

# U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council Annual Report



2017–2018



## Chairman's Message

*G*reetings All, I hope this letter finds you all getting past the Winter in great shape. This has been another crazy ride. Warm Feb and a cold March. We here in NC have fared well through this weather. I hear my neighbors to the south have had some weather issues. We have been there, you all are in our prayers that the damage is minimal.

This past year was my first year as chairman of the USHBC. It was a busy eventful one. I feel I have learned a lot, I have a better understanding of just how much work there is in this organization.

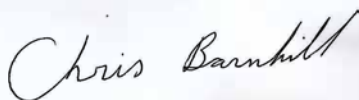
We should all be proud of our staff. It is a top-notch group of people. As we grow our staff with the addition of Vicki, I think we did a fine job with this addition. She is fitting in very well. She has a lot of energy to move the goal forward.

Much to our regret you all know Mark has plans to retire. I don't think we can ever express our thankfulness for what he has meant to this organization. He has been a part of us for so long he is family. Whoever replaces him has big shoes to fill. He has set the bar very high for them.

Most of you know Mark and myself were not able to be at the Fall 2017 meeting. The staff took the ball and ran with it. All the reports were it went great. Everything went smooth. Thank you staff for your hard work each and every day. When Mark was out you all showed how well you can do during difficult times. This also showed us where we could improve some of our procedures. THANKS again staff for your dedication to the USHBC and the NABC.

As we go forward in our industry, new challenges arise each year. This reminds us how important the USHBC and the NABC are to us. Between these organizations most of our situations can be addressed. I know in the past year some concerns have been brought forward that I think need to be looked at in depth. Hopefully these and other concerns can be addressed and resolved to everyone's satisfaction. I will help with these things all I can and be open to all suggestions. If there is anything I can help with please don't hesitate to contact me.

I pray this year is a smooth eventless profitable year for all. May GOD be glorified in all things.



Chris Barnhill

Chairman

U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council



### USHBC STRATEGIC PLAN CONTINUES TO EVOLVE TO ADDRESS INDUSTRY GOALS

Since the start of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) we have conducted strategic planning sessions and developed strategic plans to address industry goals and measure our progress. These goals have evolved over the years as our industry has grown and our attention has been directed to a changing marketplace and newly identified opportunities for our blueberries.

We have conducted four strategic planning sessions over the years and it is interesting to see how these plans have progressed. Our initial strategic plan back in 2003 listed the following as our strategic priorities:

- Build knowledge base on the market for blueberries
- Retain current and pursue new markets
- Enhance consumer perception of the health benefits of blueberries
- Minimize food safety vulnerability
- Initiate two-way grower communication

Our next plan in 2007 maintained and expanded upon the priorities of the previous plan with an added emphasis on building upon our health research studies and expanding efforts to encourage grower participation in the USHBC.

Strategic planning in 2012 added efforts to initiate activities that would increase the consumption of highbush blueberries in all the varied forms and settings in which they are offered, and to encourage the expansion of these forms and settings.

Over the years the USHBC has made significant progress in addressing these priorities and in adjusting goals and activities to match current market conditions. Last year we completed our fourth strategic planning session and have a new five year plan for 2018 to 2022 that has an increasing emphasis on developing international awareness and consumption of our blueberries, given our current and projected production trends.

Over the next five years our strategies are to:

- Build interest in, and promote usage of, highbush blueberries to target consumers, health professionals and priority business audiences (foodservice, schools, manufacturers and retailers) to increase demand
- Continue to build blueberry health halo status by expanding, focusing and communicating research efforts on important health benefits
- Facilitate U.S. highbush blueberry access and consumer demand in export markets
- Expand existing and seek out, explore and build new U.S. and international markets for food and non-food uses of processed blueberries
- Increase USHBC member engagement and support to improve USHBC results and industry cohesion

The great baseball pitcher Satchel Paige once said “Don’t look back. Something might be gaining on you.” The USHBC continues to look to the future and anticipate where we need to be as our industry grows, but at the same time we do look back at previous strategic goals and results to be sure we remain on the right track.

Over the next five years we will continue to monitor our progress and work to attain our overall mission as stated in our 2018 to 2022 strategic plan which is “to grow a healthy highbush blueberry industry and support our growers through promotions, research and education while increasing awareness and consumption”.

Wishing you a successful blueberry season.

Sincerely,



Mark Villata  
USHBC Executive Director



# USHBC Executive Officers



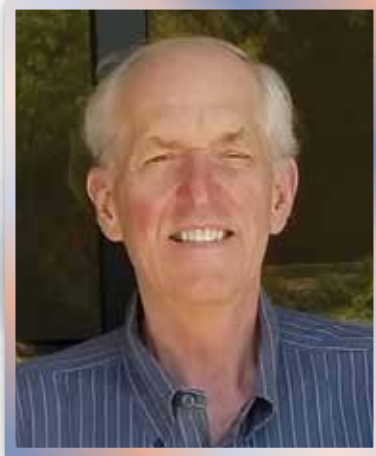
**Christopher Barnhill**  
Chairman, North Carolina



**Bill Braswell**  
Vice Chairman, Florida



**Pat Goin**  
Secretary, Indiana



**Mark Villata**  
Executive Director, California



**Mark Hurst**  
Treasurer, Oregon



**Art Galletta**  
Past Chairman,  
New Jersey



**Bill Steed**  
Member at Large, California

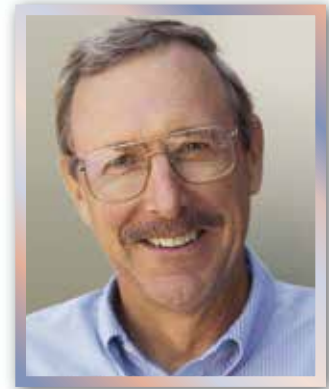
# U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

## USHBC Members and Alternates - 2018

CALIFORNIA:	Member - <b>William Steed</b>
	Alternate - <b>Young Kwun</b>
FLORIDA:	Member - <b>Brittany Lee</b>
	Alternate - <b>Janet Swilley</b>
GEORGIA:	Member - <b>John Bennett</b>
	Alternate -
MICHIGAN:	Member - <b>George Fritz, Jr.</b>
	Alternate - <b>Bob Carini</b>
NEW JERSEY:	Member - <b>Denny Doyle</b>
	Alternate -
NORTH CAROLINA:	Member - <b>Chris Barnhill</b>
	Alternate - <b>Neil Moore</b>
OREGON:	Member - <b>Steve Erickson</b>
	Alternate - <b>Doug Krahmer</b>
WASHINGTON:	Member - <b>Rob Dhaliwal</b>
	Alternate - <b>Bryan Sakuma</b>
REGION 1 (Western):	Member - <b>Mark Hurst</b>
	Alternate - <b>Verne Gingerich</b>
REGION 2 (Midwest):	Member - <b>Patricia Goin</b>
	Alternate - <b>Shelly Ann Hartmann</b>
REGION 3 (Northeast):	Member - <b>Art Galletta</b>
	Alternate - <b>Dave Arena</b>
REGION 4 (Southern):	Member - <b>Bill Braswell</b>
	Alternate - <b>Jerod Gross</b>
HANDLER:	Member - <b>Guy Cotton</b>
	Alternate - <b>Risa Bakker</b>
IMPORTER #1:	Member - <b>Francisco Allende</b>
	Alternate - <b>John Johnston</b>
IMPORTER #2:	Member - <b>Brian Bockock</b>
	Alternate - <b>Brian Caster</b>
IMPORTER #3:	Member - <b>Janice Honigberg</b>
	Alternate - <b>Andrew Maiman</b>
IMPORTER #4:	Member - <b>Bo Slack</b>
	Alternate - <b>Tom Bodtke</b>
EXPORTER 1 (Chile):	Member - <b>Jorge Andres Varela</b>
	Alternate - <b>Felipe Juillerat</b>
EXPORTER 2 (Canada):	Member - <b>Ray Biln</b>
	Alternate -
PUBLIC MEMBER:	Member - <b>Juan Silva</b>
	Alternate - <b>Amy Howell</b>

### Blueberries and Health- It's a marathon, not a sprint

The Health Research Committee continues its efforts to explore the benefits of blueberries. We are fortunate to be studying a very healthy berry! Almost 20 years ago, Dr. Ron Prior published his paper using an Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity or ORAC test to measure the antioxidant activity of various fruits and vegetables. He reported that blueberries were among the highest in antioxidant activity. The term “antioxidant” became closely associated with blueberries and consumption increased dramatically. The race was on! Our efforts to explore and share the results haven't diminished since that time, but now we have plenty of company. The media started describing blueberries as a superfruit and quickly other fruits jumped on the healthy bandwagon. It's easy to gain a lot of attention when you're the first one out of the gate and there are few competitors. It's a lot harder to keep that lead when there are suddenly many other foods competing for both the attention of the media as well as a share of the consumer's stomach. Now, more than ever, we are committed to supporting world-class, independent science, and leading the way with our blueberry health research program.



**Dave Brazelton**  
Chairman, USHBC  
Health Research  
Committee, Oregon

Nutrition is a field that evolves as we learn more about the link between diet and health. The ORAC test was important in highlighting that blueberries are high in antioxidants but it was a “test tube” type assay. Over the past 20 years, consumers and scientists are asking more questions about blueberries such as:

Are the beneficial health effects of blueberries due to its antioxidant activity or something else?

Are blueberries good for your brain? heart? gut? mouth?

Do some individuals need to eat more blueberries than other individuals to have the same beneficial health effect?

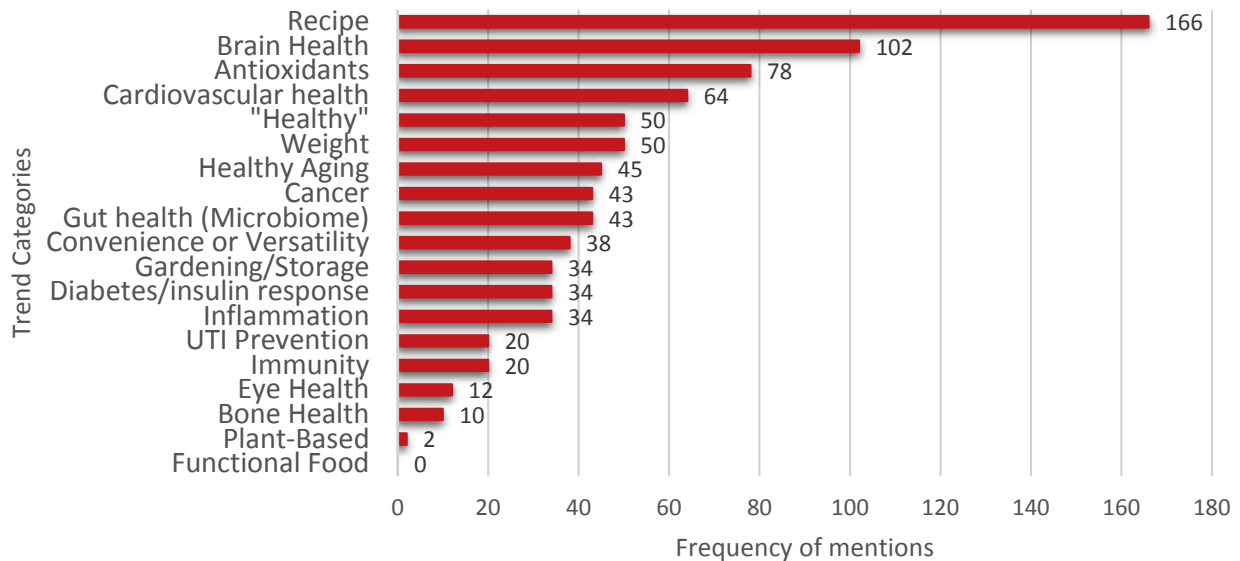
It worked in the test tube, but will there be the same effect in people?

