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AC Brands deploys vaccine rollout

By

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One year ago in the midst of Sumo Citrus season, the COVID-19 shutdown began across the United States. Today, as the nationwide distribution of vaccines continues to ramp up, AC Brands wanted to make sure that its employees and the surrounding community — many of whom support the Central Valley citrus and table grape industry — had access to the vaccine. “Here we are, halfway through another busy season, yet the team worked tirelessly to execute a 10-day, 2,144-dose vaccine rollout at our facilities beginning on March 5,” said Vincent Sorena, vice president of farming.

The COVID task force team at AC Brands, led by Sorena, Renee Massey, Jessica Martinez, Jorge Luna, Monica Escoto, Priscila Reuland and Heidi Cervantes, began by compiling resources and appointing trusted ambassadors who would monitor and answer questions about the vaccine. They were able to gauge interest from their employees and secure over 2,100 vaccines. “Once we had vaccines secured, we coordinated staff and facilities to create vaccination sites that would service our employees, Sumo Citrus contractors, farm labor contractors, other table grape and citrus operations, and community members,” said Sorena who went on to say that they have been thrilled to see community members from the age of 18 to 85 sign up for vaccinations.

During one of the busiest times of year for their citrus business, the company partnered with Albertsons Pharmacy division to provide 1,100 vaccines across Kern County and Family Healthcare

Network to provide 1,044 vaccines across Tulare County. Vaccine sites were stationed at Legacy Packing and Cold Storage in Dinuba, CA, Columbine Vineyards in Delano and Arvin, CA, and Treesource/Griffith Farms in Woodlake, CA.

“A year into the pandemic, COVID 19 is still widespread, and we saw an opportunity to solve a community problem,” Sorena said. “Vaccine rollouts began to take place but there was still a lack of access in the communities we operate in, so we set out to bring the vaccine to the people who need it.”

With the vaccine rollout AC Brands has been able to provide vaccinations to its employees and to began to make a dent with farm labor contractors and partners. “During the first weekend, we have had 340 people from partnerships through California Farmworkers Foundation enrolled for a vaccine appointment,” said Sorena.

In total, the company will have provided vaccine access to more than 30 different businesses. At its Arvin facility the company even partnered with California Farmworkers Foundation to provide 200 boxes of food to those who received vaccinations. In Delano it provided 400 boxes of food to vaccine recipients.

“It took a lot of teamwork and effort to get to where we are now,” said Sorena who reported that as of March 13 AC Brands had vaccinated 2,144 individuals. “We hope to continue to do more, and plan to do as much as we can to improve vaccine equity and education within our community and when it appears that our work is done, we’ll find a way to do even more.”

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