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AFOP Announces 2024 Excellence Awards Winners

Winners to be Recognized at the AFOP National Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada

Washington, DC – The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) announces the winners of the 2024 AFOP Excellence Awards. The AFOP Excellence Awards identify and honor farmworkers who demonstrate grit and determination in their quest to better their lives, as well as staff members and employers who have gone above and beyond in supporting customer success. It is a nationwide, competitive contest.

Agricultural Worker Excellence Award – **Ana Henriquez-Artiga** – Proteus, Inc., California

Employer Excellence Award – **Rouge River Farms** – Telamon | TRC, Virginia

Veteran Staff Excellence Award – **Blanca Barba** – California Human Development, California

New Employee Staff Excellence Award – **Genesis Leon** – PathStone Corporation, Puerto Rico

Several of the winners expressed surprise and gratitude when they learned about the award.

Genesis Leon of Pathstone, Puerto Rico, said, “When I first found out I was receiving this award, I was really surprised. I immediately thought about the hard work and dedication that not just I, but my entire team put into this year. This recognition is a testament to our collective effort, and it fills me with gratitude and inspires me to keep making a positive impact.”

Rob Reesor, president and an owner of multinational Rouge River Farms, shared his response in a telephone interview: “We are humbled and honored by this award. At Rouge River Farms, we strive to create opportunities for people to grow their skills and responsibilities. We are grateful for the wonderful individuals we get to work with that live in our local neighborhoods and come seasonally from Central America. We strive to be better by creating a place of employment that people like and where they feel safe. Some of our managers have done an excellent job at driving these values forward. A big thanks to them, they deserve the credit.”

Each year, AFOP member agencies implementing the highly successful National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) nominate standout individuals and employers for award consideration. Earlier this year, the AFOP Excellence Awards Committee – chaired by Michelle Engel-Silva, AFOP board member and the CEO of Proteus, Inc. – reviewed and scored nominees and produced this list of awardees. AFOP is proud to announce those winners today.

“AFOP gives these awards each year to acknowledge farmworkers who have excelled in training, individuals who have gone the extra mile for their farmworker clients, and employers who are committed to changing their communities – and, indeed, the nation – one good job at a time,” said AFOP Executive Director Daniel Sheehan. “We share a commitment to serving farmworkers that moves us to do all we can to make the lives of those laboring in our fields a little bit more stable, a little bit healthier, a little bit better. Congratulations to all our winners.”

AFOP will recognize these award winners at the 2024 AFOP National Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, during the AFOP Excellence Awards ceremony on Thursday, September 26.

About AFOP: The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs has been an advocate for migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States since 1971. The thread that binds the association is the concept that training and education can be a launching pad to a better and more stable life for the workers who plant, tend, and harvest the crops that Americans consume at their tables.

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