In order to answer questions such as these, we may start with a “test tube” type of assay but we build on that with additional studies that provide necessary information to guide us toward the goal of conducting human clinical trials. These trials are expensive and can take several years to complete, but are necessary to answer questions about the health benefits of eating blueberries.

As we gain knowledge about the health benefits of blueberries, we realize that blueberries may have an effect over a wide range of areas. The USHBC research program funds studies that look at new areas where blueberries may have beneficial effects, but we have focused primarily on the health benefits of blueberries in the areas of: brain health, cardiovascular health, cancer, insulin sensitivity and gut health.

The association between blueberries and these health-related areas also happen to receive a great deal of attention in the media. This may be due, in part, to the publicity that USHBC funded studies receive after they are published. When you analyze all of the print and online consumer media articles that mention blueberries in 2017, you see that some of the articles are related to recipes and gardening, but the majority of the articles are about the association between blueberries and a health condition.

## Frequency of trend mentions in 2017 consumer media



### Number and topic of consumer media articles which mention blueberries

Sources:

- New Nutrition Business 2017 & 2018 “10 Key Trends in Food, Nutrition and Health” and other consumer health and food trend articles
- Google Trends estimating popularity of terms over time

The health-related topic that received the most attention was brain health. This past year there were three scientific articles published describing USHBC-funded studies that looked at the effect of blueberries on cognitive health. The USHBC is also providing frozen blueberries to the Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay (MIND) diet trial which is a 3-year study investigating whether diet can inhibit the development of cognitive decline with aging.

The Health Research Committee will continue to fund research studies that investigate the effect of blueberries in areas that are important to the consumer and the media. The research is more complex and takes longer as we move beyond antioxidants. But understanding human health and the link to healthy foods like blueberries isn't a fast sprint, it's a marathon! Your Council and the Health Research Committee are in it for the long haul.

#### ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

### Dietary blueberry improves cognition among older adults in a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial

Marshall G. Miller<sup>1</sup> · Derek A. Hamilton<sup>2</sup> · James A. Joseph<sup>3</sup> · Barbara Shukitt-Hale<sup>1</sup>

European Journal of Nutrition

### Enhanced neural activation with blueberry supplementation in mild cognitive impairment

Erin L. Boespflug<sup>1</sup>, James C. Blissen<sup>1</sup>, Jonathan A. Dudley<sup>1</sup>, Marcelle D. Shidler<sup>1</sup>, Wilhelmina Kalt<sup>2</sup>, Suzanne S. Summer<sup>3</sup>, Amanda L. Stein<sup>1</sup>, Amanda N. Stover<sup>1</sup>, Robert Krikorian<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neuroscience, University of Cincinnati Academic Health Center, Cincinnati, OH 45267-0559, USA, <sup>2</sup>Atlantic Food and Horticultural Research Centre, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Kentville, Nova Scotia B4N 1K5, Canada, <sup>3</sup>Clinical Translational Research Center, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, 3333 Burnet Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45229, USA

Nutritional Neuroscience

### Blueberry supplementation attenuates microglia activation and increases neuroplasticity in mice consuming a high-fat diet

Amanda N. Carey<sup>1</sup>, Kelsea R. Gildawie<sup>1</sup>, Abigail Rovnak<sup>2</sup>, Nopporn Thangthaeng<sup>1</sup>, Derek R. Fisher<sup>1</sup>, Barbara Shukitt-Hale<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Simmons College, Department of Psychology, Boston, MA, USA, <sup>2</sup>USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, Neuroscience and Aging Laboratory, Boston, MA, USA

Nutritional Neuroscience



### USHBC Good Practices Committee Report: “Practice What You Preach”

The mission of the USHBC Good Practices Committee is to support the highbush blueberry industry in earning and maintaining market confidence through good practices. Our committee continues to communicate best practices to growers to improve grower results and product quality. Following the old adage of “practice what you preach”, our committee has initiated a number of projects this past year to assist in achieving our goals.

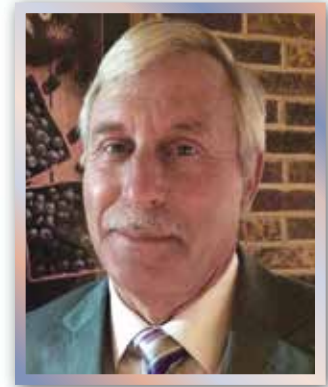
One of our objectives has been to maintain an updated issue response plan which includes a crisis information website that can be activated immediately upon notification of a health related issue. Internet is being monitored daily for references to blueberries that might indicate critical media coverage of or interest in blueberries. We continue media training of industry members and staff at USHBC meetings. Over 100 industry members have had on camera training to date and we now have one or more people trained as potential spokespersons in each major growing region.

Our committee is also in the final stages of producing a food safety leaflet which will be distributed to all industry members this year. This important reference document will provide growers with reminders on the importance of food safety and identifies key concerns that everyone in our industry needs to address. Handling and sanitation practices are detailed to help prevent contamination and foodborne illness. Food safety must be taken seriously and it is our responsibility as growers and marketers to have and enforce a food safety plan, provide the right facilities and infrastructure, and train our workers. Personal hygiene, water usage and field sanitation are three critical areas that must be addressed and are detailed in this new USHBC leaflet which will be printed in both English and Spanish language versions. Look for your copy of this leaflet to be sent to you in the months to come.

This year the committee also initiated its first symposium dealing with advancements in blueberry harvesting and handling as a means to educate our industry on current and future trends. We have formed a Blueberry Technology Subcommittee which presented its first symposium the day before the North American Blueberry Council and U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council Spring Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah on February 27, 2018.

This symposium was a very successful event with 127 registered members attending. The event was also made available via live streaming to 31 additional viewers across five different countries. Topics covered included trends and developments in mechanical harvesting of fresh blueberries with presentations by representatives from major harvesting companies; optical sorting for fresh pack; updates on ag technology and autonomous farming equipment; a discussion of sensing technology for crop estimating and sensing of defects; and a discussion of future trends. The goal of this and future events is to continue to introduce the industry to innovation and technology for future solutions for the blueberry industry. For those who were not able to attend, a video of the event with each speaker’s presentation is posted at: [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/aaytorhqgiibgjs/AAAIKmXYMNL\\_u\\_MORFOpCipia?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/aaytorhqgiibgjs/AAAIKmXYMNL_u_MORFOpCipia?dl=0).

The Good Practices Committee will continue to offer this type of information and service to our industry as we all work to “practice what we preach” and continue to supply a quality product to our consumers. We thank you for your support.



**Denny Doyle, Chairman  
USHBC Good Practices  
Committee, New Jersey**

### New Orleans in the fall...

This fall the US Highbush Blueberry Council will be meeting in the Birthplace of Jazz... Our Industry Relations Committee is committed to grower engagement and through this we've created the new **Blueberry Leadership Program (formally the Ambassador Program)** with a stronger emphasis on the future leaders of the blueberry industry. **This program and others below enhance the Council encouraging grower involvement with representation from all ages and diversity.**

As blueberry supply throughout America increases it is more important than ever for you to stay connected with the blueberry industry. The Industry Relations Committee is tasked with informing and educating the industry through regional, state and commission leaders but only you can make a difference.

We need your support to update the USHBC contact information by sending your information (Name, Address, Email, Phone) to: [info@blueberry.org](mailto:info@blueberry.org), if you cannot be reached you'll be the last to know.

In 2018, our committee continues to expand industry outreach activities with these great programs:

- Blueberry Industry Playbook with new video focusing on USHBC activities and successes, PowerPoint and materials for regional and state representatives to engage our US growers.
- "Positively BLUETIFUL NEWS" e-newsletter has a fresh look and delivers USHBC research, promotion and activity updates through improved functionality across all devices.
- Website redesign and consolidation bringing our platform into the 21st century.
- Amerilert free Emergency Alert System updating your teams on crisis issues.

New exciting programs are on the horizon with hopes of increased consumption, consumer demand and healthy options -- "We all live on a Big Blue world".

The New Blueberry Leadership Program will continue to generate awareness and educate industry members on the functions and activities of the USHBC. Through the Blueberry Leadership Program industry members are invited to attend and observe USHBC and North American Blueberry Council (NABC) meetings and gain a better appreciation of these programs, which will hopefully lead to their consideration of future participation. Most importantly this educational program is intended to bring new individuals from throughout the industry (both domestic and foreign) into the Council and is funded by both the USHBC and NABC. The Blueberry Leadership Program will always prioritize the sponsoring of a diverse base, including our next generation of blueberry growers and marketers with the goal of promoting their future industry participation. The USHBC Industry Relations Committee will solicit the help of USHBC, NABC and industry members from the specific region to identify possible Nominees from their regions.

Lastly, I wanted to say that coming to a USHBC event is so rewarding on an academic and social networking level with all the key leaders throughout the US. You cannot buy this type of education. Please get involved or be another statistic.

Please join us for a future event and update your contact information today!



**Bo Slack**  
Chairman, USHBC  
Industry Relations  
Committee, Washington

## Fueling the Passion for Blueberries

Our little blue dynamos secured the position as consumers' top berry in 2017, with 75% of Americans on the path to purchase. That represents a 10% increase over 2013 – and demonstrates that consumers are demanding blueberries now more than ever before (USHBC U&A 2017). These results are no coincidence. Promotional programs from the USHBC create an ecosystem of positive blueberry messages that surround and influence consumers, health and foodservice professionals, day in and day out.



The ecosystem of blueberry promotion illustrates the all-encompassing effect the USHBC's programs have on consumers.

In late 2016, the USHBC fielded research to identify the consumers that would offer the greatest opportunity for increasing consumption over the coming years. In past years, research guided us to prioritize women and moms, ages 25-44, for our consumer-oriented promotions. That target audience was a smart choice for many years – and USHBC efforts made a distinct impact. The late 2016 “opportunity assessment” showed that we succeeded in converting many women and moms in this age group to “heavy blueberry users.” They consume the most blueberries out of all Americans, so while it’s critical to keep them engaged, they’ve now become a secondary target for us. Moderate blueberry users, also known as “fruit lovers,” now hold the primary position, and they became the focus of many USHBC programs in 2017 (SMS Opportunity Assessment 2016).

At a high level, moderate blueberry users:

- Consume 7.6 cups of fresh blueberries per year on average and offer the greatest potential for increasing their blueberry consumption
- Love fruit and know that it’s good for them
- Love blueberries because of how they taste

## Communications and Promotions



Moderate blueberry users include men and women of all ages, incomes and backgrounds, united by their attitudes and behaviors around food.

- Like simple, easy-to-make recipes
- Use digital tools for finding recipe ideas and meal planning
- Want to eat healthy but sometimes slip up

In addition to great taste, blueberries offer nutrition, variety and convenience, points that resonate with moderate blueberry users. Specifically, they are synonymous with health, taste great in many kinds of meals and require no pitting, peeling or chopping, meaning that they're simple right off the bush (and out of the bag). As we grab consumers' attention with these selling points, health and foodservice professionals also take notice, and further the consumption cycle by endorsing blueberries and including more blueberry items on menus.

