

Lyndsi Oestman – Loma Vista Nursery

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

From pitches to plants. From hardballs to hibiscus. From the strike zone to the root zone. Those phrases are a way of describing the transition made by a major league baseball player who, with his daughter, has developed one of the leading plant nurseries in the nation. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Lyndsi Oestman is vice president of Loma Vista Nursery in Ottawa, Kansas. She shared this remarkable story.

Lyndsi's dad, Mark Clear, grew up in California where he worked at his best friend's family's avocado ranch. Mark enjoyed tree pruning and avocado picking. He also enjoyed baseball. In fact, he was such a good player that he was drafted into major league baseball as a pitcher.

While being developed in the minor leagues, he was playing in Des Moines when he met the young woman who would become his wife. He went on to a 17-year major league career, serving as a two-time All-Star relief pitcher for the California Angels, Boston Red Sox, and Milwaukee Brewers.

One year Mark bought a tree nursery in California with his childhood friend from the avocado ranch. He played baseball during the season and worked at the nursery during the off-season.

One of his buddies on the Red Sox was traded to the Kansas City Royals. When Mark came for a visit, he found he loved the hunting and fishing in the KC area. In fact, he liked it so well that he moved his family to Olathe after retiring from baseball. He also sold his share of the partnership in California and bought a home with a tree nursery in Olathe. He called it Loma Vista Nursery.

"That was the place I grew up in," Lyndsi said. "My brother and I drove tractors and planted trees." The company became one of the first wholesale suppliers in the Kansas City area.

Lyndsi went to K-State and studied marketing and business. She met and married her husband and entered corporate work after graduation, but found it wasn't the same as a family business.

As Loma Vista Nursery continued to grow and evolve, Lyndsi came back to work at the nursery. She worked in every department and became vice president of the company, which is now headquartered in Ottawa, Kansas.

Today, Loma Vista Nursery is one of the nation's leading wholesale suppliers of plants, trees and shrubs for independent garden centers, landscape contractors, and wholesale distributors in the midwest. The operation consists of 300 acres of containerized production at Ottawa plus a 600-acre tree farm in the Willow Springs area of Douglas County. Willow Springs is a rural township with a population of 1,409 people. Now, that's rural.

Loma Vista Nursery offers various varieties of pot-in-pot trees, shrubs, roses, grasses, perennials and groundcovers. The tree farm produces field-grown shade and ornamental trees, upright junipers and spruce, as well as many other deciduous and evergreen varieties. Loma Vista serves customers from Denver to Indianapolis.

“We’re focused on being the best grower we can be,” Lyndsi said. Loma Vista was a pioneer in the adoption of what is called SANC: Systems Approach to Nursery Certification, developed in partnership with regulatory agencies and the industry. In simplest terms, SANC takes a holistic approach to the processes and protocols necessary to assure plant health. “We are super proud of that,” Lyndsi said. “Our SANC handbook has become one of the national models,” she said.

In 2019, Loma Vista Nursery won the national sustainability award from Greenhouse Growers. “We want to do the right thing for our plants, our people, and our customers,” Lyndsi said.

Loma Vista employs 100 people and is home to more than a million propagated plants and more than two million containerized plants. “The team we have right now is awesome, and we’re very proud to be part of the Ottawa community,” Lyndsi said.

For more information, see www.lomavistanursery.com.

From baseball fields to fields of plants, Mark Clear successfully made the adjustment. We commend Mark Clear, Lyndsi Oestman, and all the people of Loma Vista Nursery for making a difference with commitment, horticultural knowledge, and entrepreneurship. They’ve gone from major league to major landscape.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.