



# Produce for a ***GREATER GOOD***

GROWERS AND SHIPPERS PUT THEIR BEST FOOT FORWARD DURING THE PRODUCE MARKETING ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL FRESH SUMMIT INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION & EXPOSITION. BY Craig Levitt

As the produce industry gathered in Atlanta to show off its wares, the underlying theme across the PMA show floor was altruism. Many exhibitors geared their booths toward helping children eat better and the fight against childhood obesity.

Chelan Fresh was promoting the National Dairy Council's and the National Football League's Fuel Up to Play 60 program, which is designed to make a dent in childhood obesity. According to Mark Blake, director of the program, Fuel Up to Play 60 is now run locally in 70,000 schools across the country.

"With supporters like Chelan Fresh, we have been able to reach 36 million kids across the U.S., teaching them about the importance of nutritious foods."

Beyond supporting the FUTP60 program, Chelan Fresh, based in Chelan, Wash., used PMA as a springboard to display a new look and feel to retailers. Those changes include switching its merchandisers from black backgrounds to white.

Terry Braithwaite, director of marketing at Chelan, said they are also incorporating the FUTP60 message on some of its packaging as well, including the use of QR codes that will give kids ideas on how to tie apples into the program. "Our goal is not just to have

apples, we want to see other commodities come on board," said Braithwaite. "We are real excited about it."

Shuman Produce, based in nearby Reidsville, Ga., has been supporting community outreach programs for ten years with Produce for Kids (PFK). At a PMA reception Shuman announced that thus far, PFK efforts have raised more than \$3.5 million. On the show floor, the reigning Miss America was at Shuman's booth discussing her partnership with PFK.

"We started the partnership in June with some in-store events," said John Shuman, president of Shuman Produce. "She can generate awareness a lot better than we can and it is great that she supports that platform and the organization a whole."

Shuman Produce also supports Susan G. Komen for the Cure with its pink bags, stickers, boxes and bins. "It's a great way to sell sweet onions and Shuman onions commits \$20,000 to SGK for the cure each October," added Shuman.

Potandon Produce showed its support of breast cancer awareness with special pink bags of its Klondike Rose and Klondike Goldust potatoes. Barbara Keckler, marketing coordinator for the Idaho Falls, Idaho-

based company, said the support includes a donation to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. "We have all been affected by breast cancer and this is a good way for us to give back," added Keckler.

Potandon is also trying to raise awareness on the benefits of potatoes. Part of that initiative includes the introduction of animated characters called the Klondike family, consisting of dad, a goldust; Rose is mom; teen-aged son Finnegan, a red skin yellow; Anabel, a small goldust and a purple named Violet. The Klondike family will appear in storybook form on the Potandon website.

"They will be fighting villains such as chocolate, candy and other things that aren't good for you," said Keckler. In January Keckler said promotional plush dolls will be available for retailers. Potandon will also begin a sampling promotion in January with retailers across the country.

Getting kids to sample vegetables can often be quite difficult. One of the most difficult is often onions. With that in mind, the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee (IEOOC)

was showing off kid-friendly onion recipes from its new cookbook, part of its "All-American Winners" promotional campaign. That campaign includes America's Next Top Model's



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2010 First Runner-Up, who was at the IEEOC booth and happens to be a native of Boise, Idaho.

“When many of us were kids produce was incorporated into our diets because that’s just how our families did things,” said Sherise Jones, marketing director for the Parma, Idaho-based committee. “We need to work harder to get kids eating more produce, specifically onions. We are working on that as part of our campaign.”

Beyond promoting to kids, Jones said it is just as important to give consumers ideas on how to incorporate onions into their everyday meals. The cookbook is designed to do that, and the IEEOC encourages retailers to do so as well. “If retailers take that extra step, it will raise their onion sales,” said Jones.

### An eye on talent

At the Wilcox Fresh booth, in partnership with the PMA Foundation for Industry Talent, for a \$2 donation, visitors had the opportunity to support the produce industry while enjoying Chef Dave Sherman’s “almost famous” potato bruschetta. “This is a great way to attract, obtain and develop future leaders of the industry,” said Jim Richter, executive vice president sales and marketing for Rexburg, Idaho-based Wilcox Fresh. “We continue to support PMA throughout the year, so this will certainly stay at the fore front of our efforts to support this great industry cause.”

Wilcox also reinforced its core value messages with booth banners highlighting value, quality, food safety and sustainability.

Sun-Maid Growers core value is, and always will be raisins, said Joe Tamble, vice president, sales for the Kingsburg, Calif.-based coop. At PMA, Sun-Maid continued to promote its yogurt minis and yogurt cherries. Tamble was also teasing visitors with the promise of a product launch, “with a spice element involved,” new to the entire category. The launch is targeted for 2012.

Visitors to the Village Farms booth were able to enjoy the premier of its “Heavenly Villaggio Marzano,” an authentic mini San Marzano



plum tomato. “Our exclusive mini San Marzano is distinctive in appearance with a unique elongated, slightly pear shape,” said Doug Kling, senior vice president and CMO for the Eatontown, N.J.-based hydroponic grower. Village Farms also unveiled a brand redesign, developed based on extensive

consumer research. New to the packaging is the tagline, “Fresh Just Got Fresher.”

“The new logo and packaging will enhance shelf presence, drive consumer interest, and build produce awareness for quality and freshness,” added Kling.

Dole had quality and freshness in mind for bananas when the Westlake Village, Calif.-based company developed the FreshPack, a bag that slows the ripening process of bananas. Introduced at the show, the bag has two pouches—each sized to hold four to five bananas—so consumers can open one side immediately and save the other for future consumption. According to Dole’s research, FreshPack keeps bananas fresh up to six days longer.

“Years in development, this completely natural, chemical-free advancement in technology controls the atmosphere in the bag to keep the bananas ‘asleep’ until consumers are ready to enjoy them,” said David Bright, vice president of marketing.

First time exhibitor Raw Foods International was offering samples of its RAAW Fresh Juices, six different energy drinks made from a combination of fruits and vegetables. Flavors include: pineapple-cucumber, cranberry-ginger, carrot-lemonade, better beets, passion fruit-wheatgrass and raspberry-lemongrass. Currently available in 12-ounce bottles, Paul Gregg, executive vice president of the Miami-based company, said a 32-ounce multi-serve bottle will be available in December.

“We support [the juices] with heavy sampling, heavy demos and other ways in the marketplace so that we can get additional pull through,” said Gregg. “We are maybe six months away from saying ‘please come and try this’ to people saying, ‘man have you tried this?’ That’s a paradigm shift that we are about to hit.” □