To drive further demand for blueberries in the health and foodservice arenas, we can cite compelling consumer data:

- 52% say blueberries make menu items more appealing
- 65% perceive menu items or snacks with blueberries as healthier or better for them than those without
- 63% say they're very likely to purchase food products that have a *Made with Real Blueberries* seal (USHBC U&A 2017)

We worked with decision-makers who feed millions at chain restaurants and K-12 schools, providing personalized education and concepts to help get more blueberries onto more menus. We also continued our outreach to health professionals, creating allies to help us expand the health halo that already exists around blueberries.

USHBC experienced many successes in 2017, reaching moderate and heavy blueberry users, as well as the media outlets, chefs, health professionals and social media personalities influencing their food choices. These efforts will continue in 2018, growing and evolving to generate demand that supports blueberry businesses far and wide.

## Non-Stop Consumer Marketing Machine

### Expanding Our Influencer Strategy

There's no escaping it: social media is the place to be. Today, about 7 of every 10 Americans use social media to connect with one another, engage with news content, share information and entertain themselves (Pew Research 2018). Personal media *has become* mainstream media to our USHBC target audience, and social media sites like Facebook and Instagram are part of our consumers' daily routine.

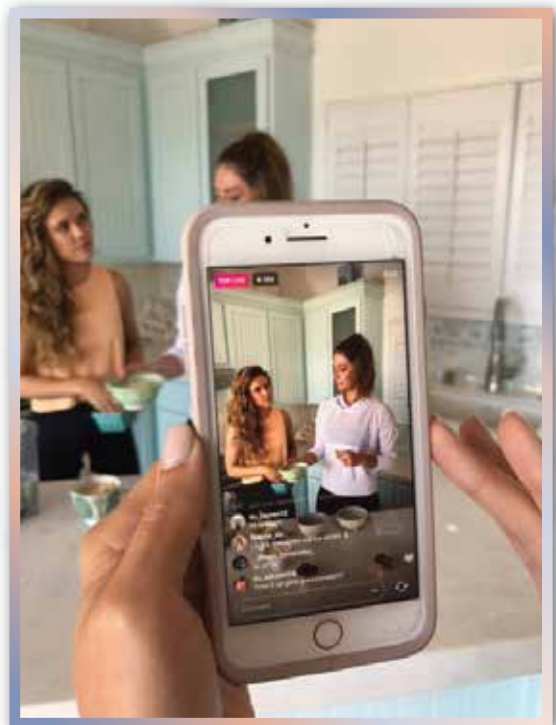
Identifying the new target audience of moderate users in late 2016 required a shift from our historical media relations approach to a new, integrated approach featuring many expert voices. These voices included RDs and "Blue Crew" ambassadors, like Jess and Wendy from Food Heaven Made Easy, as well as food, fitness and lifestyle bloggers and personalities like the Tone It Up Girls. Partnering with several influencers with varying areas of subject matter expertise made us nimble, appealing to our moderate users' diverse set of interests.

The USHBC's health, food, fitness and lifestyle influencers contributed to blueberry-centric articles in top-tier mainstream media like Food Network Magazine, SheKnows, Shape and Men's Fitness. Simultaneously, these well-known influencers served up delicious new blueberry recipes, health tips and even holiday survival guides to their social media followers. Their participation made our consumer promotions more authentic and accessible to our moderate user audience. For example, when our target audience sees their favorite Instagram fitness experts or gurus showing them how to make a mouthwatering post-workout blueberry smoothie bowl, they tune in – and pick up a carton of blueberries to try it out. This integrated, multi-channel approach to influencer partnerships ensured that we were telling blueberries' story whenever and wherever our moderate user wanted to see, hear or interact with it.

And the partnerships went beyond big-name influencers. In 2017, the USHBC began working with micro-influencers, everyday blueberry fans who engage deeply and regularly with their followers on social media. These micro-influencers support our seasonal campaigns with real-life, blueberry-focused posts, attracting tens of thousands of likes, comments and shares on social media. Harnessing the popularity of a variety of social media influencers – from top-tier influencers like Tone It Up to everyday blueberry fans and 100+ micro-influencers – took our consumer campaigns to a whole new level in 2017.



Micro-influencers, or everyday blueberry fans who have engaged followers on social media, were tapped to spread the word about seasonal promotional campaigns with real-life, blueberry-focused posts.



The USHBC rallied new blueberry ambassadors, like fitness gurus the Tone It Up Girls, to influence the moderate user audience and position blueberries as a delicious, worthwhile purchase.

## Activating Food Lovers on the Web

How do consumers today use the web? Well, for pretty much everything – and definitely to research, connect and communicate. That holds true for our target audience, moderate blueberry users, as well. They rely heavily on digital tools for recipe ideas and meal planning, making it critical for blueberries to have a presence on the web. What's more, it's critical to have a website that appeals to those exact consumers we're trying to reach.

After several years of making significant investments in website content and functionality, the USHBC scaled back the development of new content and features in 2017. Instead, we focused on activities to deliver existing content to more people. We used the time to monitor USHBC's performance online against industry benchmarks provided by Google. The ability to measure performance was particularly important, knowing that we might need to shift our efforts as the year progressed to better serve our new target audience.

We researched current Google searches involving blueberries as well as other general search queries to test their ability to reach more "fruit lovers" via Google AdWords and search engine optimization. We kept a watchful eye on Google Analytics to understand consumers' preferred areas of content and their tendencies for leaving or continuing their exploration of the website. We also continued our email marketing efforts, reaching the USHBC's existing list of 13,000+ blueberry fans with content that fuels idea sharing and purchase intent – recipes.

- Our activities drove significant results across channels:
- 750,000 website visits, a 7% increase over 2016
- 41% increase in site visits via Google AdWords over 2016, resulting from improved copy and ad bidding spurred by 2016 key learnings and 2017 research

62% of email subscribers said that USHBC emails have prompted them to use more blueberries (USHBC email survey 2017)

The USHBC is carrying these and other activities into 2018. In the months ahead, we will use our key learnings to make website enhancements that help capture and keep the attention of more moderate blueberry users. These efforts are a top priority, as web interactions are prime predictors of purchase in today's digital world.



LittleBlueDynamos.com is an entire connection strategy involving the creation and promotion of compelling content (recipes, videos, infographics, images) that spurs recipe trial, idea sharing, blueberry email subscriptions and repeat visits to the USHBC's online library of blueberry inspiration.

## Seasonal Campaigns

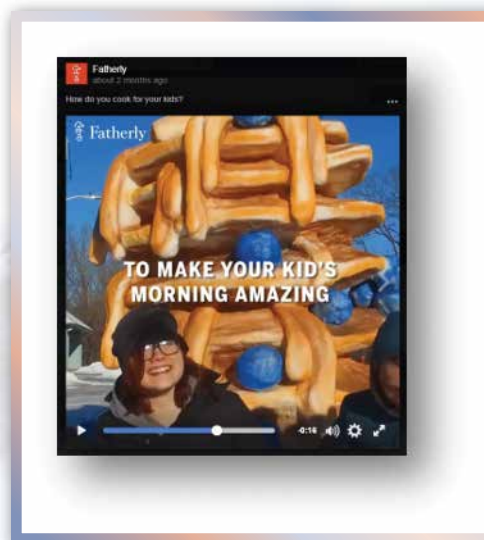
### *Winter Fresh, Summer Somewhere*

For much of the country, January and February bring cold, snowy weather that has warm weather lovers dreaming of summer days. The USHBC took this opportunity to educate blueberry lovers and celebrate the fact that even in these long winter months, consumers don't have to give up all their summertime pleasures – like juicy, fresh blueberries.

Winter Fresh, Summer Somewhere took a fun, humorous approach to driving demand and encouraging sales among a specific subset of our consumer group – millennial moms and dads. The USHBC created relatable videos and storylines highlighting the fact that fresh blueberries are available year-round. We also tapped Fatherly, the top millennial dad website, to create a social media-friendly video for the campaign that ultimately reached half a million dads.

The campaign reached billions of consumers with creative video advertisements, story placements with media outlets important to our target audience, and partnerships with parenting influencers. In total, the campaign generated notable results:

- 2.2 million video ad views
- 1.8 billion people reached through story placements
- 500,000 video views on social media



Creative and humorous videos targeting millennial parents helped increase fresh blueberry sales in January and February 2017.

## Goodness Frozen

In 2016, the USHBC successfully launched its first-ever campaign dedicated to promoting frozen blueberries. In 2017, the USHBC continued its focus on frozen by extending Goodness Frozen into spring and summer months to show consumers how blueberries' goodness – in terms of health benefits, flavor and convenience – can contribute to life's goodness, any time of year.

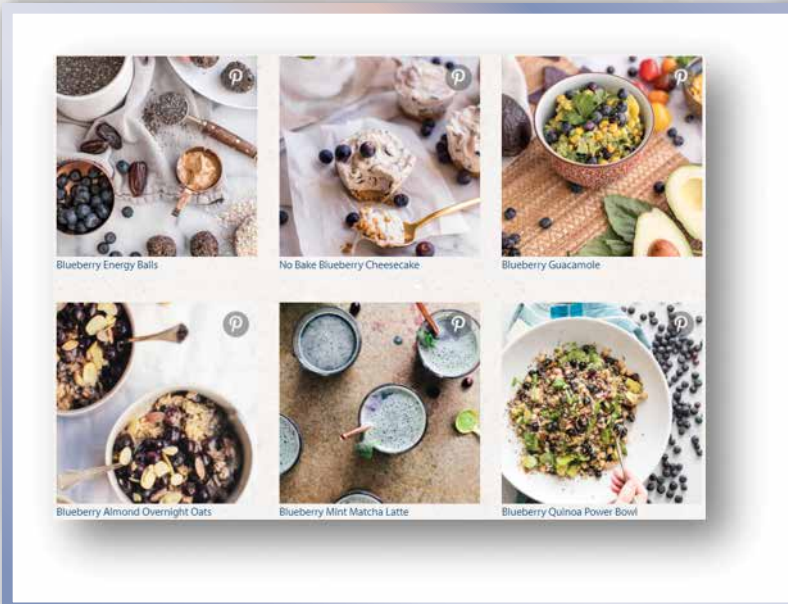
In addition to sharing feel-good, family-oriented online videos capturing the essence of blueberries' goodness, the campaign sought to connect with health-conscious consumers. The USHBC partnered with food bloggers to develop simple, tasty recipes to help them meet their goals. We also sponsored frozen blueberry content on influencer sites, such as the blog associated with MyFitnessPal, a popular health- and fitness-tracking app.

The campaign drove:

- 1.3 million video views by parents and fruit lovers
- 89,000 consumer interactions with new online recipe content
- 110,000 views of frozen blueberry content on the MyFitnessPal blog



Goodness Frozen videos were viewed by 1.3 million parents and fruit lovers in the spring of 2017.



The Council partnered with foodie influencers to develop new frozen blueberry recipes to appeal to health-conscious consumers looking for simple, tasty ways to meet their health and fitness goals.



