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Health goes beyond the berries for Driscoll's

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More than 1,600 members of the San Quintín community received free access to health care offerings, including pediatric, women's health, dental and optometry services, in May as part of the first Health Fair organized by farmworkers employed by BerryMex — one of Driscoll's largest independent growers in Mexico.

Fair Trade Committee members were elected by farmworkers to represent them in the implementation of projects with funds generated through a growing Driscoll's Fair Trade Certified organic program, which totaled \$200,000 in its first year. In June, the same community benefited from a delivery of more than 1,700 school supply packages ahead of the next school season.

"It's powerful to witness the positive impact that our program in partnership with Fair Trade USA has on San Quintín thanks in large part to the passion and efforts of workers who make up the Committee," Soren Bjorn, president for Driscoll's of the Americas, said in a press release. "We recognize the importance of empowering farmworkers to lead initiatives like this to benefit their local communities."

The Fair Trade Certified program is one of many initiatives Driscoll's has implemented as part of its commitment to sustainable business practices. Fair Trade USA standards complement Driscoll's existing independent and comprehensive global Worker Welfare standards, which represent criteria that apply where local laws do not exist, are not consistently enforced, or provide inefficient worker protection.

The Fair Trade Certified process introduces a democratic system in which Fair Trade committees made up of local farmworkers are elected to represent their communities. These committees work

with all workers who are included in the scope of the certificate to determine how premiums will be invested, based on the needs of all beneficiaries. The funds are generated each time a consumer buys berries carrying the Fair Trade Certified label, with 100 percent of those community funds being directed back to the farmworkers and the communities that grew the berries.

Through a combination of survey results and focus groups, the Fair Trade Committee and Premium Participants identified three potential areas where projects would be most beneficial: health, education and/or housing. Thus, more than 80 volunteers joined 38 doctors as well as more than 100 medical students across Baja California at the Restaurante Misión Santa Isabel in San Quintín on May 6 and 7 to provide hundreds of medical exams to community members and their families as part of a local Health Fair.

In addition, more than 500 contact lenses, 1,200 toothbrushes and toothpastes and dozens of education seminars were offered to community members at no cost.

In June, the Fair Trade Committee worked with volunteers to deliver school supplies to children of BerryMex employees at the primary, secondary and high school levels. This effort aims to resolve the high cost of school supplies in San Quintín and reduce the percentage of children who drop out of school given the higher costs of supplies required by schools.

Packages that included the highest quality notebooks, pencils, crayons, scissors and other essential items were delivered to upwards of 250 families at no cost.

Based upon the initial success of the Fair Trade Certified program, Driscoll's is expanding efforts this year to include more independent growers, expand retail distribution and increase sales of Fair Trade Certified to include organic blueberries and organic blackberries. In turn, more workers in Baja California will benefit from the program and receive additional funds for community improvement.

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