



**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **United Fresh Introduces Class 22 of the Produce Industry Leadership Program**

*Twelve Rising Stars of the Produce Industry Begin Their Leadership Journeys*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 22, 2016) – The United Fresh Produce Association is pleased to announce the 12 members of the 2016-2017 United Fresh Produce Industry Leadership Program Leadership Class 22. Sponsored by a generous grant from DuPont Crop Protection, this program was launched in 1995 and has graduated more than 200 program participants.

The Produce Industry Leadership Program welcomes the following professionals to its 22nd Class:

- **Katie Birkhauser**, Dole Fresh Vegetables, Salinas, CA
- **John Carkoski**, The Fresh Group Ltd., Oakdale, MN
- **Kelly Catchot**, Renaissance Food Group, Rancho Cordova, CA
- **Nick Chappell**, California Giant Berry Farms, Watsonville, CA
- **Melina Lopez**, Walmart Stores, Valencia, CA
- **Adam Lytch**, L&M, Raleigh, NC
- **Brendan Miele**, Jacobs Farm/Del Cabo Inc., Pescadero, CA
- **Melissa Olsen**, Freshway Foods, Sidney, OH
- **Max Saad**, Mastronardi Produce, Kingsville, Ontario
- **LeighAnne Thomsen**, Mission Produce, Oxnard, CA
- **Jonathan Vance**, 4Earth Farms, Los Angeles, CA
- **Megan Zweig**, DMA Solutions, Inc., Irving, TX

Beginning this July, the members of Leadership Class 22 will participate in a number of educational events and outings centered on the four core focus areas of the program: leadership development, business relationships, government and public affairs, and media and public communications.

During the year-long fellowship, participants will take part in a series of customized trips which include face-to-face meetings with leading industry players, hands-on training with top industry experts and educators, interactive experiences with influential leaders in Washington, and more. This year's schedule

will feature expansive trips to Washington State; Washington, D.C. and Wilmington, DE; Arizona; and Chicago, IL, where the class will graduate at the 2017 United Fresh Convention.

"We are thrilled to welcome the newest class of the Produce Industry Leadership Program," said Amanda Griffin, Senior Director of Meetings and Member Programs for United Fresh, "We congratulate the Class 22 Leadership Class for their commitment to becoming future fresh produce leaders."

"DuPont Crop Protection has been the sole sponsor of the Produce Industry Leadership Program since its inception 22 years ago," said Victoria Backer, United Fresh Executive Vice President. "Their tremendous support creates a unique opportunity for future fresh produce leaders to grow professionally and personally, ensuring a bright future for our industry."

Candidates for the program submitted an application including two essays detailing their interest in the program and what they consider the most important challenges affecting the produce industry. Applications were reviewed by the Leadership Advisory Committee, which is comprised of United Fresh Board members and program alumni. The committee is responsible for assessing each candidate based on their experience and expertise, as well as developing a class that is balanced and representative of the industry.

For questions or additional information on the Produce Industry Leadership Program, visit [www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org) or contact said Amanda Griffin, Senior Director of Meetings and Member Programs for United Fresh at [agriffin@unitedfresh.org](mailto:agriffin@unitedfresh.org) or 202-303-3412.

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#### **About United Fresh Produce Association**

Founded in 1904, the United Fresh Produce Association brings together companies across every segment of the fresh produce supply chain, including growers, shippers, fresh cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. We empower industry leaders to shape sound government policy. We deliver the resources and expertise companies need to succeed in managing complex business and technical issues. We provide the training and development individuals need to advance their careers in produce. Through these endeavors, we unite our industry with a common purpose – to build long-term value for our members and grow produce consumption. For more information, visit [www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org)