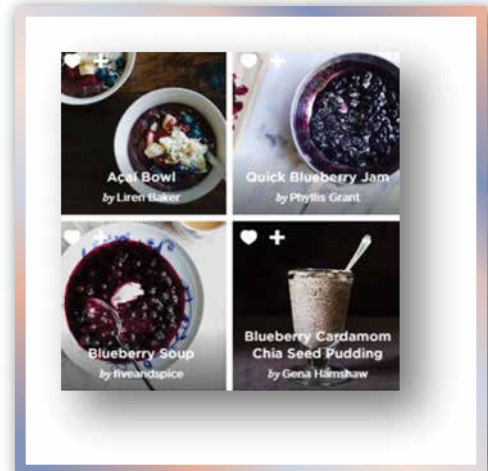
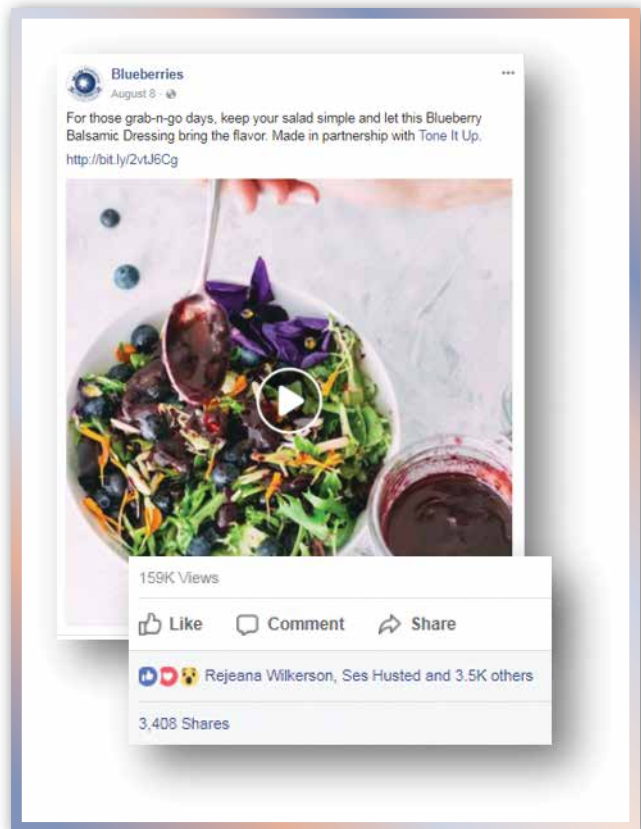
## The Blueberry Life

Blueberries go hand in hand with summertime. So, the challenge for blueberries in the summer months is less about how we get consumers to consider blueberries, and more about how we get them to buy *as many blueberries as possible*.

This challenge fit perfectly with the USHBC's new target audience of moderate users, who love fruit and look to online influencers for recipe inspiration and guidance on health. Far from perfect, they slip up on their latest "meal plan" so they're on the lookout for a few trusted advisors to point them in the right direction. And convenience is big – they're more likely to toss fresh blueberries into a grab n' yogurt than turn on their oven.

That's when a "carton a week" was born – the Council's call to action for the Blueberry Life summer campaign. It gave these consumers a simple solution they could grab onto and continue well past the summer. And the USHBC knew exactly where to start rolling this out – with the Tone It Up girls, whose tight-knit online community of 3.5 million followers was built on encouraging healthy eating and the idea that nobody's perfect. Together, we launched "the Blueberry Life" on [toneitup.com](http://toneitup.com) and their social channels. It even involved these influencers taking over the USHBC Instagram account for a day to show our followers how they live "The Blueberry Life."

The campaign also included an element to keep our "heavy users" engaged, excited and creating content that trickled down to influence moderate users. The USHBC partnered with *the* most influential foodie website, Food52, to roll out a "Blueberry Week" full of sharable recipe videos, articles and a recipe contest to engage that audience.



An integrated campaign encouraged millions of consumers to try blueberries in new ways.

## Communications and Promotions

By the end of the summer, the Blueberry Life campaign reached millions of consumers:

- Nearly 58 million media impressions with Health, Shape and Teen Vogue, just to name a few
- 1.2 million followers encouraged to meet the carton-a-week challenge by The Tone It Up girls



Fitness influencers the Tone It Up Girls appeared on Shape's Instagram account to talk about blueberries and how they fit into a healthy diet.



Relatable social media visuals called “memes” were shared on the USHBC’s social media pages, encouraging follower engagement and challenging followers to eat blueberries at the rate of a carton a week.

## Blueberry Break

It's no secret that the holidays can be tough: hosting and attending gatherings, traveling, gifting and, of course, trying not to eat every tempting treat in sight. Our target audience – the moderate user – is bound to suffer from a little festive stress. Knowing that increased blueberry demand is essential to maintaining market balance, we used our 2017 holiday campaign to encourage moderate users to take a “blueberry break” to stay fresh and energized in the madness of the holiday season.

The quick, two-week holiday campaign driving blueberry consumption during South America's peak season consisted of:

- A survey about common holiday stressors, positioning blueberries as the solution
- A social media influencer partnership, inspiring moderate users to take a #BlueberryBreak
- Humorous and relatable USHBC social media posts

We found that our relatable, lifestyle-driven approach cut through the clutter of the stereotypical recipe-driven campaigns that are common this time of year. The #BlueberryBreak program led to:

- An 11% increase in Instagram followers (unusually high for a two-week period)
- 198,000 consumer engagements on social media (likes, shares and comments)
- 5.7 million moderate users reached through influencer social media and blog posts
- 1.1 billion potential moderate users reached through story placements in targeted media outlets

The positive response to this campaign supported our ongoing mission to make blueberries a staple of consumer diets and lifestyles, no matter the season.



Relatable, lifestyle-driven USHBC social media posts drove hundreds of thousands of likes, comments and shares during the holiday season.

## Health Professional Programs

### *Breaking Through the Clutter*

We know that consumers today are inundated with a dizzying array of messages. That's a concern when it comes to nutrition and health, especially given the number of conflicting opinions coming from less-than-credible sources. In partnership with several credible health professionals, the USHBC has positioned blueberries as a delicious and versatile, nutrient-dense food, that supports a healthy lifestyle – and in ways that cut through the marketing clutter. To communicate our science-based health information to consumers, we engage registered dietitians, who consumers have cited as one of the most trusted sources of information on what foods to eat (IFIC Foundation's 2017 Food & Health Survey). This has helped drive consumers to rate blueberries as their top preferred berry (USHBC U&A 2017).

In 2017, the Council enlisted a group of health professional ambassadors and named them the “Blue Crew.” In their ambassador role, they connected with moderate users online and shared messaging on blueberry health, taste, and USHBC-funded research studies. We pitched the Blue Crew to media outlets, offering them as subject matter experts on a number of seasonal topics. The Blue Crew also created original, healthful recipes highlighting fresh and frozen blueberries, and promoted the recipes on their digital channels.

The Blue Crew's efforts led to:

- 24 story placements in top-tier media, including ABCnews.com, Foxnews.com and Readers Digest
- 64.8 million media impressions
- 20,000+ consumer engagements related to the recipes (likes, shares and comments) on social media

The collage consists of three distinct parts. The leftmost part is a screenshot of a Fox News Health website article. The article title is "Foods to beat inflammation" and the sub-headline is "Dietitian details proper portions to boost brain health". It includes the "EYEWITNESS NEWS abc 7" logo. The middle part is a graphic titled "BLUE CREW MEDIA PLACEMENTS" which displays "24 Media Placements" and "64.8 MILLION Media Impressions". It features photos of two women and a man, along with a "news @ generation" logo. The rightmost part is a screenshot of a Readers Digest article titled "BETTER The Dos and Don'ts of Cheat Meals, According to Nutrition Experts".

In 2017, the USHBC's Blue Crew members landed 24 health-related media stories, including key, “top-tier” placements in ABCnews.com, Foxnews.com and Readers Digest.

## Communications and Promotions

The USHBC also continued its work with retail dietitians in 2017, cultivating partnerships with 30 dietitians that resulted in 38 retail events reaching approximately 3,500 shoppers.

We also ramped up our efforts online in conjunction with the USHBC's presence at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE®) in Chicago. We connected with thousands of registered dietitians, both in person at the event, as well as online through an Instagram food styling contest, targeted advertisements and social media posts from Blue Crew members. For the first time, the USHBC hosted an invite-only, blueberry-themed breakfast for 21 influential media RD-influencers to learn about the MIND diet clinical trial. The breakfast was significant because the USHBC has donated frozen blueberries to the large multi-center clinical trial to test the effects of the MIND diet, which includes berries, on brain health.

In the end, the numbers showed how maximizing the Council's presence online helped drive "offline" results at the conference. Results included:

- 5,500 social media engagements
- 300+ new Twitter followers
- 2,000 recipe samples handed out, featuring fresh, frozen and freeze-dried blueberries
- 3,000 pieces of USHBC branded collateral given to attendees



The USHBC team, including USHBC member Karen Avenilis of Thomas Creek Farms, connected one-on-one with thousands of health professionals at FNCE and passed out recipe samples to help persuade them to recommend blueberries (of all forms) to their clientele.

# Communications and Promotions

## Foodservice Programs

### *Giving Menus a Blueberry Boost*

You can bet we have our eye on bulk sales, too. The USHBC encourages the use of more blueberries on chain restaurant menus using a two-part approach. Consumer promotions drive demand that prompts the restaurants to feature more blueberries, while foodservice promotions educate and inspire chefs about the versatility and culinary benefits of blueberries on menus. Influencing foodservice operator decisions can have a big impact on high-volume blueberry purchases, as foodservice offerings reach millions and millions of consumers each year and play a role in influencing purchases at retail.

In recent years, the Council has interacted with, educated and partnered with decision-makers collectively responsible for tens of thousands of restaurant operations. Over the years, the Council has inspired several blueberry menu items, including limited time offers and permanent offerings. Examples from recent years include:

- Wendy's Blueberry Pineapple FruiTera Chiller
- Disney: The World of Avatar's Blueberry Cream Cheese Mousse dessert
- Tropical Smoothie Café's Blueberry Truffle Smoothie
- McAlister's Deli's Pecan Berry Salad
- BJ's Restaurant's Kale, Roasted Brussels Sprouts & Blueberry Salad
- Huddle House's Blueberry Pancakes
- Sizzler's two seasonal summer salads featuring blueberries, plus their fall blueberry lemonade (limited time offer)
- LYFE Kitchen's Blueberry Budino Chia Pudding

Media coverage and digital marketing have encouraged further inclusion of blueberries on menus, with foodservice media placements reaching nearly 3 million sets of eyes in the foodservice industry and digital marketing in top-tier industry publications reaching another +1.29 million foodservice professionals in 2017.



The 2017 Blueberry Culinary Deep Dive at The Culinary Institute of America – 95% of operators reported an increased likelihood to increase their use of blueberries on menus post-program.

# Communications and Promotions



During the Blueberry Culinary Deep Dive, each operator attended a one-on-one meeting to taste personalized blueberry menu concepts designed for their operation and menu strategy.



Behind-the-scenes look at the personalized blueberry menu concepts presented during the one-on-one meetings at the Blueberry Culinary Deep Dive.



In 2017, 27 foodservice media placements reaching nearly 3 million readers supported the USHBC's goal of reaching more foodservice decision-makers with influential selling points in the channels they look to for industry trends and inspiration.

### Energizing School Lunch

We're here to show school nutrition professionals the advantages and versatility of blueberries, helping inspire them to make blueberries a core part of school menus. More blueberries on school menus means more volume sold, but it also means that we're helping raise the next generation of blueberry lovers. We're not just boosting sales today – we're laying the foundation for a lifetime of blueberry purchases.

The USHBC targets communications to these school nutrition pros positioning blueberries as an ideal ingredient and educating them about the affordability and year-round availability of frozen blueberries through the USDA Foods Available List. We highlight blueberries' low-labor and zero waste benefits that are key for schools seeking ingredients that appeal to kids, but also deliver ease, convenience, health benefits and culinary versatility across the menu. It's a tall order, but we're showing these professionals that blueberries can deliver.

