

# THE PRODUCE NEWS

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COVERING FRESH PRODUCE AROUND THE GLOBE SINCE 1897

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## Floral Marketing

*News and Views of the Supermarket Floral Industry*

### Seeley meeting atwitter with new media potential

BY JOHN S. NIBLOCK

The 24th annual Seeley Conference, billed as a think tank for the horticulture industry, gave rise to a new momentum for industrywide discussions and sparked interest in new social networking media such as Twitter, Facebook and blogging.

"We heard some cutting-edge presentations from people outside the industry that made us consider how we could apply their lessons to our work," Christine Boldt, executive vice president of the Association of Floral Importers of Florida, said. This was the fifth Seeley Conference she has attended.

The conference was held June 29-July 1 on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. About 60 industry professionals attended.

Speakers included a sus-

tainable agriculture rancher with new ideas on sustainability and social and environmental issues; a trend-spotter at an international public relations agency; and a floral industry innovator who discussed delivering a message to multiple audiences and said taking risks is essential to a business.

"The most dynamic part of the conference for me was when Stan Pohmer, the coordinator for this year's conference, broke us into six groups and had us grapple with a few key questions for 75 minutes, then report back to the full group," Ms. Boldt said. A general consensus emerged in the groups, she said, that the industry must make a concerted effort to communicate its messages through grassroots strategies and ap-

propriate use of some of the new social networking techniques.

"Cornell students helped orient us to the new media by setting up a Seeley Conference Facebook page. We also looked at Twitter, MySpace, podcasts and blogging and

recognized that if you use them you have to be set up to respond to your audience," she said.

"We had several associations represented at the conference," Ms. Boldt said, "and most of them are committed to a follow-up effort."



Christine Boldt of the Association of Floral Importers of Florida, shown here with a parent and child at a floral exposition in Miami, attended the Seeley Conference.