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## CLASS OF 2013 Young And Smart Leaders On The Rise

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EXCLUSIVE



GEORGIA GROWN

INSERT



FLORAL BUSINESS

INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT LOOKS AT  
MULTIPLE FORMATS  
SUMMER MERCHANDISING  
NEW JERSEY PRODUCE  
HARMONS • STONE FRUIT  
CALIFORNIA BAJA TOMATOES  
GRAPES • DRIED PLUMS  
UNITED FRESH GALLERY

of, and passion for, produce is invigorating. She is such a genuine, intelligent and fearless person. Her innate characteristics make her a savvy seller and leader in the ag industry. Both Margaret and Tonya have taught me that passion, persistence, relationships and balance are key factors to success in the industry."

**April Ward, 35**  
**Communications Director**  
**California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA)**  
**Sacramento, CA**



Ward leads the communications team responsible for presenting the LGMA food safety program to the leafy greens industry's vast audience of regulators and buyers. She collaborates with fellow LGMA staffers, outside agencies and industry volunteer leaders on initiatives and is responsible for crafting all of the LGMA's communications efforts. Her skills and leadership have helped establish the LGMA's reputation as an innovative food-safety program that institutes healthy practices for farms in the leafy greens industry.

Ward manages the LGMA's emerging social marketing program and is an online advocate. She oversees the annual update of the LGMA's rapid response plan, manages the LGMA's strategic planning process, and coordinates LGMA's "Golden Checkmark" award program. Ward orchestrates media training for industry spokespeople and marketing efforts to buyers and customers. She also partners with LGMA's advertising and PR consultants to develop targeted and incisive advertising, direct mail, and Internet marketing campaigns. In 2012, she managed LGMA's first consumer-outreach program test in Canada.

To stay active with women who have similar interests, Ward is a member of California Women for Agriculture and an annual participant in industry charitable efforts like 5K runs.

Ward reveals how working with the California Leafy Greens industry is a real inspiration. "The LGMA was created in response to a crisis, but the individuals who built this organ-

ization handle themselves in the most respectable and inspiring manner," she says. "Every chance I get, I share with others the opportunities that lie ahead for hard workers within this important and inspirational industry."

Working as part of a small staff is both challenging and empowering. "We work together to make sure that everything gets done, however we often have to complete tasks that normally wouldn't fall under the responsibilities of our position," she explains. "There is a real sense of community within our organization and the whole California Leafy Greens industry."

In the coming year, Ward will be working to expand the LGMA's blossoming social networking program. "Online outreach presents unlimited opportunities and is an affordable way to share your message," she states. "I would also like to attain my master's degree in communications. Continuing education is a high priority for me and will enhance my career choices moving forward."

Working with LGMA board and committees—especially industry leadership—provided numerous mentors for her. "To see how they think and make decisions led me to grow as a professional," she says. "From day-one, Scott Horsfall, the organization's CEO, gave me the utmost respect and opportunity. Having a supervisor who is supportive and allows for career growth is really all that one can ask for, and I've found it in the produce industry working for the LGMA."

**David White, 31**  
**President & CEO**  
**Providence Produce Markets, Inc.**  
**Matthews, NC**



Over the past 10 years, White has steadily and aggressively built Charlotte, NC's foremost retail produce experience. With

signature road-side open-air markets, he created a distinctive brand for his customers and an exceptional work place for his employees. He started his company as a road-side produce stand in 2002. Though he had little startup money, he had a clear idea of the concept and a brand he wanted to

create. He took his only asset at the time (his car) and traded it in for an old refrigerated truck. His first location was built by his father, a friend and himself. During that first year, he started the company of Providence Produce Markets, Inc., and he worked hard to keep the concept simple: providing produce to the community and sourcing local when in season.

Since then, the company has grown into a much larger line of products and services. It currently has four retail locations and a warehouse to serve its retail outlets and wholesale customers. Its unique and simple farm-fresh style has created a strong following. White promoted change and helped amend the zoning laws in Charlotte, NC. These laws had previously restricted open-air produce markets, but now embraces and encourages these types of businesses in the city. He has also helped people and young entrepreneurs create businesses and successfully launch into the industry.

White believes strongly in giving back. "My community has always been so supportive of my business. I feel an obligation and passion when it comes to returning the favor," he says. "Providence Produce donates thousands of pounds of fruits and vegetables every year to those in need. We partner with philanthropic organizations and charitable causes to distribute to those who are less fortunate. We also sponsor community events, fundraisers, and make in-kind contributions to schools and camps."

He is motivated by the challenges created by the incredibly dynamic industry. "My dedicated team continuously works on new ways to do things, meeting new growers and working with new vendors," he states. "No day, week, or season is the same. I am most challenged by finding the products that no one else can, whether it is from a local farmer or a far-off region. The reward is bringing premium produce to the customer and creating the 'wow factor!'"

In the future, White aspires to expand his company's brand, quality standards and logistics. "We are not trying to be the next franchise hit or finding someone to help us open 100 new stores," he explains. "We are focused on the quality of what we are doing to

our customers' needs, listen to them and grow in the direction they steer us. I believe there are tremendous growth possibilities for small retailers and produce distributors like us. We don't worry about the big box retailers and mega food distributors of the world. Our local market share is small but, as I tell people, I would rather have a small market share and amazing growth potential than large market share and only trying to hold ground."

He names Mike Severt of Severt & Sons Produce in Columbia, SC, Todd Gates of VB Hook & Co. in Columbia, SC, and John Mackey of Whole Foods as particular influencers for his career. "Mr. Severt taught me hard work is not an option in the produce industry; it's a way of life," he shares. "Todd Gates displays strong professionalism and industry knowledge. John has taken a concept from small to huge. I admire how he has really put some strong values into the industry, subsequently passing them down to the employee, vendors and growers of that company."

**Adrian Zendejas, 38**  
**General Manager**  
**Desert Mist Farms**  
**Coachella, CA**



As GM at Desert Mist, a farming operation for Castroville-based Ocean Mist Farms, Zendejas manages over 3,400 crop

acres on 2,600 land acres for an operation of 22 field employees, two field supervisors and two office staff. He reviews budgets, farming agreements, planting schedules and monitors farm labor contractor, Valley Pride, with 35 field employees. Since he began working for Desert Mist, assets have doubled in size.

The son of migrant farm workers, Zendejas was the first in his family to earn a college education and eventually begin his farming education with Sea Mist Farms, another farming operation of Ocean Mist, in Castroville, CA. It all started with a college field trip to the Salinas Valley, where he met Ocean Mist's Ed Boutonnet and was eventually hired for summer work. From 1995 to 1997, he worked in various roles for Ocean Mist during