In 2017, the USHBC took 15 school nutrition professionals from influential, high-volume school districts to The Culinary Institute of America in San Antonio, TX, for a multi-day blueberry immersion program. These chefs, who collectively have the potential to reach nearly 1.4 million students per day, learned the culinary versatility and advantages of adding blueberries to their school menus. Post-event, 92% of attendees reported increased intent to purchase more blueberries for their schools' use.



Participants in the blueberry immersion program collectively reached nearly 1.4 million students per day – a big deal considering that 95.5% became blueberry advocates during the program.



# Communications and Promotions

We also turned to digital channels for engaging and influencing these professionals, focusing on activities with the School Nutrition Association (SNA). The USHBC launched a digital campaign with SNA SmartBrief, reaching more than 22,000 school foodservice professionals with blueberries' selling points. In addition, we partnered with SNA to host an educational webinar for 400+ school foodservice professionals that took a deeper dive into the benefits and process of buying blueberries for school menus. The webinar facilitated two-way dialogue, allowing us to address individual questions, ideas and uncertainties in a way that benefitted all.

The webinar moved the needle for participants.

- 94.7% of school foodservice survey respondents said they're more likely to serve blueberries to students
- 96% are more likely to serve more blueberries in new, different ways across school menus



100% of participants reported increased awareness of blueberries as a versatile ingredient that can be cross-utilized across meal parts.

**SNA SmartBrief**  
from the School Nutrition Association

**SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION**

**blueberries**  
Little Blue Dynamos®

**Yum Alert: Savory Blueberry Pizza**  
Who doesn't love pizza? Adding blueberries to a familiar favorite will help boost students' fruit intake while satisfying cravings. One slice of our [Savory Blueberry Pizza](#) will help meet their daily nutrition needs - protein, fruit, veggies, dairy & grains. Visit our website for more [kid-friendly blueberry recipes](#) that'll please the pickiest of eaters!

**Yum Alert: Chicken Tender & Blueberry Wrap**  
Schools need tasty, nutritious items kids will love. A little change like adding blueberries to menus can excite students to eat more foods meeting USDA standards. Cafeteria pleaser? Our [Chicken Tender & Blueberry Wrap](#) uses [oven-roasted blueberries](#) to give the familiar favorite a delicious surprise. Visit our site for more [kid-friendly recipes!](#)

Media and digital communications garnered thousands of views of the blueberry school foodservice website.

## Harnessing Kid Power

We know that kids and parents play a large role in adding more blueberries to school menus. Inviting kids into the food conversation is one way to increase their fruit consumption. We know if kids are asking for blueberries, then parents will purchase. And if parents request blueberries, schools will serve them!

In 2017, the USHBC harnessed kid power by partnering with 400 schools to deliver blueberry nutrition, recipes and fun activities to 100,000 American households. The program was a huge success, with nearly 70% of parents reporting blueberries will be top of mind during their next grocery store visit, and close to 60% of schools saying they'll consider serving blueberries to students as a result of this program.

**MORE**  
FUN IN YOUR LUNCH

What do you get when 371 blueberries try to go through the door at the same time?  
Blueberry jam!

What's blue and goes up and down?  
A blueberry in an elevator.

Enjoy the Blueberries

blueberries  
little blue dynamos

Don't forget me in your lunch bag!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- Native Americans called blueberries "star berries" because they have a star shape on the top.
- Blueberries have been around for 13,000 years.
- There's no such thing as blueberry season. Fresh blueberries are available year-round!

70% of parents said their kids asked them to purchase blueberries after the USHBC's in-school promotion.

blueberries  
little blue dynamos

**Blueberries -**  
Nature's Little Blue Dynamos

Little Changes Can Make a Big Impact

Pick me! Pick me! Don't let my miniature size fool you - I am proof that, when it comes to flavor and health benefits, good things do come in small packages.

One little change, like adding a handful of rdy-pdy berries like me to your family's breakfast or lunchbox, will add a burst of flavor to your day. From snacks to supper, there are tons of fun ways to enjoy blueberries 365 days a year - fresh or frozen!

Plus, we're delicious and a good source of fiber. Keep fresh or frozen blueberries on your grocery list, and we'll help your kids meet their daily nutritional requirements.

Smiles,  
Little Blue Dynamos

1 cup of blueberries equals 80 calories and virtually no fat

1 serving of fresh blueberries equals 25% of your daily Vitamin C requirement!

Good source of fiber!

Blueberries are frozen at the peak of freshness, oftentimes at the farm

Life is busy! Find simple snack and activity ideas for the whole family at [littlebluedynamos.com](http://littlebluedynamos.com).

Following the USHBC's in-school promotion, 83% of parents said they would want their school's cafeteria to serve blueberries.

## Fueling Your Promotions

Rising to the top spot as consumers' top berry is no small feat! As an industry, we created and experienced many promotional successes to help us get here. In fact, the consumers we targeted from 2011-2016 are now the segment consuming the most blueberries (SMS Opportunity Assessment 2016). Efforts with this audience were so successful that we can now focus on a new crop of consumers – fruit-loving moderate users. Demand is on the rise because of our ongoing efforts with these consumers, as well as health professionals and foodservice decision-makers, and more people are primed to buy blueberries now than ever before (USHBC U&A 2017).

The USHBC will continue its efforts to better the industry, helping businesses thrive by making blueberries a staple of consumer diets and lifestyles. We encourage all USHBC members to utilize our library of recipes, recipe cards, ads, posters, magnets and more to help reach and influence customers near you.

Follow blueberries on all digital channels and seek opportunities to utilize and re-post our professionally developed content:

- [LittleBlueDynamos.com](http://LittleBlueDynamos.com)
- [Facebook.com/littlebluedynamos](https://Facebook.com/littlebluedynamos)
- [Instagram.com/littlebluedynamos](https://Instagram.com/littlebluedynamos)
- [Pinterest.com/blueberrylife](https://Pinterest.com/blueberrylife)
- [YouTube.com/littlebluedynamos](https://YouTube.com/littlebluedynamos)
- [Twitter.com/blueberry411](https://Twitter.com/blueberry411)

Learn about the latest industry updates and USHBC initiatives via Positively Bluetiful News (formally the Blues Brief) and through industry publications, including the Packer, Produce Business, Produce News, FreshPlaza and more. For marketing research and resources, media training or guidance on good management practices, please contact the USHBC office.



Contact the USHBC for recipe cards and other easy-to-use marketing tools developed to help drive consumption near you.



Produce industry publications have taken notice of the blueberry industry's successes over the past year – in fact, USHBC and our promotions were featured in 50 articles in 2017! Keep a look out for future updates in prominent industry outlets over the coming months, and contact us about receiving ongoing member updates to your email via Positively Bluetiful News.



**Awards Presented to  
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council in 2017 and 2018**

**Produce Business Marketing Excellence Awards:**  
Winter Fresh, Summer Somewhere

**PRSA Silver Anvil and Award of Excellence:**  
Goodness Frozen

**New York PRSA Big Apple Awards:**  
Goodness Frozen

**Virginia PR Award of Excellence:**  
Bite Size Summer

**PRSA-NCC (D.C.) Thoth  
Award of Excellence Award:**  
Goodness Frozen

## Food Tech 2017: Here is what we do

This year marks the 29th year that myself and small company have worked for the highbush blueberry industry. I first started with the voluntary Cultivated Blueberry Group (CBG) and worked on campaign to establish highbush blueberries in the ingredient side of the business. At that time, we were considered the “fresh guys.” Highbush blueberries powered up, and our food technology campaign was integrated into the North American Blueberry Council (NABC). Initially the NABC included both highbush and lowbush, and after the cousins parted ways the NABC began efforts to expand processed blueberry use in the US food industry. When the US Highbush Blueberry Council began in 2000 – Blueberry FoodTech was a major part of the organization’s marketing mix.

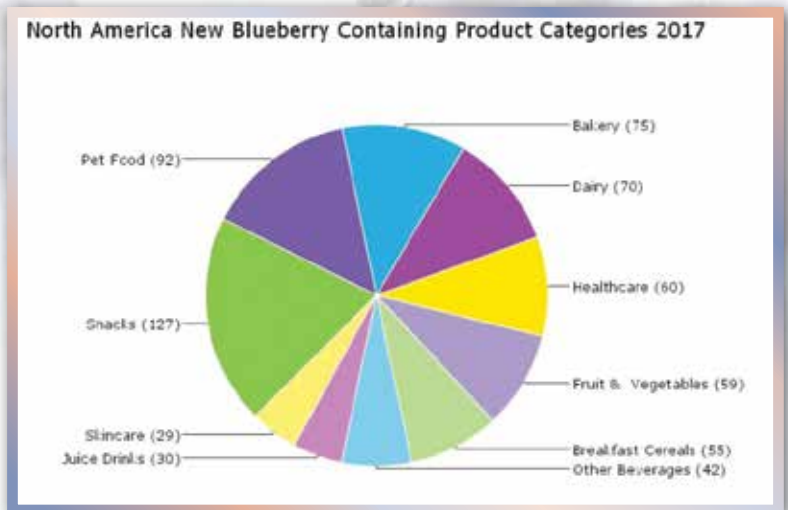
A lot has changed in the 29 years, but one thing remains constant. We must push hard for the stomach space of the American (and world) consumer!

**The Focus.** Our activity is dedicated to the food processing sector. This includes the products and companies who produce items as varied as muffins, yogurts, health foods and others. Blueberries are an ingredient in these products. In North America, this is a multi-billion-dollar industry with hundreds of categories. This includes multinational companies like Nestle, Bimbo and General Mills, to small guys like Bob’s Bagels down the street.

**Target Audience.** In 1988, the main user of blueberries (besides fresh) were the jam, jelly and preserve companies. Standby products such as pies, bakery fillings and others have long traditions in the USA. Today these companies are still extremely important and the spectrum of current and future users is continually changing. Today, we see blueberry use in more than 25 major categories in North America. This includes the core markets such as baking, preserves, snacks and others. But, we also look over the horizon for new opportunities for highbush blueberries. One of the high priority directives of the USHBC strategic plan has been to develop new high value markets at home and abroad. We stay on top of trends, consult experts in the field and promote blueberries in product categories including nutraceuticals, natural cosmetics, healthcare, pet foods and others.



“Hawaii night” at the Great Lakes Institute of Food Technologists meeting at Kellogg’s in Battle Creek gave Tom a chance to wear a Vintage U of Hawaii Sugar Bowl cap!



Food manufacturing usage has changed considerably since 1988 with snacks and pet food products rising.

**Blueberry Products:** In 1988, most of the products utilizing blueberries were from the frozen and juice value chain. When we did our first technical brochure for the CBG in 1988, our product categories included: frozen, puree, juice and this small category called dehydrated. This year we introduced our latest version of the Technical Brochure and it included more than 20 blueberry ingredients and the number keeps growing. These include dried, liquid, powders, flakes and even extracts. The key is the term: “ingredient solutions.” Food manufacturers are looking for ingredients that can go right into the product. They want a puree or puree concentrate of a specific fruit level and viscosity for adding to dairy products. Cereal companies look for dried of specific size, shape, moisture content and water activity (moisture transpiration from the fruit to the flake). More and more new products are produced with these ingredient solutions and Blueberry FoodTech continually works to educate and connect the manufacturer with the right product. What does this mean for growers? It takes 3.5 lbs. of frozen blueberries to make 1 lb. of dried. It takes around 35 lbs. of blueberry to make a lb of an extract. Ingredient solutions have become an important channel partner for the US blueberry producers. For now – USA is the center for blueberry innovation and blueberry ingredient solutions are leading the way for new product development at home and in export markets around the world.



New blueberry extract product from Futureceuticals.

