

# Fresno County Farm Bureau

## Friends of the Family Farm Sponsor

### Ricchiuti family continues “a tradition of excellence”

The Ricchiuti family story begins with a voyage from Vincenzo Ricchiuti's native Italy. Vincenzo set foot on fertile American soil in the year 1914. This is where he would plant the seeds of a family business which would eventually grow for generations. A vegetable grower by trade, he knew that diversification would be the key to long term success. He and his wife, Loretta, would nurture the land, and through their hard work and commitment to quality, the business prospered. With this in mind, Vincenzo planted the first family acreage with grapes and figs.

Benefitted by his father's wisdom, Pat Ricchiuti began his career as a grower, packer, shipper after returning home from serving his country in 1946. With the help and support of his wife, Frances, they continued to diversify their business by planting plums and cotton. This proved to be the beginning of the expansion which Pat Ricchiuti envisioned. His goal for the newly founded P-R Farms in 1956 was to bring forth growth while maintaining quality at every juncture.

The Ricchiuti's first tree fruit packing facility was located on their Clovis homestead at Fowler and Shields avenues. For many decades this was the hub of their business. As the town started to expand to the north, so did the Ricchiuti holdings. In 1973, Pat, Frances and their son Patrick oversaw the construction of a new state-of-the-art cold storage and packinghouse on the corner of Shepherd and Willow avenues. The P-R Farms label quickly became known worldwide for premium quality peaches, plums, apricots, nectarines, apples, citrus, grapes, almonds and olives.

Today, the Ricchiuti Family Farms operation also includes a retail store, Bella Frutta, which is located in Clovis, and an almond hulling and processing plant, plus the newly completed ENZO Olive Oil Company that produces and bottles estate grown extra virgin organic olive oil. Both of these facilities are located in Madera.

Another venture the Ricchiuti family is proud to be a part of is Harvest of the Month. The goal of this program is to introduce agriculture into the classroom. For the last nine years, Bella Frutta has participated in the state-sponsored Harvest of the Month program, which is a collaborative effort between Bella Frutta and several county offices of education including Fresno, Tulare, Merced, San Joaquin and Kern counties. Each month the

program effectively reaches about 95,000 students in more than 3,000 classrooms, located in 38 school districts throughout the state.

Children in grades kindergarten through third grade are given the opportunity to taste fresh produce, with a different product featured each month. Teachers and local health liaisons from the county department of education provide the lessons including the nutritional attributes of eating fresh produce.

Bella Frutta has also started a similar program in collaboration with the University of California Cooperative Extension-Fresno



(L-R): President Pat Ricchiuti, Director of Educational Program Steve Spears, Sales Manager Robert Ochoa, Chief Financial Officer Danny Medeiros, Director of Plant Operations Vincent Ricchiuti and Assistant Controller Scott Grossman.



County which reaches more than 700 classes each month in the Fresno Unified School District. In addition to the lesson plan, Bella Frutta conducts classroom cooking demonstrations for students and their parents about how to prepare and cook fresh produce.

P-R Farms also enjoys giving tours of their orchards and vegetable gardens allowing students to get an up close view of local farming practices. “It is funny to see the reactions in some of their faces when they see that fruit actually grows on trees and not in the store!” said Steve Spears, P-R Farms Director of Educational Programs. “Hands-on experience is still the best form of education.”

Over the years, the Ricchiuti family has demonstrated a strong commitment to their community and state with involvement in education, healthcare and a multitude of other philanthropic organizations. Additionally, Ricchiuti Family Farms participates with industry organizations to help improve and educate the public about agriculture. “We take pride in giving back to the community,” Patrick Ricchiuti said. Ricchiuti Family Farms' companies are engaged in all levels of education from elementary to college, as well as secondary schooling.

As they look to the future, Patrick and son Vincent remain dedicated to carrying on the family legacy established by Vincenzo and Pat Ricchiuti of being productive agricultural business leaders and devoted community servants.

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