

# home away from home

I started working at Gali's Garden Center on September 10th, 2001. It was my 19th birthday and the day before 9/11. And I didn't know it then, but it was also the very beginning of something I now consider a full-blown appreciation for what it means to be a family-owned business.

Presently, as an editor for *Lawn & Garden Retailer*, I don't think a day goes by when I don't catch myself thinking about my time at that garden center on the corner of Chagrin and Belvoir. It's hard not to. After spending nearly a decade of my employed life there — full time, part time, opening, closing, weekends, holidays — it's a place that became a second home.

It's where I learned soft gravel is not a towmotor's friend. Where I became the master of tying Christmas trees to tops of family sedans. Where Crocs were cool (for a brief moment in time). Where faking gardening advice to gardeners was a bad idea. Where the guy with his new pickup truck needed more trunk liners than the woman in the \$60,000 Benz. It's where I earned the nickname Sweet Pete just by throwing out the trash for the equally sweet ladies in the Flower Shop. Where I worked a power saw for the first time. It's where I learned that taking over as the garden center

delivery guy was the cushiest gig in town — especially on busy weekends. It's where I learned having a fifth slice of pizza at lunch is never a good idea. It's where I learned the strangest customers come out when it rains. And the moment you're left to watch the shop is the very moment everyone decides

to checkout. It's where I learned that watering plants didn't make me invisible, but quite the opposite. It's where making friendships lasting longer than the summer became easy. And most importantly, it's where I met my beautiful wife for the first time.

Lots of life lessons in all of that — and it's just the tip of the mulch pile. Thanks to Linda Gali and her dad Glenn, I was

given the chance to know the craziness and importance of a good spring. I also witnessed, firsthand, owning a small business is not for the faint of heart. It takes patience, bumps and bruises, and a whole lotta love.

Whether you realize it or not, there's much more to your family business than beautiful plants and bags of soil. It's a place that *will* undoubtedly create memories for your staff. It's a place that *will* show them the uniqueness, hard work and pride behind a locally owned business.

That's awesome.




Gali's Garden Center — where I honed my towmotor skills and met my future wife.



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