PRODUCTS	PROCESS	PACKAGING	CHARACTERISTICS	STORAGE
<b>Fresh</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 32°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>Frozen</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>PROFESSIONALLY DRIED: FROZEN DRY</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>DRY</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>LIQUID</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>POWDER</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>FLAKE</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>EXTRACT</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity

PRODUCTS	PROCESS	PACKAGING	CHARACTERISTICS	STORAGE
<b>Liquid</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>LIQUID STRENGTH PUREE</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>PUREE CONCENTRATE</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>LIQUID STRENGTH JUICE</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>JUICE CONCENTRATE</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>OTHER FORMS</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>POWDER</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>FLAKE</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity
<b>EXTRACT</b>	Washed/Sorted/boxed in cartons Frozen in 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs. cartons	Packaging: 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 lbs.	Assorted sizes, color, firmness	0° to 10°F 95% RH 20-25% relative humidity

Here is a copy of our new format sheet which describes blueberry ingredient solutions.

## Interesting observations 2017

**Genuine Foods.** “Clean label” has become a mantra in the North American food industry. Companies are looking for ways to remove synthetic color and flavors from products. Ingredient solutions like powders, flakes, purees and concentrates are the answer. Highbush blueberries are a North American original. They share an ingredient category with items such as ancient grains, super-foods and other categories, and more and more new products are bundling blueberries with other appealing ingredients.

**Real Fruit.** Consumers really do look for real ingredients in foods and major companies have taken up the cause

and are upping the amount of fruit including blueberry in individual products. The USHBC Real Blueberries™ Seal has appealed to smaller and medium sized companies and the big surprise has been that major companies are placing their own seals on products proclaiming real fruit, more fruit and even real blueberries.

**Beauty-from-Within.** We have been hearing about this trend from Asia for years now and finally it is appearing in the USA. Korean, Japanese and Chinese companies are utilizing blueberry ingredients in tandem with ingredients associated with health and beauty. Blueberries do perform valuable functions such as masking off flavors of other ingredients such as collagen. But, for the most part – blueberries are associated with beauty. The latest trend in the business is “beauty-in-advance”. This is specific foods when consumed in younger half of lifespan will help with appearance in the later half.



This Doctor Mascot at the Natural Cosmetics Exposition symbolizes the move to link health benefits with real science and medicine.

more and more companies utilizing whole blueberries, powders, flakes and even freeze dry blueberries. USA produced pet foods are in demand around the globe – especially in countries where the safety of local products is in question. Now USA companies are proudly posting the USA flag.

**Artificial Blueberries.** They are still around! This year I identified 56 artificial blueberry-containing products. Some of the same ones as the past using colored fat bits, colored grain bits and others. It is interesting to see that some companies actually have artificial blueberries labeled as “blueberry nuggets,” in one region of the country and in others regions use Real Blueberries. Sometimes they even blend real and artificial blueberries. Each time we identify an artificial blueberry product, we make an effort to contact and discuss. Normally, the usage rationale it is a matter of cost. But, in some cases the manufacturer is enlightened about Real Blueberry™ ingredient solutions. In some cases, the price difference between real and artificial is slim. And, when factoring the value added from the Real Blueberries™ – we can help convert to real.



Here is the new Real Blueberries™ which is available to food processors.

**Non-Food Uses.** Pet food companies continue to utilize blueberries and blueberry ingredients. Startup pet food companies were the first to integrate blueberries into pet foods and treats. Many are pet owners who proclaim their pet’s love of blueberries! Some of the smaller blueberry pioneer companies are getting purchased by large multinationals. We are seeing



This entrepreneurial couple developed a dog food with cricket (insect) flour and blueberries!

## Activity Highlights 2017

**Food Tech Blogs and Webs.** Here is the place you can stay up to date on food tech and export food tech activities:

**blueberryfoodtech.blogspot.com/**  
We are always posting information of current news, events and try to bring the program to the industry. Please take a look, and the blog includes a place for posting comments. We have also redesigned our regular website: [realblueberries.org](http://realblueberries.org) and this is continually evolving.



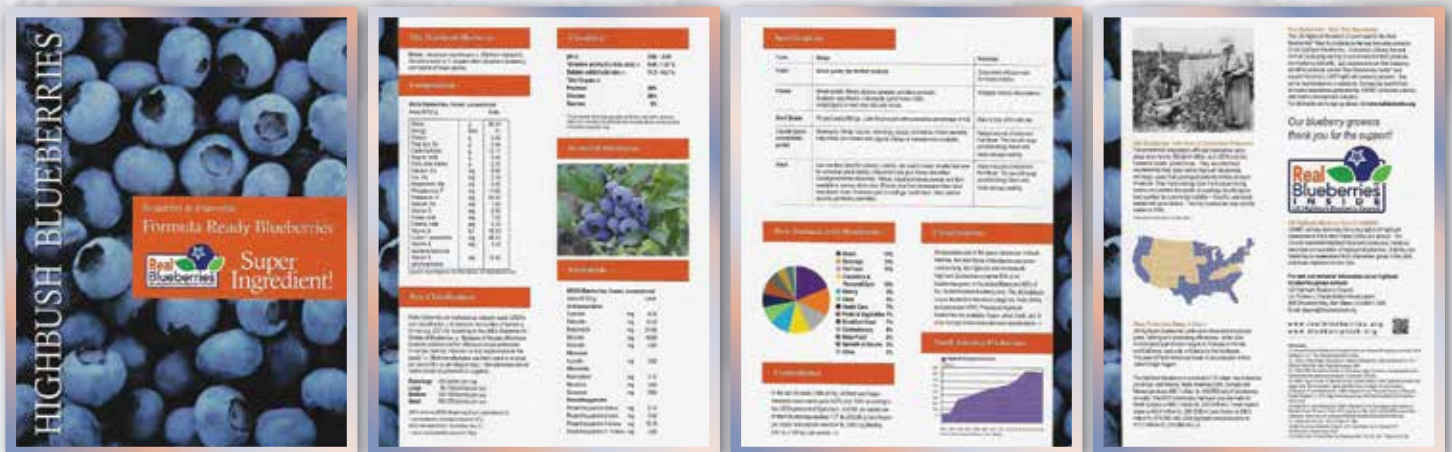
Here is the new [Realblueberries.org](http://Realblueberries.org) web site.

**Technical Assistance.** My most important task is to help growers, packers and shippers with assistance in the food industry. We receive calls and emails from companies with questions on a new product, ingredient and sometimes even difficulties. We drop everything and do whatever we can to find the answer and reply as fast as possible. Almost all of the time the question has been asked before and this knowledge goes a long way in keeping the food industry use of blueberries moving along.

New Technical Brochure. Well, here it is. Almost 85 percent of the information in this brochure has been revised since our last publication. It includes details that food processors need including background on blueberries, product composition, usage, and formats and further processed products available. We also continue our publicity campaign and place interesting information in magazines and newsletters read by food processors. Check out the blueberry toolkit which is published by a major food tech publication.



This is the online e-toolkit hosted by a popular food tech publication.





## Food Technology and Export

**Real Blueberries™ Seal.** We are off and running with the Real Blueberries™ Seal. The program platform is [www.realblueberries.org](http://www.realblueberries.org) and we are getting the word out by advertising in trade publications. In the USA we are receiving a regular stream of companies who want to use the seal. This year we approved 55 plus. Another 39 were signed up in export markets. Note – we denied about half that many who did not qualify! Most companies are small and medium, but eventually we hope to see major brands on board. The big surprise has been overseas companies. The USA origin brings value to the equation. Companies in India, Philippines, Vietnam and China have requested use. We will monitor use very carefully and make sure that the Real Blueberries™ Seal stays Real!

**In the field.** Despite all of the internet and social networks, the food industry is a face-to-face business. In 2017 we continued our blueberry road show with visits to regions where food is processed including Chicago, New York, and other areas. We also attend important gatherings such as the Global Pet Expo, the American Association of Cereal Chemists, New Product Conferences and others. Check out the schedule at: <https://realblueberries.org/calendar/>

**Latin America Turns Blue.** I remember the days when we were convinced that Latin Americans did not like blueberries. Things have changed. Last year, more than 84 new products containing Real Blueberries™ were introduced in Latin America. (Mexico, Central America and South America). Initially, we saw a slew of “blueberry” products with little or no blueberry. Now, we see some of the leading companies like Kellogg’s Mexico, Bimbo – all over Latin America and others with trendsetting blueberry products with lots of blueberry inside! We have found that even in countries with blueberry production, there is still potential for blueberry ingredient use. In 2017, we initiated activities in Colombia which is only 1,750 miles from Miami. Activities like trade shows and company visits are paying off and in 2018 we will hold a Little Blue Dynamo new product recognition event in Bogotá. In Mexico, we continue to work the FoodTech activities including participation in the country’s Food Technology Summit.



Here are the various versions of the Real Blueberries™ Seal.



We create interesting messages for the food processors. Here we present gluten free recipes utilizing breadfruit flour from American Samoa. Congressman Su’a (High Chief Alexander Jennings, wife Rowena and Larry Allen III a Harvard student athlete man the USHBC booth.

# Food Technology and Export

**Evaluation:** USHBC FoodTech is one of many partners who are essential for the development of the US food ingredient market. This includes the growers who produce the product, packers, further processors and the extremely important “channel partners” in the field who sell to the food industry. USHBC monitors the number of new products generated in the year as identified by a research firm called MINTEL. Shoppers check stores and outlets across the nation to identify and document new blueberry containing products. This gives us a good indication of activity in the market.

- In 1999 there were 50 new blueberry-containing products introduced in North America according to MINTEL Global Products Database.
- Since 2012 we are seeing 500 plus products each year.



Colombia is on the rise and a market found targeted for development by USHBC-FoodTech.

The best evaluation I can imagine is when a company sends a note saying thank you. This year, I have heard from dozens companies in the field who have appreciated the services of the FoodTech program. A thankful email, a smile from a packer or shipper at an exposition makes my day!

Talofa and thanks!

Tom Payne



Tom in Tutuila, American Samoa!

## Export FoodTech, The long march

Two decades ago one of our growers cornered me at a meeting and said – if we could get each person in China to eat a blueberry, we would have to plant more! Since then we have looked at markets around the world as potential users of blueberries. We look at regions like Europe with long-standing blueberry consumption traditions. In Asia, where there is miniscule per capita consumption of blueberries, we seek markets and categories where blueberries fit their “Food as Medicine” and now “Food for Health and Beauty” culture.

It has been a “long march” as they say in China. One way we work to develop export markets is through FoodTech programs. We approach food processors in foreign markets – many of which have strong ties to US companies. As Henry J. Kaiser the Cement Baron of Kaiser Permanente said – “we find a need and fill it!” In most of these countries, we have started from zero: few blueberries imported, low awareness and interest. Also, it is incredibly difficult to facilitate sampling with frozen product. Each and every country has been a challenge. But, by visiting the markets, connecting with individuals and companies – we have identified needs and helped fill with blueberry solutions!

