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## **REALITY SHOW WINNER LONSERT JOINS CONNELLS AS WEDDING AND EVENT SPECIALIST**

*"Making it Big" victor was mentored by Preston Bailey*

COLUMBUS, Ohio (Sept. 2, 2008) - He was a victorious floral designer on the reality TV series "Making it Big."

Now Bellefontaine native Cory Lonsert intends to make a big impression on the world of wedding and event planning in the Columbus area.

Lonsert, 30, has joined Connells Maple Lee Flowers & Gifts as a wedding and event specialist serving the company's four Columbus-area stores. He brings to Connells' award-winning design staff a number of his own accomplishments and a passion for his work.

"I'm thrilled to take the knowledge I've gained at a national level and bring it to the Columbus market through Connells Maple Lee," Lonsert said. "There's just no better feeling than to make someone's wedding day or a corporate event even more memorable with flowers. It's just the most satisfying thing in the world."

Steve Lambert, Connells' vice president of operations, was familiar with Lonsert through the floral industry.

"Cory clearly has an enthusiasm for what he does that customers really pick up on," Lambert said, "and he brings with him experience with innovative, trendy designs and bigger-scale weddings and events. Connells has expanded its work with funeral homes and corporate sales, and Cory's arrival is another step in our diversification. We're thrilled that he's on board and know that our customers will be, too."

Lonsert grew up in the floral industry: his mother still operates a flower shop in Bellefontaine. However, Lonsert had his eyes on a pre-med major in college until the day his mother asked him to help with some rose arrangements. Something clicked. That's when he knew that flowers were his true calling.

He worked at his mother's shop and began entering floral competitions. Ohio Designer of the Year and Midwest Designer of the Year honors followed, as did an innovation award from the Michigan Floral Association. In 2003, he was inducted into the prestigious American Institute of Floral Designers, through which he attends an annual four-day design symposium involving some of the top floral designers in the world.

In 2006, on a lark he submitted an online entry for a Canadian reality TV series, "Making it Big." After lots of interviews, he was invited to Vancouver to participate in a floral competition against two other designers. He won, and with it a mentorship from famed event designer Preston Bailey and multi-page spread of his designs in Flowers magazine. (The TV program aired earlier this year in the United States on the Style Network.)

More recently, he worked as a free-lance designer in Los Angeles, learning the events industry on a grand scale (one wedding featured \$350,000 worth of flowers). He had moved back to Ohio for personal reasons when Lambert approached him about joining Connells.

What he really brings to the table, Lonsert said, is more and bigger ideas. He can show prospective brides and grooms some 450 original designs from his own portfolio.

"They're not just clippings of other peoples' work that are pulled from a design magazine," he said. "Through my travels and involvement with the American Institute of Floral Designers, I'm always educating myself on the cutting-edge trends and styles. Couples see that, and it instills confidence in them. It makes for a terrific partnership when that kind of trust exists."

Connells ([www.cmlflowers.com](http://www.cmlflowers.com)) has stores at 2408 E. Main St. (Route 40), Bexley; 2033 Stringtown Road, Grove City; 176 Clint Drive, Pickerington; and 615 High St. (Route 23), Worthington.

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