed, and we will be able to continue to support research and legislative causes for our industry.

Like many of you I am stressing this week about apple thinning. This has been a challenging year, as it seems it always is. I had a snowball bloom followed by unfavorable thinning conditions. Now the challenge is to figure out how to take off larger fruit as the temperatures increase into the 90's. It's always good to have the encouragement and experience of my father who says in 35 years of chemical thinning apples, he only over-thinned one time. Thinning fruit isn't for the faint of heart. Hopefully I hit them hard enough that hand thinning is kept to a minimum.

As I prepare for the summer months in the farm market, I am going through piles of applications trying to fill positions. While I have a core group of excellent seasoned adult veterans that I would be lost without, like many of you I need to hire seasonal help to get through the busy summer and fall seasons. In my case those hires are high school and college age students. Teenagers usually get a bad rap in the negatively leaning media, and a viewer could easily conclude that this generation of teens are all vagrants and lazy bums. I don't find that to be true at all. A disclaimer should be mentioned...I get lots of applications, so I have the pick of the litter. That being said, the teens I have working for me are excellent young people who are going to have a lot to offer to society in the future. They are hardworking and learn quickly. They all are taking the most difficult courses the local high school has to offer, and many of them are taking online college courses before they graduate high school. They aspire to be doctors, lawyers, teachers, and researchers. Working with them on a daily basis makes me feel confident that our future is in good hands.

My love/hate relationship mentoring the summer teen workforce is similar to that of a high school coach. When I first get them they are green and need lots of training. My staff and I spend countless hours training them and then evaluating them to find the perfect position for them to play. About the time we have them fully trained and we can compete in the championship game, they graduate and we have to start from the beginning. Luckily we have a large enough crew that we continually have a mix of seasoned veterans and untrained fresh new faces.

Every year we lose a four year veteran or two. By the fourth season they can easily sort and prep every crop and create attractive displays, can jump on the computer or register and figure out the issues, and they've learned how to handle the most difficult customer with ease. They've learned to show up to work on time, how to clean an toilet and wash dishes, what it means to put in a physical day of work, what good customer service looks like, how to work like a team with their fellow employees, time management and how to take constructive criticism. I like to think their future employers will be pleased with the training they received in their first job.

Early in May I read an article in the Gettysburg Times about a teen who has huge potential. The article was about an essay he wrote for a Law Day contest. I happened to graduate high school with the author of the Times article, so I was able to get my hands on a full copy of the essay, and eventually get in touch with the author. I thought it was very well written and just so happened to pertain to our labor struggles in agriculture. With Andrew's permission, we will run his full essay in this newsletter.

I hope any of you who hire teens have as much luck as I do. Our business wouldn't survive, and I would be lost without their help. I think having them around keeps me mentally young. At least that's my excuse for knowing all the words to the latest Lady Gaga song.

Hoping your thinner worked the way you wanted it to,
Tad

Tad Kuntz
SHAP President