## Here is a tour of the world from a FoodTech perspective

### Japan

Japan was the first export market approached by the NABC/USHBC in 1995. For decades fresh blueberries had been shipped to Japan for upscale markets. Lowbush blueberries were used mainly in jam manufacturing. In our initial activity, Foodex – USHBC featured frozen blueberries and a new “smoothie” concept from America. Our neighbor booth was the Japan Blueberry Association who were our friendly allies in market development. On the first day of the exposition, a news crew from NHK television network, visited the blueberry team and continued to film what resulted in a 20 minute nationally televised feature on blueberries. This ignited a wave of blueberry interest that started a craze for frozen polybag blueberries and home use of blueberries in smoothies. Some of the leading dairy companies also began to utilize frozen blueberries in fruit preps for yogurts and ice creams. Since then USHBC FoodTech has actively promoted frozen blueberries to the food industry and this has resulted in year-to-year new products that are sticking in the marketplace. Activities include participation in food tech expositions such as the International Food Ingredients and Additives exposition and seminars at companies and in conjunction with the USDA-Agricultural Trade Offices. In the past five years, we have extended the ingredient promotions to include further processed blueberries such as dried, juice concentrate, puree, puree concentrate, powder and extracts. These ingredients have been well received in food industries especially in functional foods, beauty-from within and other emerging categories. In 2017 we continued to engage the food industry with exhibitions and seminars aimed at bakers, nutraceuticals, natural cosmetics and confectioners.



**Ted Mc Kinney, USDA Undersecretary of Trade and Foreign Agriculture Affairs, visits the USHBC booth at the Foodex exposition in Makuhari, Japan.**

# Food Technology and Export

## Taiwan

In 2002, we targeted Taiwan, the Republic of China. This is a large island about twice the size of New Jersey off the coast of the People's Republic of China. Taiwan has become the trendsetting center for popular culture including food in what we call "greater China." Chinese run food businesses all over Southeast Asia, and most "overseas" Chinese companies are connected to Taiwan. On our first visit to Taipei, the capital city, was rocked by a 7.0 earthquake and our exhibition was toppled. The Taiwanese are resilient people and the expo went on and we met dozens of companies who were interested in adding blueberries to local bakery and confectionery products. Interesting enough – we also noted that young ladies lined up to sample blueberries and when asked – commented that blueberries were considered "good for beauty". We connected with some of the leading companies in Taiwan including I-Mei and President Enterprises which is now the largest food company in Asia. Fresh blueberry sales grew and dried and frozen followed. Taiwan has been the most loyal and steady market for all US blueberries. For more than a decade our FoodTech representative Millie Hsia connected with the Taiwan trade and conducted activities to build retail, foodservice and food industry business. Her daughter Mandy is now promoting highbush blueberries and doing an excellent job with exhibition, seminars and technical assistance to current and new users. Our big event is the Food Taipei exposition and we also participate in seminars and other promotions with the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), Agricultural Trade Office (ATO).



This online advertisement from a local grocery chain in Taiwan presented blueberries as a high value, beneficial product.

## South Korea

USHBC began activities in South Korea in 2002 with participation in health ingredient seminars sponsored by the USDA-FAS ATO in Seoul. At this time, blueberries were relatively unknown besides a few candies and sales of blueberries through the Military Post Exchange (PX) system. Fresh blueberries were restricted and a few local producers sold fresh blueberries in stores at incredibly high prices. USHBC activities included regular participation at food industry expositions such as Seoul Food and Hotel and others. During the next five years, blueberry sales and interest in Korea was lukewarm at best. By 2008, we were quite discouraged with progress in South Korea. One of the large Japanese trading companies sent an expert to research the South Korean market and reported back that there was "no real potential for US blueberries." In June of 2008, a number of events lined up which propelled a meteoric rise in blueberry popularity. It was referred to by the Voice of America (VOA) broadcasting service as: "Blueberry Fever." The major Korean television network MBC sent a broadcast crew to the 1st ever Korea Blueberry Festival in Central Korea which was co-sponsored by the USHBC. This included a week of blueberry products, farm tours and seminars which included a USA webcam tour of blueberries. MBC produced a one-hour segment on blueberries airing on national TV which included extensive coverage of blueberry health with a focus on eyesight and beauty from information gleaned from Japanese broadcasts. Since there were few if any blueberries in the markets – some of the leading TV and internet home-shopping networks quickly developed blueberry sales programs.



Sunyong Lee works the Seoul Foods Exposition and discusses new product concepts with food manufacturers.

## Food Technology and Export

One US packer sent a 40-foot container (36 metric tons) of frozen blueberries for one of the networks and the contents were sold in 20 minutes. Others followed, and major retail chains installed blueberry freezers in the produce section to sell polybag blueberries. Television programs demonstrated smoothies. “Blueberry Fever” was in full swing. While frozen polybag sales soared, USHBC FoodTech capitalized on the craze to begin developing the food ingredient market. Our FoodTech Rep Sunyong Lee began a regular circuit of company visits each month to preserve, baking, beverage and snack food companies. This led to rapid new product development of goods containing blueberries. While mainstream categories are online with blueberries, Sunyong continues to promote new ingredient-solution uses. He has promoted blueberry puree and concentrate in blueberry soju and macule (alcohol beverages) and drinking vinegars. He is also promoting frozen, dried blueberries in traditional snacks and powders and extracts in functional foods, natural cosmetics and other emerging categories. While there are ups-and-downs in the market, the Korean blueberry interest continues! Sunyong Lee, continues works on behalf of highbush blueberries and meets with companies all over the peninsula, attends trade shows and enthusiastically looks for new opportunities for blueberries and blueberry ingredient solutions. In 2017, Sunyong retooled and developed many new usage concepts for blueberry use in beverages, Korean snacks, fermented foods (Kin Chee) and cooking sauces.

### China

NABC and USHBC FoodTech have been active in the China market since 1990 when we visited the Chinese growing regions in the north and conducted bakery and food industry seminars in Shenzhen, Shanghai, Beijing. Since then we have conducted ongoing market development activities including participation at food industry expositions such as SIAL China, Food Ingredients China and other activities. We have participated in regular health and food tech seminars with the USDA including events in Shenzhen, Chongqing, Qingdao, Jilin, Beijing, Shenyang and others. In the past three years we have received visiting food industry delegations and have arranged field and factory visits, seminars and training. In 2017, we focused on ingredient



USHBC participates in trade shows and exhibitions all over China. Above, is the China Fruit and Vegetable show held sponsored by the Chinese government.



solutions such as dried blueberries, powders, purees and concentrates for food industry applications. This includes snack foods, dairy applications and fruit preparations. We also initiated work to organize current importers and users for submitting application and support activities for duty reduction. This customer-based activity has drawn the USHBC closer to users and poised for opportunities for addressing constraints in the future.

USHBC hosted a visiting delegation of bakery suppliers from China to the Central Valley to visit fields, and tour local bakeries.

# Food Technology and Export

## Hong Kong

Hong Kong has been a gateway to the China mainland for NABC and USHBC. We began activities in 1999 with a trade visits and participation in the HOFEX exposition. We have worked regular activities with the US Wheat Associates in Hong Kong to introduce frozen and dried blueberries to the regional baking and foodservice industry and this has resulted in regular, long-term uses of product in bakeries such as Garden throughout HK, Macau and South China, Maxim's and others. In 2017, we extended activities to South China and Macau and have been working on getting the Real Blueberries™ Seal onto snack and bakery items.

## India

USHBC FoodTech began market development activities in India in 2008 with implementation of a USDA-funded Emerging Market's Program (EMP) assessment. This was followed by fresh promotional activities with retail chains in Mumbai Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. In 2013 USHBC FoodTech implemented a USDA-FAS Quality Samples Program (QSP) where frozen blueberries were distributed to hundreds of manufacturers across India for evaluation and product development. This resulted in the launch of several jam, jelly and filling products that continue to utilize frozen blueberries and also provide ingredients for bakery and dairy applications of other companies. Our USHBC FoodTech engineer visits companies and factories across the sub-continent and has been successful at introducing a whole line of US blueberry ingredient solutions. A major success has been the introduction of dried blueberries in the Indian snack market. Initially, most Indian companies showed little interest in dried blueberries which sell for more than \$5 per lb. compared to inexpensive local dried fruit. With sampling, technical assistance and follow up – dried blueberries are now the “hot” ingredient and are packed in dozens of local brands all over the country. In 2017, we launched the Real Blueberries™ Seal which has proven successful with Indian packed dried blueberries. USHBC's local FoodTech representative has also rallied a group of users and importers to work on submission of locally-based petition process for duty reduction.



Maxim's, a multi-unit bakery chain in Hong Kong features several blueberry items year-round.



Here is the scene at the Food Ingredients India (FI) Exposition held in Delhi. Dozens of local ingredient suppliers who carry US highbush blueberries visited the booth and new companies joined the pack!

# Food Technology and Export

## Middle East

In 2012, USHBC FoodTech attended its first Gulfood Exposition in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). This is the largest food exposition for the region including Middle East and North Africa. Our first time at Gulfood, was a quiet experience. Although Dubai residents from Europe and North America loved blueberries -- the locals and guest workers from around the region showed little of no interest in blueberries. Year-to-year and Gulfood to Gulfood, the situation has changed dramatically. Fresh blueberries are readily available in the high-end hyperstores in most countries and this has helped familiarize the locals. At the same time, newspapers and popular media in the region continually praise blueberries as a food good for diabetics. Although Gulf countries import a huge number of food and beverage products in ready-made form, the regional food industries in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and even Iran are powerful companies with innovative new products in the works. We are seeing more and more new blueberry products and also imports of blueberry products (snacks) produced in India. In 2017, USHBC spread activities beyond Dubai and have made progress with food processing users in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan. Frozen blueberries are promoted with fruit preparation, jam and jellies and USA dried blueberries are also finding success in many of the Gulf markets including Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and others. Dried blueberries are also finding their way to Iran and are used in traditional confectionery.



Raj Kapoor from India discusses blueberries with visitors from throughout the region at the Gulfood-Dubai.

## Southeast Asia

The ASEAN countries of Southeast Asia are a new region for Blueberry FoodTech. Since 2015, we have been conducting exploratory activities such as participation at Food Ingredients Asia, Bakery Expositions in the Philippines and other activities. In 2016, we conducted a USDA-FAS Emerging Markets Program (EMP) market assessment for Indonesia which included interviews with importers, food processors. Timely research indicated that government licenses which have been used to import frozen blueberries from China were transitioning to other origins and new opportunities. Several large food processing conglomerates in



Here is Hana, your Blueberry FoodTech in Ho Chi Minh City Viet Nam. Note HCM in the background!

## Food Technology and Export

Indonesia have now begun sourcing U.S. frozen blueberries for jams and jellies and intermediate ingredients that open further markets such as baking, dairy and confectionery. We now have a Blueberry FoodTech engineer working the region, contacting manufacturers and working on the Emerging Market Program (EMP) assessments for Vietnam and the Philippines in 2018. In 2017, Hana in Vietnam has been visiting importers, food manufacturers all over the region. We are already seeing success with purees and concentrates in Vietnamese dairy sector as well as dried blueberries for snacks. In the Philippines, we have targeted jam and jelly manufacturers and have had success with convincing companies who already produce jams – to add a blueberry jam. In 2018, we will work with local food industries to implement a frozen sampling program to provide potential users such as jams, jellies, bakeries and others with samples for product development trials and evaluation.

### Australia

Blueberry FoodTech has interacted with Australian food processors for the past two decades at US and international food expositions and has helped provide technical information and support. In 2015, we initiated our first in-country activity – Fine Foods Australia. This event occurred on the heels of a major food safety scandal including Chinese packed berries. Australian companies including poly baggers, dairy preparations and others lined up to connect with the US blueberry industry and key linkages were made that continue today. We continue to attend food expositions in Australia including the Food Pro and Fine Foods and this year will include a trade mission to New Zealand. In 2018, USHBC is focused on the Real Blueberries™ Seal as a way to protect some of the gains for US blueberries in the food industry.



USHBC connects with Australian blueberry users each year at the Fine Foods Australia, exposition.



