



**AMERICAN FLORAL  
ENDOWMENT**  
*60 Years Of Providing For The Future*

## THROUGH THE DECADES

1961

1981

2001

2021



1971

1991

2011

### Mission Statement

The American Floral Endowment (AFE) is an independent nonprofit organization that funds research and scholarships in floriculture and environmental horticulture for the benefit of growers, wholesalers, retailers, allied industry organizations, and the general public.

**1961:** The Society of American Florists Endowment (SAFE) is incorporated. Six trustees administer the organization on a volunteer basis. Charles Pennock is the group's first chairman; his home in Pipersville, PA, serves as the base of operations. John Henry Dudley is named treasurer. Contributor and financial records are maintained in his office at the John Henry Company in Lansing, MI.

**1965:** Files and secretarial duties are turned over to Erma Houston (Cook), the Executive Director of the Wholesale Florists and Florist Suppliers of America. Houston is named Assistant Secretary; she holds the position until 1968.

**1966:** SAFE is granted an exemption from federal income tax, making contributions tax-deductible.

**1968:** Records and secretarial functions are moved to the Society of American Florists' (SAF) office. John H. Walker is Executive Director.

**1973:** The Endowment's first national phone-a-thon is conducted, raising nearly \$500,000 in cash and pledges. The fundraiser is conducted every five years through 2005. Betty Seitz Abrams becomes the liaison between SAF and SAFE.



**1973:** George Staby, Ph.D., receives funding for his research on the post-harvest cold chain, which ultimately results in the “Chain of Life” program. Gus De Hertogh, Ph.D., retired Research Coordinator for AFE, calls this research “among the most important projects the Endowment has ever helped fund.”

**1978:** Florists’ Mutual Insurance Company – known today as Hortica Insurance – offers to digitally store Endowment contributor records at its headquarters in Edwardsville, IL.

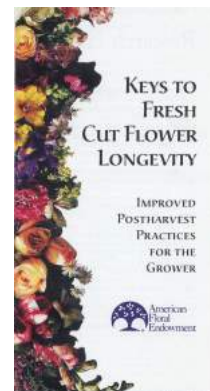


**1979:** Abrams is named Executive Director. Operations are centralized at her home in Edwardsville until she retires in 1993.

**1984:** Trustees change the organization’s name to the American Florists Endowment.

**1986:** Trustees change the name again, this time to the American Floral Endowment.

**1988:** The Endowment announces it has awarded more than \$2.2 million in grant funding since its inception. The Endowment’s corpus exceeds \$3 million.



**1992:** Vic and Margaret Ball give \$800,000 to AFE to provide internships and scholarships for students interested in pursuing careers in greenhouse production. The donation represents the largest in the group’s history at the time.

**1993:** The Trustees purchase a building as the headquarters for the Endowment in Edwardsville. At the time of Abrams's retirement, Bob Stoeckl is hired as Executive Vice President. Scientific research and educational programs expand significantly.

**1995:** AFE establishes its website, [www.endowment.org](http://www.endowment.org). The site is upgraded in 2001, again in 2010 and again in 2014.

**1997:** The corpus grows to about \$9 million, and grant funding grows to about \$5 million.

**1999:** Steven F. Martinez is hired as Executive Director. Gus De Hertogh, Ph.D., is retained as AFE Research Coordinator.

**2001:** In honor of former chairman Jim Botsis, the Endowment establishes the Jim Botsis Wholesaler's Educational Program to benefit wholesalers. For the next 10 years, the Endowment gives \$2,500 to the Wholesaler Florists & Florist Supplier Association for educational programming.

**2005:** Operations move to Hortica headquarters in Edwardsville, IL. Hortica management assumes oversight responsibilities for AFE's operations and staff.

**2006:** AFE and the Floral Industry Research and Scholarship Trust (FIRST) merge. AFE is now able to offer more than 18 additional scholarships. Industry veteran Sten Crissey is hired as Vice President of Development and Industry Relations.



**2008:** Trustees transfer AFE management to SAF, and the AFE office is moved to SAF headquarters in Alexandria, VA. Longtime SAF staff member Debi Chedester is named manager. In honor of her parents, Lee Phillip Bell gives \$500,000 to establish the James and Helen Phillip Endowed Scholarship Fund.

**2010:** The market value of the Endowment corpus stands at \$10 million. The Endowment announces its first Paul Ecke Jr. MS/Ph.D. scholarship recipient.

**2011:** AFE celebrates its 50th anniversary. Longtime AFE supporters Herman and LaDonna Meinders donate \$250,000, creating AFE's first unrestricted named fund. AFE adds a communications specialist to its staff to help raise awareness about the Endowment.

