



Produce Marketing Association

Mail: PO Box 6036 • Newark, Delaware 19714-6036 • USA
Address: 1500 Casho Mill Road • Newark, Delaware 19711 • USA

Phone: +1 (302) 738-7100

Fax: +1 (302) 731-2409

www.pma.com



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Contact: Debra Mitchell, dmitchell@pma.com, +1 (302) 738-7100, ext. 3008

PMA Selects Experienced Association Professional to Lead Education Foundation

NEWARK, DEL. – To mark its high-level commitment to attract and guide the next generation of produce industry leaders, the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) has added an experienced professional and former PMA vice president as the executive director of PMA's newly established, tax-exempt Education Foundation. Cindy Seel, a seasoned executive with 20 years of association experience, was confirmed as the first staff executive during the Education Foundation's Board of Directors meeting held in Wilmington, DE on August 12. Seel, who previously worked in executive positions for PMA from 1997-2002, is starting with the foundation effective August 14.

Seel is well versed in not-for-profit structure, management and member service and brings exceptional knowledge of the produce industry as a result of her five year tenure with PMA. Her previous senior executive positions at international and statewide associations have provided her with strategic leadership skills and the ability to yield positive results while containing costs, increasing productivity, service and morale. Seel's success and strong relationships forged with industry leaders while on the PMA staff were contributing factors in her selection to lead the Education Foundation.

"PMA is elated to have such an experienced leader oversee the new Education Foundation. This opportunity demonstrates PMA's commitment as a leader of the produce industry and our commitment to building the industry's future, a task that is surely among the most important for any organization looking beyond the horizon" said PMA President, Bryan Silbermann.

While in Delaware for the meeting of the Education Foundation's interim board this past weekend, Seel said "It's great to be back in the produce industry. I will enjoy reconnecting with old friends and building new relationships that will help advance the education goals of the Foundation. I'm very excited about our mission and am already so impressed by the energy and enthusiasm PMA members have shown in launching this commendable and critical effort to build the industry's future."

The Education Foundation was incorporated in late 2005 and has just received its tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. The Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization and its activities will be supported by tax deductible contributions and donations.

The Foundation's new Board of Directors will take office in San Diego this October when it meets during PMA's Fresh Summit. Prospective directors are currently being contacted with invitations to serve.

The objectives of the Foundation are to: help industry professionals define their career paths, attract new talent into the industry, and ensure that the industry has the information it needs to remain competitive. The Education Foundation has two student scholarship programs currently operating and is working with several colleges and universities nationwide: the Pack Family/PMA Career Pathways Fund which enables produce marketing students to participate in PMA's annual Fresh Summit and the Nucci Scholarship for Culinary Innovation which gives future chefs the opportunity to become familiar with the variety of ways fresh fruits and vegetables can be incorporated in foodservice through their participation in PMA's annual Foodservice Conference. The Pack/PMA Fund is now bringing students to Fresh Summit in San Diego for its third year of operation while the Nucci Scholarship was just launched for the first time at PMA's most recent Foodservice Conference this past July.

"The PMA board feels that the Education Foundation will provide an excellent opportunity for professionals to become familiar and adapt to such an ever-changing industry. We recognized the need for a trusted, recognized, and reliable source for education and training for fresh produce and floral," says PMA Chairman of the Board, Janet Erickson of Del Taco, adding that "the Education Foundation meets that need."

The Education Foundation will fund programs that increase and enhance the teaching of produce-related courses at colleges and universities around the world. It will also support research and professional development programs and will provide industry recognition to individuals who master the knowledge and skills the industry requires.

Founded in 1949, PMA is the leading trade association serving more than 2,100 companies representing all segments of the global produce and floral supply chains. Members rely on PMA year round for the business solutions they need to increase sales and consumption, build strong professional relationships, and expand their business opportunities.

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PHOTO CAPTION: At the close of a PMA leadership meeting on Saturday August 12, 2006, PMA Education Foundation leaders (left to right) Bryan Silbermann, PMA president, Cindy Seel, executive director of PMA's Education Foundation, and Janet Erickson, PMA chairman of the board, visited a Wegmans store located in Cherry Hill, New Jersey .

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