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Applications sought for Caplan Family Scholarship

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Eight years ago, sisters Karen Caplan and Jackie Caplan Wiggins were thinking of ways to honor their mother, Frieda, who founded Frieda's Inc. specialty produce company in 1962 in Los Angeles.

At the same time, the sisters wanted to recognize the family-owned business atmosphere in which they grew up as well as promote their passion for government advocacy in the fresh produce industry.

They took care of all three criteria with the establishment of the Frieda Rapoport Caplan Family Business Scholarship Program in 2001. The United Fresh Research & Education Foundation announced recently that it is taking applications for the 2009 scholarships, which will be awarded to up to four employees of family-owned United Fresh member businesses.

"We thought it was a fitting way to honor our mother, encourage family businesses and encourage people to get involved in the political process as it relates to the industry," said Jackie Caplan Wiggins, vice president and business development manager at Frieda's. "We just wanted to encourage others in family businesses to be a part of the industry."

Scholarship recipients receive airfare, hotel and registration to attend United's Washington Public Policy Conference Sept. 9-11 at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel in Washington D.C. The conference allows attendees opportunities to meet with produce leaders from all sectors as well as administration officials and congressional leaders.

"It really is an eye-opening experience," said Victoria Backer, United Fresh senior vice president of member services.

Gahl Crane of Prime Produce International LLC, Orange, Calif., and a 2008 scholarship recipient, confirmed Backer's claim.

"This scholarship program really opened my eyes to how critical it is for the produce industry to get involved and have a strong voice in Washington," Crane said in a United Fresh news release. "It's one thing to talk about issues impacting your business, but it's an entirely different game to meet with your members of congress to make sure your views are being heard."

Applications for the scholarship are at www.unitedfresh.org and must be received by July 24. Applications should be sent to the United Fresh Research & Education Foundation, attention Julie Jacocks. They can be e-mailed to jjacocks@unitedfresh.org.

For more information, contact Backer at 202-303-3400, ext. 408.

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