

VISTA Seed Partners, LLC

Veteran seed marketers find independence in their new company



Vista Seed Partners, LLC owners Marissa McDowell, Christie McDowell, and Mandi Mack are all experienced turf and forage seed marketers. (Vista Seed partners photo)

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Company Profile

- Marketing a full line of warm and cool season turf grasses and forages to professional users and distributors throughout United States and Canada.
- New and improved varieties from university and private breeding programs.
- Family owned.
- More than 175 years combined seed industry experience.
- Established September 2014.

Two years ago, a mother and her two daughters – all experienced turf and forage seed marketers – gave up their corporate positions to form VISTA Seed Partners, LLC (VSP). Christie McDowell says the time was right for her and her daughters – Mandi Mack and Marissa McDowell – to start a new business.

“It was an opportune time for us,” Christie says. “We were all born and raised here in the Willamette Valley. We believe that people are more interested in the fact that we know the seed business rather than knowing the business is owned and operated by three women.”

Local Industry Experience

Together the women brought 50 years experience and an extensive number of seed production and customer contacts to VSP. Plant breeder Jerry Pepin, Ph.D., with more than 70 commercially-released, improved turfgrass varieties to his credit, also joined the VSP team.

“Dr. Pepin has excellent relationships with plant breeders at Rutgers University as well as with several independent plant breeders,” Christie says. “These contacts enable him to continually find new, improved varieties to evaluate for our portfolio.”

Director of Grower Services Doug King has more than 40 years experience working with growers in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. King is able to secure production contracts to maintain a steady supply of quality turf and forage seed.

Personal Service

“Sales is more than completing a transaction,” says Mandi Mack. “It means having a relationship with your customers that gives them the trust and confidence to know that you are there for them, that you have answers to their questions. When they want information that is not provided in a new variety’s technical spec sheet, Dr. Pepin will have

the answer for them.”

Most of VSP’s customers outside the three-state region are distributors to professional landscapers and high-end users including East Coast and Southern golf course superintendents.

“Selling into these markets is very competitive. Maintaining personal relationships with them is essential,” says Marissa. “It takes more than a newsletter or an occasional phone call. Each of us gets out of our office to make personal visits to our customers. We are all million-mile fliers with our airline.”

By being a close-knit, family business, partners can make immediate decisions to meet individual customer needs or to resolve difficulties.

“We are all equally vested in the success of VSP and understand the importance of customer service,” Christie says. “We have the freedom and independence to resolve customer concerns in ways that are mutually beneficial for everyone involved. We believe that is the essence of good customer service.”

Joe Funk, editor