



PRESS RELEASE

Press Contact:
SUSAN McALEAVEY SARLUND
Ph: 908-723-0645
Email: easternproducecouncil@gmail.com

EPC Leadership Class Tours Hionis Greenhouses *Expands Coaching Skills*

For Immediate Release: November 16, 2022. The fourth Eastern Produce Council (EPC) Leadership Class benefited from a festive and informative tour of Hionis Greenhouses in Whitehouse Station, NJ, on November 14. After the tour, participants furthered their leadership education with a seminar from Rutgers University Office of Continuing Professional Education.

Tim Hionis, co-owner of Hionis Greenhouses, provided a thorough tour for the group of the operation's main greenhouses filled currently with holiday poinsettias and Christmas cacti as well as other high demand items. Hionis summarized the operation's long history, started by Hionis' father and mother (Spiro and Angie) three decades ago and now run by Hionis and his three brothers (Pete, Spiro and Gerry). "My family started in 1965 with one acre," he said. "Now we have six acres of state-of-the-art glass facilities and a total growing operation under-cover of 13 acres. Our outdoor production has expanded to over 65 acres."

A highlight of the tour was a visit to the lush decorative plant house. Hionis mentioned the increase in demand for plants used in home décor especially since the pandemic and explained some of the other newer additions to the greenhouse product line. "The opportunity to get out in the field and see different aspects of our industry adds so much to professional development," said Susan McAleavey Sarlund, EPC Executive Director. "Our program's dual-medium learning environment is fundamental to providing an enriching experience for our participants."

Catherine DeLettera, retail account executive with Zespri, felt the tour was valuable because it presented a part of the industry she hasn't tapped into before. "Seeing the variety of plants and extensive inventory at Hionis adds to my understanding of the whole industry picture," she said. "I gained another perspective which was very interesting."

After the tour, the class explored how to improve skills in leading and coaching with Lacey Alexander, a Rutgers University Adjunct Instructor. Alexander began with a puzzling and fun spaghetti-marshmallow building challenge to illustrate some team-building concepts and then moved into in-depth training about coaching people. "Coaching is long-term development," she said. "Management is more day-to-day focused. Coaching is a skill where you can set people up to step in and get the job done."

Much of Alexander's presentation focused on listening, asking powerful questions, being curious and promoting growth. "I learned a lot about active listening, team building, the internal psyche of employees, and how it all works together to address challenges in day-to-day business," said Dan Oettinger, retail supervisor with JOH. "I'm really looking forward to trying some of the methods we learned today with my retail team, and becoming a better co-worker and person in general whether in business or my personal life."

The EPC Leadership Program chooses up to 20 up-and-coming produce professionals for each Leadership Class, a professional development experience for those with less than 10 years of experience in the industry. Participants selected for this year's program include: Mohammed Bouzaidi of Global Fresh Vision LLC; John Carapella, Jr. of Sierra Produce; Shanna Deegan of Suja Juice; Catherine DeLettera with Zespri; Louis Getzelman of Canyon Sales Company LLC; Patrick Hallock of Four Seasons Produce; Brendan Haslam of Bolthouse Farms; Peter Machala of Wakefern Food Corp.; Krystal McCusker of The Oppenheimer Group; Juliet Moran with Suja Juice; Noelle Neary of Wakefern Food Corp.; Dan Oettinger with JOH Metro; Garrett Sebor of Key Food Stores; Kate Watson of The Oppenheimer Group; and Shawn Wen with Zespri. Also participating in the tour were Susan McAleavey Sarlund of EPC and Olga Welch of Rutgers.

PHOTOS:

Group at Hionis

From Left to Right:

Patrick Hallock of Four Seasons Produce; Shawn Wen with Zespri; John Carapella, Jr. of Sierra Produce; Catherine DeLettera with Zespri; Garrett Sebor of Key Food Stores; Kate Watson of The Oppenheimer Group; Dan Oettinger with JOH Metro; Krystal McCusker of The Oppenheimer Group; Louis Getzelman of Canyon Sales Company LLC; Olga Welch of Rutgers, Tim Hionis, and Susan McAleavey Sarlund of EPC.

Hionis Plant Room -

Viewing Hionis Greenhouses diversity of plants.

Training Session –

Leadership training from Lacey Alexander, Rutgers University Adjunct Instructor.

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