# Food Technology and Export

## Latin America

When USHBC FoodTech began work in Mexico in 1995, we saw very little or any interest in blueberries. Since then, we have focused on the Latin American food industry with participation in food technology expositions, seminars for manufacturers and targets to major multinational food industries in the region. The first developments have been with companies such as Kellogg's, Sabritas and especially Grupo Bimbo who are globally oriented and quick to latch onto trendy ingredients such as blueberries. Our major activities include participation at Food Technology Expositions in Mexico and Brazil and new activities are underway in the rising country of Colombia. Our expert Food Engineer attends conferences, provides technical information and trade linkages to the USA. This year we are holding our first Blueberry New Product award and seminar in Bogotá Colombia and will follow with sampling and technical assistance that should drive more and more new blueberry containing products to the market.

## Conclusion:

Where does the long march lead? USHBC FoodTech has succeeded in building long-term markets in regions around the world. These markets are getting crowded as other suppliers sell into the regions to capitalize on advantages such as lack of duty. We now emphasize the USA origin the Real Blueberries™ Seal. We are also working with ingredient solutions where USA has strength and for the most part exclusive availability. For frozen, we work to gain any advantage to build market and maintain market share. This includes working on duty reduction (through NABC) where possible and strengthening relationships with companies within country presence, educational activities and technical assistance.



Here is the Blueberry Lucha Libre team visiting Grupo Bimbo in Mexico City. Bimbo is the leading bakery in all of North America and an early user of blueberries in a number of products.

## FAS Trade Programs Support USHBC Export Market Development

The United States Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) has aggressively pursued external funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) to supplement current industry-funded export programs in targeted overseas markets. As a result, USHBC will receive over \$850,000 in federal grant funds to support the industry's export market development initiatives in 2018. These programs seek to increase per capita consumption of fresh, processed and further processed blueberries in offshore markets, and open and develop new long-term markets in new areas such as Southeast Asia, India, China, Brazil and Russia.



Retail buyers in Indonesia attend a USHBC sponsored trade education event in Jakarta in July 2017.

USHBC now receives funding from a wide range of USDA FAS Trade Programs to supplement industry investments in export market

development. In 2017, USHBC became an independent cooperator and reinstated its Market Access Program (MAP) program through FAS. In 2018, USHBC will continue to receive funding through MAP to expand its export market development program in Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. In addition to fresh blueberry promotions, USHBC also utilizes MAP funds to promote frozen and dried blueberries in export markets.

With limited funds, USHBC must be specific and targeted in its market development strategy. While USHBC prioritizes Japan and South Korea, the top two export markets for fresh and frozen blueberries after Canada, the industry has identified Hong Kong and Southeast Asia as the most promising emerging markets based on export volume and value over the past five years. (In Southeast Asia, USHBC targets Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.)

USHBC has established in-country representation in each market to build relationships with local importers and retailers, and conduct promotions at retail to move more volume during peak supply periods. Promotional activities primarily include retail sampling promotions, point of sale advertising materials, and articles in consumer oriented magazines and publications. Over time, USHBC expects the success of these activities to justify increased investments in marketing and public relations efforts in these markets.



USHBC sponsored a U.S. frozen highbush blueberry promotion with Karin Juice Bar in Japan in 2017.

## Consumer Export Program and FAS Grant Funds

USHBC also utilizes industry funds, as well as the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC), Quality Samples Program (QSP) and Emerging Markets Program (EMP) programs, to explore new market development opportunities and address market access issues in Australia, New Zealand, China, South Korea, South Africa, the Philippines and Vietnam. In 2016, USHBC received two TASC grants to establish a new maximum residue level (MRL) for phosphorous acid in the European Union, and another to continue its research of pre-shipment treatments of *Rhagoletis mendax* (also known as blueberry maggot) for U.S. blueberries to Australia and New Zealand. Additional funding for the continuation of this research was approved in 2018.

In 2018, USHBC will utilize QSP funds to ship blueberries for further processing to ports in Eastern India and Colombia. Samples will be distributed to Indian and Colombian food manufacturers interested in developing food items such as juice, snacks and confectionary products with U.S. highbush blueberries. USHBC also received EMP funds to conduct market feasibility studies in Vietnam and the Philippines. USHBC's food technology advisor, Thomas Payne of Thomas J. Payne Market Development, will work with in-country contractors to assess current food ingredient trends and distribution methods, and identify market development opportunities for U.S. frozen and dried blueberries.

Additionally, USHBC has initiated a comprehensive global assessment of markets and opportunities to establish a clear prioritization of efforts and maximize impact of available resources. USHBC will then develop an online database (through a portal on the USHBC website) to share updates and analysis with the industry. The assessment will include markets throughout North and Southeast Asia, North and South America, Europe and the Middle East. Topics covered will include: phytosanitary and sanitary barriers to trade, tariffs, maximum residue levels and testing practices, free trade agreements, supply chain characteristics, cold chain, blueberry consumption trends, retail merchandising trends, and competitive threats.

The USHBC is confident that its export market development activities, funded jointly with industry and government funds, will help build demand for highbush blueberries overseas. To support these efforts, the industry will continue to prioritize the pursuit of external funding, particularly from FAS Trade Programs.

## Statements of Financial Position

*December 31, 2017 and 2016*

### Assets

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
<b>Current Assets:</b>		
Cash	\$7,381,986	\$7,577,892
Accounts receivable	770,160	455,315
Promotional materials	40,562	29,647
Prepaid expenses	129,745	18,519
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>8,322,453</b>	<b>8,081,373</b>
Equipment, net	-	-
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$8,322,453</b>	<b>\$8,081,373</b>

### Liabilities and Net Assets

<b>Current Liabilities:</b>		
Accounts payable	\$1,132,540	\$641,740
Current portion of health research contract obligations	1,146,463	1,005,923
Deferred crop assessments	<u>3,900,177</u>	<u>4,593,807</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>6,179,180</b>	<b>6,241,470</b>
Unrestricted net assets	<u>2,143,273</u>	<u>1,839,903</u>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$8,322,453</b>	<b>\$8,081,373</b>

## Statement of Activities

*For the Years Ended December 31, 2017 and 2016*

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
<b>Revenue:</b>		
Domestic crop assessments	\$4,771,906	\$4,432,109
Foreign crop assessments	3,577,559	3,442,318
Grant revenue	882,300	226,754
Gains from contract expirations	-	122,250
Other revenue	<u>14,376</u>	<u>10,174</u>
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>9,246,141</b>	<b>8,233,605</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
Market promotion and publicity	5,955,333	5,434,890
Health Research	1,161,024	1,068,574
Industry relations	100,112	85,371
Food safety	551,849	93,233
USHBC program fees	208,440	207,833
General and administrative	<u>966,013</u>	<u>915,252</u>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>8,942,771</b>	<b>7,805,153</b>
Change in unrestricted net assets	303,370	428,452
Unrestricted net assets, beginning of year	1,839,903	1,411,451
Unrestricted net assets, end of year	<b>\$2,143,273</b>	<b>\$1,839,903</b>

## **The Corporate Social Responsibility Statement of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council**

Members of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) believe in several core values related to the responsible stewardship of the resources with which we are entrusted. In order to fulfill our responsibilities in accordance with these values we will:

- Promote sustainable practices in agriculture, balancing the needs of consumers with the needs of the land and the industry.
- Contribute to an important agricultural economy that must be self-supporting and profitable.
- Recognize the interdependence of our growing, handling and marketing activities with customers, regulators, neighbors, suppliers, employees and others who support and permit our work.
- Enjoy and foster diversity in all its positive forms, from the crops we grow to the membership in our blueberry community.
- Encourage the sharing of information to provide participants in the industry and our consumers the knowledge they need to make good choices about all aspects of their enjoyment of blueberries.
- Embrace the challenge of promoting the goodness of blueberries to all corners of the earth and to be the impetus that contributes to the health and well-being of consumers and creates opportunity for fellow industry members.

## **The USHBC Code of Ethics**

As members of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council, we acknowledge our responsibility to our industry, its customers, the Council and our fellow humans to exhibit the highest standards of business conduct. We therefore encourage our industry members to:

- Be committed to adherence to laws, practices and regulations which apply to the areas where we conduct business.
- At a minimum, follow the standards and practices required by law and regulation for growing, harvesting, processing and handling blueberries for the protection and health of our employees and those who eat our great product.
- Encourage that hours worked each day, and days worked each week, shall not exceed legal limitations, that unsafe workplace practices not be tolerated and that employees be trained in safe practices.
- Provide impartial and unprejudiced treatment to employees in all sectors of the industry.
- Conduct all our business practices with honesty, fair dealing and in conformance with high ethical standards and use only legal and ethical means in all business activities following all applicable laws and operating in ways that encourage trust among our members, their customers and other stakeholders.
- Provide the means to help our industry grow in socially appropriate and ecologically responsible ways throughout the entire supply chain.
- Be strongly committed to the strict adherence to all environmental rules, regulations and standards that are imposed by local, state and national government authorities.
- Hold one another to the highest levels of integrity and be a good corporate citizen in every community and locality where we grow. Encourage blueberry growers to become involved in the life of their communities by participating in and sponsoring activities that result in community betterment.
- Collaborate with industry members, researchers and others to benefit the responsible growth of the blueberry industry.
- Be honest and fair in our promotion of blueberries and scrupulously accurate in our representation of the benefits of eating blueberries.
- Support our Council, and the industry at large, by debating, crafting and promoting changes that will create opportunity for involvement in the industry.
- Educate members about good management practices that contribute to further development of the industry's growing, handling, marketing, health, safety, public education and other important disciplines.

## USHBC OFFICE STAFF



### USHBC OFFICE STAFF

Vicki De Bruin, Marketing Manager, Mandy Boarman, Administrative Assistant, Julie Fogarty, Assistant Manager, Mark Villata, Executive Director, Rick Ruckman, Compliance & Data Coordinator and Mary Nezbeth, Office Manager

## USHBC Meeting Schedule and Invitation

USHBC meetings are open to all members of the industry and offer an excellent opportunity to learn more about the Council and the various market promotion and health research activities being conducted by the USHBC. These open meetings also offer the opportunity to contribute by sharing your thoughts with the USHBC.

All members of the blueberry industry are encouraged to attend and participate in USHBC meetings and are asked to also consider future service with the USHBC as an elected member or alternate. Please contact the USHBC office at (916) 983-0111 if you have any questions concerning the USHBC or future meetings, or for more information about USHBC member or alternate positions.

### **2018 USHBC Fall Meeting**

New Orleans, Louisiana

Wednesday, October 3 to Friday, October 5, 2018

HYATT Centric French Quarter New Orleans

Hotel Phone Number: 504-586-0800

Group Name: North American Blueberry

Council October 2018 Meeting

### **2018 USHBC Spring Meeting**

San Diego, California

Wednesday, March 6 to Friday, March 8, 2019

TBD

---

The USHBC has adopted a diversity outreach plan to attempt to achieve a diverse representation on the Council. USHBC programs and meetings are open to all individuals. The USHBC prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information, parental status and marital or family status. The USHBC fully complies with any and all applicable Federal, State and local equal employment opportunity statutes, ordinances and regulations, including but not limited to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USHBC office at (916) 983-0111. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC. 20250-9410 or call 800-795-3272 (voice) or 202 720-6382 (TDD).



The USHBC Annual Report is published by the

**U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council**

1847 Iron Point Road, Suite 100 ♦ Folsom, California 95630

**Phone (916) 983-0111 ♦ Fax (916) 983-9022**

[www.blueberry.org](http://www.blueberry.org)