

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Memorial Tribute Established in Memory of Bob Williams

Jennifer Zurko

The American Floral Endowment (AFE) 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.

Bob, a former Vice President of North American Operations for Smithers-Oasis, passed away on September 27, 2021, at the age of 75. He was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) in March 2020.

Bob was an industry champion, active volunteer leader and business expert. He graduated with a bachelor's in Business Administration from the University of Vermont in 1969. He completed some graduate-level work at the Darden School of Business, University of Virginia. While there, he focused on strategic marketing, managing channel conflict and managing critical resources. He completed a Certificate in Management in 1998.

Bob's early career was at Sherwin-Williams, where he became Director of Sales and Marketing, Consumer Brands Division, which he held for 10 years. In 1997, Bob left Sherwin-Williams to work for Smithers-Oasis, a global manufacturer and marketer of floral foam, postharvest products, growing media, temperature-controlled packaging and floral accessory products, entering the floral industry where he would devote the rest of his career.

Over the course of 19 years, he rose in 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.

Throughout his career at Smithers-Oasis, Bob became more deeply involved in the floral industry by devoting time to AFE, the Society of American Florists and the Wholesale Florist & Florist Supplier Association. He took on many volunteer leadership roles and became an incredible advocate for our industry.

After retirement from Smithers-Oasis, Bob continued to support the industry with consulting work. He worked with Kennicott Brothers from 2016 to 2020.

Within his own community, Bob exemplified what it means to be a volunteer leader. He served as his church's Deacon and a Sunday school teacher for several years. He also lectured at Kent State University and volunteered with support groups for those facing drug and alcohol addiction. In his free time when he was not volunteering, Bob kept active as a referee for varsity high school football. He also ran in a local running group and completed six marathons between the ages of 61 and 65.

He is survived by his wife of 49 years Diane, three children and five grandchildren. **GT**