**2012:** Teleflora presents AFE with a \$1 million pledge, the largest in the Endowment's history. The donation establishes the Teleflora Fund, an unrestricted fund allowing AFE to increase annual funding for additional research or special projects.



**2013:** AFE creates new awareness videos. Five new [undesignated named funds](#) (The FTD Fund, The Ecke Family Fund, The Mellano and Company Fund, The Olive Hill Greenhouses Fund, and The Sunlet Nursery, Inc. Fund) and three new [scholarship funds](#) (the American Florists' Exchange Scholarship, the Julio and

Sarah Armellini Scholarship and the Richard T. Meister Scholarship) are created, bringing the total to more than 20 scholarships available.



**2014:** Gus De Hertogh, Ph.D., retires after 15 years as Research Coordinator, and Terril A. Nell, Ph.D. is appointed to the position. [Five new named funds](#) are established to advance the floriculture industry: The Todd Bachman Memorial Fund, The Del Demaree Family Fund, The Pennock Company Fund, The Tom Butler Family Fund, and The Peter Ullrich/Esmeralda Farms Fund. AFE's corpus reaches \$13 million with market value of over \$17 million.

**2015:** The [Young Professionals Council \(YPC\)](#) was established to enable a vibrant group of 21- to 35-year-olds to learn more about the floral industry and contribute to the efforts of the Endowment. A new Business Internship Program is created from the Del Demaree Family Fund to attract emerging business leaders to the floriculture and horticulture industries. New Named Funds include the Altman Family Scholarship Fund, Ball Horticultural Company Fund, Hortica Insurance Fund, and Smithers-Oasis Fund.

**2016:** Eight [new videos](#) were created to spread awareness of AFE and its many programs, including the [Vic & Margaret Ball Intern Scholarship Program](#). [Five new named funds](#) are established to advance the floriculture industry: The Yoshimi and Grace Shibata Family Fund, The Blackmore Family Fund, The Tagawa Family Fund, and The BioWorks Fund. In partnership with NC State, launches Floriculture InfoSearch Library, a powerful search engine for convenient and comprehensive access to floral literature, videos, and presentations. In partnership with the Floral Marketing Research Fund, the Consumer Purchasing Study, and Marketing to Gen Y Studies are funded, and the Generations of Flowers Study is released.



**2017:** A special research fund is established to address the control and management of Thrips and Botrytis with a goal of \$1.5 million. Results will reduce losses and provide higher quality flowers and plants. Three new named funds are established – Egon and Laina Molbak Fund, Scotts Miracle-Gro Fund, and the Arizona Retail Florist Travel Grant Fund. Growing Further newsletter created especially for grower news and research reports. Sakata Seed teams up with AFE with a \$10,000 gift match during 40 Days of Summer Giving to celebrate Sakata's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary raising \$30,000.

**2018:** In its first year of promotion, \$800,000 in pledges were raised for Thrips and Botrytis Research Fund. Kickoff of #FlowerMarketingMonday series with over 100 new short videos promoting flowers from the Floral Marketing Research Funds' #FlowerLoveVideos contest. New named funds established including the CalFlowers Scholarship Fund, and the Long Island Flower Grower Association Bob Gunther Scholarship Fund, bringing the total number of scholarship funds to 28.

**2019:** Thrips and Botrytis Research Fund reaches \$1.5 million goal and eight research projects underway. AFE assumes administrative oversight from SAF of funding recommendations to Floral and Nursery Research Initiative through USDA-ARS. New named funds include The Garcia Family Scholarship Fund, and the Retail Florist's Continued Education Fund, sponsored by The Sharpe Family to assist floral brick and mortar businesses in the Maryland, Virginia, and DC areas continue education. AFE creates Paul Thomas Intern of the Year Award through the Vic & Margaret Ball Intern Scholarship Program.

**2020:** The impact of COVID-19 is felt throughout the world. AFE shifts focus on providing COVID resources for industry, while committing funds to continue research, scholarships, and internship programs to help the industry sustain. AFE launches new Career Center to address the labor challenges and to provide the first platform to connect floral businesses and job seekers. Vic & Margaret Ball Intern program celebrates \$1 million in scholarship funding since its inception in 1992. The first virtual dinner held raises a record amount of donations in excess of \$80,000 for AFE's annual fundraising event.



**2021:** 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration! Since 1961, AFE has funded 14,589,329 in research, 1,958,098 in scholarships and internships and 1,645,349 in educational grants.

**Thank You for your support of the American Floral Endowment!**



Check out our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Photo Gallery at <https://endowment.org/through-the-decades/>