Beyond the beautiful floral materials, bows, and showiness that a retail florist shop encompasses is another world of hustle, bustle, sweat and tears. Royer’s Flowers and Gifts is a company that has many employees deeply invested in the overall achievements of the corporation, with many of the employees being with the company for 20+ years. The company is now in its third generation of Royer’s as owners, CEO, managers, and designers and this aspect shines through from the perspective of an intern. The well orchestrated seasonal changes, preparation for holidays and special events, and day to day business has been perfected throughout the years from its original owners Ken and Hanna Royer to their grandchildren who have effectively moved the company into modern terms of wholesaling and retailing floral products. These changes have expanded the company to 17 retail florist locations as well as wholesaling to themselves and multiple other retail florists.

A hands-on experience is what an intern would get if they worked at a Royer’s, as I did at the Reading, Pa location. Under the supervision of Jenni Eberly, the store manager, and assistant manager, Helen, I performed daily duties which mainly consisted of general upkeep of the sales floor. The sales floor included the front walk-in cooler which had to be kept full of the day’s freshest flowers and foliage, as well as fresh arrangements of varying costs and handheld bunches of mixed bouquets, roses and weekly specials. The weekly specials consisted of standard carnations and mini carnations which had to be processed, wrapped, and labeled for sale. The front cooler always had to be full of the best floral materials in various colors and forms which then affected the general layout and display. For instance, the cooler had to be kept full of pre-packaged, ready-to-go cash and carry items for the Christmas and Valentine’s Day holidays for quick and easy, in-and-out customer service. This business tactic helped customers get what they wanted quickly and on their way with their busy lives. The premise of the customers having what they need at their fingertips is what the Royer’s family business has catered to. Catering to this desire of the customers has molded their business into a quick and efficient corporation which has brochures, catalogues and a webpage which help the customer find what they want with ease. This is one thing that I will take with me no matter what arena of the ornamental horticulture circuit I choose to work for, being that pre-determined products should be mass-produced so that customers have many choices, while being limited to a few items which are the most desired. Not to limit what their customers are offered, the customers
are always free to design their own arrangements and have them made up for delivery, pick-up or while they wait.

Another area of the sales floor that was my daily duty to keep clean and maintained was the greenhouse. The greenhouse was a one-bay, lean-to style glass greenhouse which housed various tropical plants for indoor use. Terrariums, European plant gift baskets, bird bath planters, and multiple plants at various price points, etc. were displayed in the greenhouse area. The plants had to be placed within the greenhouse in a manner which invited customers to explore the greenhouse area. A display of German pottery was also ever changing to coordinate with the displays throughout the remainder of the sales floor. Scouting for pest problems, physiological problems, and proper watering and care were also part of my daily duties within the greenhouse.

Care of the sales floor itself was the major portion of my duties at Royer’s Flowers and Gifts. I gained ample experience from designing the displays with the store manager, Jenni. Jenni and I worked together to come up with elaborate displays which helped the flow of traffic throughout the store and also invited customers into the areas which tend to be avoided, i.e. the greenhouse and a back room filled with candles, gift baskets and containers for sale. One course which I took at Delaware Valley College, Marketing Horticultural Products, came into great use, as I could put the information I learned in the classroom into a real world situation.

As far as working behind the counter, I learned to properly take customer orders for delivery and pick-up, inventory and restocking practices, and how to calculate the cost of designs. These practices were of great use throughout the four months of the internship and will be taken with me to use in the sales part of the horticulture industry. Working directly with the customers offered customer service and sales experience. The range of emotions is wide when working in an industry which caters to customers sending gifts of happiness and joy in times of pleasure and grieving, which has to be accommodated appropriately. This experience working with the customers at Royer’s has allowed me to aid my customers at my current workplace more efficiently and effectively.

I have taken what I gained at Royer’s and put that to work in the sales department at Dan Schantz Farm and Greenhouses. Part of my daily duties at this new job is working directly with garden centers and florists and ensuring that they have accurate availability, which learning the inventory practices at Royer’s has helped immensely. The inventory system is very proficient and always up to date at the florist shop. The standardized business practices of a company the size of Royer’s facilitate a smooth workday with minimal frustration from the employees and encourage a high morale. Being that there are 12 retail florist shops, any employee can go from one store to another and work as effectively as if they were at their ‘home’ store. The only separation of employees within the Royer’s company is between the retail and wholesale sides, the later not being very exposed to the retail employees.
The only negative criticism is that I had expressed my interest in the wholesale side of the operation and was not afforded the opportunity to explore that realm. During the time I was an intern with Royer’s I was treated very well, but I was also treated as an employee who was there to perform specific duties which will not further myself in the long run. Some of these things are that I did not get any training on designing, did not get to attend any manager’s meetings as previously discussed to learn managerial practices, did not learn to properly take funeral orders or phone orders which compromise a large portion of the retail florist business and did not learn the wholesale operations. The time of the internship was from December 20th through April 1st so I was able to experience a few major holidays and always had a job to perform, but perhaps due to timing issues I was not able to get other experiences out of the internship.

The company as a whole is a great company to be part of. There are multiple Delaware Valley College OH-Floriculture graduates who have come to work for the Royer’s corporation and stayed with the company. I personally would have stayed with the company to enter into the manager training program if there was a location located closer to my home, but an hour’s drive one way put an end to my time with Royer’s Flowers and Gifts. If I were to stay with Royer’s I would have suggested to the company to revamp their delivery logistics and update their ordering program, as it had a few flaws which make the ordering process more lengthy than needed.

I am looking forward to entering into graduate school to complete the master’s program, but have not yet decided what specific program to enter into. The program should have a base-focus on ornamental horticulture, specifically floriculture, and expand into the international business market. I would like to be an international floral sales consultant and the AFE internship at Royer’s has helped me along my journey to the next step. My current position at Dan Schantz has granted me the opportunity to experience the wholesale and business end and will use all the valuable experience from both jobs to further myself in the floriculture circuit.