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Blue Diamond Growers Elects New Board Chairman and Announces Industry Recognitions
Following 17 Years of Service, Dan Cummings Passes the Gavel to Steve Van Duyn

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Following Blue Diamond Growers’ annual meeting in November, the almond co-op announced its new Board of Directors. Dan Cummings, a third-generation almond farmer from Chico, stepped down as Chairman of the Board and will finish out his term this year as his last on the Board. Cummings’ family joined Blue Diamond Growers in the 1920s. He was elected to the Board of Directors in 2006 and has served as the Chairman of the Board since 2014.

Steve Van Duyn was elected to serve as the new Blue Diamond Growers Board Chairman. Van Duyn is a Blue Diamond grower who has served on Blue Diamond Growers’ Board of Directors, representing District 5 since 2005 and has served as Vice Chair since 2021. He is the owner, president, and CEO of Van Duyn Family Farms in Ripon where he and his family grow almonds and walnuts. Kent Stenderup, who represents the District 9 area of Arvin, was elected as the Board’s new Vice Chair. Three Directors who were up for election – Van Duyn, Dale Van Groningen, and Dan Mendenhall – were all re-elected to the Board. In addition, the two directors at-large, Joe Huston and Kristin Daley were re-elected to their seats.

“We cannot underestimate the incredible impact that our outgoing Chair, Dan Cummings, has had on the success of Blue Diamond Growers during his leadership on the board,” said Kai Bockmann, President and CEO, Blue Diamond Growers. “His wisdom, dedication, business acumen, global industry knowledge and steadfast commitment to progress – in any marketplace condition – has served the growers of Blue Diamond incredibly well and will be positively felt for many years to come. As Dan transitions leadership to Steve, we are excited for the start of this new chapter and working together to carry on the legacy of service that Dan so admirably exemplified.”

Other Industry Leaders Honored

In addition to the new board member announcements, two industry leaders were also recognized at the co-op’s annual meeting. Long-time industry champion, Julian Heron, was recognized for his remarkable leadership on behalf of Blue Diamond Growers. As a deeply dedicated, highly influential advocate, Heron is credited with advancing Blue Diamond Growers’ voice and positions in Washington, D.C. for more than five decades. Among his many accomplishments include creation of the Market Access Program (MAP) that has benefited Blue Diamond Growers and countless other agricultural entities over the years. Heron was also instrumental in securing high-profile Blue Diamond Growers’ representation on Presidential Advisory Boards during the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations to ensure Blue Diamond Growers had a seat at the table at the highest levels of federal decision making and policy-related input. Also participating in the recognition was Julian’s colleague, Lynn Jacquez, who will help lead Blue Diamond’s future federal advocacy initiatives.

Additionally, agriculture industry leader and Blue Diamond grower, Kelli Evans, was named the 2023 Chairman’s Grower Ambassador of the Year. Evans is a third-generation Hispanic almond and rice farmer from Live Oak. She is a staunch advocate for the almond industry in California and is highly visible on her social media platforms in advancing education and understanding about modern agriculture today. Evans has served in numerous leadership roles and committees in support of Blue Diamond Growers, the Almond Board of California, and the agriculture industry.

“Without question, it has been a challenging year. But the loyalty and leadership demonstrated by deeply committed individuals – such as Julian and Kelli – along with our current and incoming board leadership coupled with the dedication of Blue Diamond team members, will allow us to overcome these challenges together,” said Bockmann. “I’m confident Blue Diamond will deliver great prosperity and a sustainable future for our growers, employees, their families, and the communities we call home.”

The full list of 2024 board members includes:

- Steve Van Duyn, Chairman, District 5
- Kent Stenderup, Vice Chair, District 9
- Dan Cummings, District 1
- John Monroe, District 2
- Dale Van Groningen, District 3
- George A. te Velde, District 4
- Nick Blom, District 6
- Dan Mendenhall, District 7
- Matthew Efird, District 8
- Joe Huston, Director-At-Large
- Kristin Daley, Director-At-Large

Blue Diamond Annual Report Now Available

The Board of Directors election was held in conjunction with the Blue Diamond Growers’ 2023 Annual Meeting. The Blue Diamond Growers 2023 “Growing Together” Annual Report is now available on the Blue Diamond website at www.bluediamond.com.

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About Blue Diamond

Blue Diamond Growers, a grower-owned cooperative representing approximately 3,000 of California’s almond growers, is the world’s leading almond marketer and processor. Established in 1910, it created the California almond industry and opened world markets for almonds. Blue Diamond is dedicated to delivering the benefits of almonds around the world and does so by providing high-quality almonds, almond ingredients, and branded products. Headquartered in Sacramento, the company employs more than 1,800 people throughout its processing plants, receiving stations and gift shops. To learn more about Blue Diamond Growers, visit www.bluediamond.com and follow the company on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).