



NEWS RELEASE

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Tomorrow's Leaders Trained at 2016 Potato Industry Leadership Institute

Ryan Crane of Exeter, Maine, elected 2017 Grower-Leader

The Potato Industry Leadership Institute (PILI) Class of 2016 brought together 23 outstanding potato growers and industry representatives. The annual program, administered by the National Potato Council (NPC) and the United States Potato Board (USPB), identifies and trains the next generation of industry leaders.

From Feb. 17-24, PILI participants traveled from potato growing regions across the country to attend eight days of industry training and professional development. This year's class kicked off in Grand Forks, N.D., where the class received an overview of the local and national potato industry, including some of the challenges and issues beyond the production sector.

NPC Executive Vice President and CEO John Keeling provided attendees with an overview of the industry's pressing public policy issues. USPB Chief Marketing Officer John Toasperm gave a market and consumer update and highlighted international export opportunities for potatoes and potato products. Participants toured Hoverson Farms and the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Potato Research Worksite and were able to attend an exciting University of North Dakota hockey game on their last night in Grand Forks.

Attendees then flew to Washington, D.C., and heard from public policy and communication experts speaking at NPC's Potato D.C. Fly-In. While in Washington, D.C., they were immersed in the legislative and regulatory priorities of the U.S. potato industry and practiced how to effectively deliver key messages to Congress. The program finished with a day of lobbying visits to offices on Capitol Hill, where participants joined their state grower delegations for the Fly-In to meet with members of Congress and advocate for industry priorities.

Bridgett Lake-Cheff of Lake Seed Inc. in Ronan, Mont., served as the group's Grower-Leader, after being elected to the position in 2015. "The PILI program has helped me grow within the industry, preparing me to become the best person and leader I can possibly be," said Cheff. At the conclusion of the event, the 2016 class elected Ryan Crane of Crane Brothers Farms in

Exeter, Maine, to serve as the 2017 Grower-Leader. The Institute is made possible each year through a major sponsorship from Syngenta.



Participants in the 2016 Potato Industry Leadership Institute: (front row, left to right): Greg Campbell, Grafton, N.D.; Bryan Fischer, Kalkaska, Mich.; Troy Sorenson, Alliance, Neb.; Toby Price, Kennewick, Wash.; Jordan Driscoll, Pocatello, Idaho; Katie Walchli, Hermiston, Ore.; (middle row, left to right) Rebecca Jones, Moses Lake, Wash.; Andy Schroeder, Antigo, Wis.; Jared Erickson, Grand Forks, N.D.; Tyler Thompson, Center, Colo.; Jaren Raybould, Saint Anthony, Idaho; Ryan Crane, Exeter, Maine (2017 Grower-Leader); Mike Kirsch, Madras, Ore.; Karl DeJonge, Manhattan, Mont.; (back row, left to right) Bridgett Lake-Cheff, Ronan, Mont. (2016 Grower-Leader); Ben Zechman, Minden, Neb.; Patrick Morris, Lansing, Mich.; Tanner Wahlen, Aberdeen, Idaho; Casey Park, Rexburg, Idaho; Brian Mahany, Arkport, N.Y.; Clay Allen, Pasco, Wash.; T.J. Hall, Hoople, N.D.; Travis Meacham, Moses Lake, Wash.

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The National Potato Council is the advocate for the economic well-being of U.S. potato growers on federal legislative, regulatory, environmental, and trade issues. NPC supports the U.S. potato industry by monitoring issues affecting the strength and viability of the potato industry, influencing regulators and legislators on issues crucial to the industry's long term success, ensuring fair market access for potatoes and potato products, and bringing the unique issues and interests of diverse growing regions in the U.S. together on a national level.

The mission of the United States Potato Board is to increase demand for potatoes and potato products through an integrated promotion program, thereby providing US producers with expanding markets for their production. For complete information about the programs, ROI results, resources and tools available to all members of the industry through the USPB, please visit www.uspotatoes.com.