

# Outstanding Growers, Marketers Take Banquet Center Stage

**ANDY ANDREWS**  
Editor

**HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.)** — Several awards were presented to outstanding growers by an array of fruit and vegetable organizations Tuesday evening here at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention.

Dave Benner, along with wife Pam and family, gathered on the podium to celebrate the honor of being named the state's outstanding growers by the State Horticultural Association of Pennsylvania (SHAP).

The Benners operate El Vista Orchards, Fairfield. The Benners manage 700 acres of fruit trees,

including 400 acres of apples and 100 acres of peaches, plums, and sweet cherries. They operate nine different farms with 11 full-time and 85-90 seasonal employees.

Dave is called by some the "answer man," who can provide information for growers on a variety of topics.

Benner, on accepting the awards, noted that, "without a doubt, this is a breathtaking experience," and thanked everybody, including state agricultural colleges and universities for their input.

Benner maintains a close association with the state's apple marketing board and is active on several commodity boards and organizations.

At the banquet at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center Tuesday evening, about 200 growers and industry representatives were on hand to recognize many other individuals.

John Mason, Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association, spoke about how the industry was "blessed" in the past six years by an individual who helped create and implement the Simple Delicious Pennsylvania Produce marketing program. Recognized for his work, "personal energy, time and interest," Mason noted, was former Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Sam Hayes.

Mason noted how Hayes also helped get crop insurance on the must-do list for many producers. When Hayes began, one in 20 producers were signed up. Now, half of the state's growers are signed up. "I don't know why we're not at 100 percent," Mason

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Billy Brent, Brent's Orchard, was presented with a Farm Show honor. At left is Kim Johnston, Pennsylvania Apple Queen. All photos by Andy Andrews, editor



Sam Hayes, former secretary of agriculture, left, receives special recognition from the state vegetable growers from John Mason.



Roger Wood, Atwater, Calif., center, won recognition from the National Peach Council. At left is Charles Walker, organizational director, NPC and at right, John Lott, president, NPC, Aspers.

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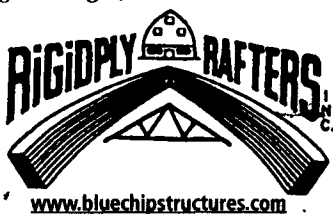
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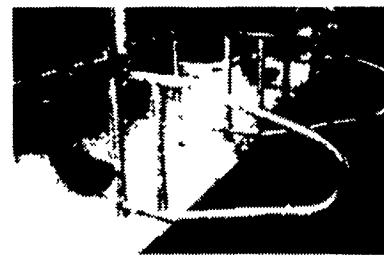


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