



# NEWS RELEASE

MEDIA INQUIRIES:  
Mark Szymanski  
National Potato Council  
202.682.9456  
marks@nationalpotatocouncil.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
March 5, 2012

David Fairbourn  
United States Potato Board  
303.873.2331  
david.fairbourn@uspotatoes.com

## **New Leaders Trained at 2012 Potato Industry Leadership Institute**

*Derek Peterson of Rexburg, Idaho, Elected 2013 Grower-Leader*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Eighteen potato growers and industry representatives from across the country joined together to form the 2012 class of the Potato Industry Leadership Institute (PILI), an annual program designed to identify, develop and cultivate new leaders within the potato industry. From February 23 through March 1, participants sharpened their skills in the areas of leadership development, public policy, marketing, team building, and public communication.

The first half of the program was located in the Finger Lakes region near Rochester, New York, where participants toured local production and retail facilities. The 2012 class had the opportunity to visit packing sheds, chip-stock wash facilities and dairies at diverse farming operations, including McCormick Farms in Bliss, Marquart Farms in Gainesville, Mahany Farms in Arkport, Williams Farms in Marion, and Hemdale Farms in Seneca Castle, as well as Tomion's Farm Market in Penn Yan.



**Nathan Bender (right) and Richard Donaldson (left) check out the potato varieties available at Wegmans.**

The group also got a behind-the-scenes tour of the Pittsford store of Wegmans Food Markets, a 79-store supermarket chain founded in Rochester in 1916. Wegmans is recognized as an industry leader and innovator, and has been named one of the "100 Best Companies to Work For" by *FORTUNE* magazine for fifteen consecutive years.

The second half of the Leadership Institute's training was held in Washington, D.C., where the focus moved to legislative and regulatory priorities for the U.S. potato industry. The program finished with visits to member offices on Capitol Hill, where participants put their lobbying training to work.

The class also participated in team building exercises, including the Iron "Potato" Chef Competition, where each team was given a pantry list and challenged to prepare a nutritious

and satisfying family meal that included potatoes and chicken in under an hour. In addition, participants took part in the Social Media Campaign Challenge, where teams designed a social media campaign to promote a product, company or event related to the potato industry.

Grant Morris of Schneider Farms in Pasco, Wash., served as the group's grower-leader, after being elected by the 2011 Institute class to lead this year's program. The 2012 Institute elected Derek Peterson, Category Manager Sales and Marketing of Wilcox Fresh in Rexburg, Idaho, to serve as the grower-leader for next year's Institute.

The annual program is coordinated by the National Potato Council and the United States Potato Board. The Institute is made possible each year through a major sponsorship from Syngenta, as well as a sponsorship by McCain Foods.

For additional photos, visit [www.facebook.com/nationalpotatocouncil](http://www.facebook.com/nationalpotatocouncil).



Troy Meacham cuts up potatoes for his team's Iron "Potato" Chef Competition entry.



Participants in the 2012 Potato Industry Leadership Institute: (first row, from left to right) Jeff Howard of Gaylord, Mich., Tyler Wagstaff of Nyssa, Ore., Derek Peterson of Rexburg, Idaho, Jonathan Webster of Rigby, Idaho, Grant Mattive of Monte Vista, Colo., Richard Donaldson of Lind, Wash.; (second row) Michael Hoverson of Larimore, N.D., Mark Finnessy of Plover, Wis., Nathan Bender of Bakersfield, Calif., Brian Meisner of Wray, Colo.; (third row) Matt Funk of Prosser, Wash., Troy Meacham of Connell, Wash., Jonathan Schutter of Manhattan, Mont., Devin Taylor of Rigby, Idaho; (back row) Grant Morris of Pasco, Wash., Lance Peterson of Nyssa, Ore., Grant Monie of Dalhart, Texas, Wade Stults of Wray, Colo., Brandon Berce of St. Agatha, Maine.