



USApple NextGen Fellowship Class of 2026

Fellow Bios

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Apolinar “Apol” Blanco

- East Wenatchee, WA
- Sustainability, Social Responsibility & Food Safety Manager
- Chelan Fresh

Apolinar “Apol” Blanco serves as Sustainability, Social Responsibility, and Food Safety Manager for Chelan Fresh, where he focuses on advancing responsible and sustainable practices within the apple industry. His passion for the industry began early, working alongside his parents in the orchards as a child, and continued through earning dual degrees in Sustainability & Organics and Tree Fruit & Horticulture from Wenatchee Valley College. Apol is committed to helping the apple industry continue to grow, innovate, and remain relevant for future generations. He believes the future of the industry depends on honoring its roots while embracing innovation, stewardship, and the people who make it possible.



Auna Lundberg

- Wenatchee, WA
- Sr. Marketing Manager
- Stemilt Growers

Auna Lundberg is the Senior Marketing Manager at Stemilt Growers, where she focuses on connecting consumers to fresh apples, pears, and cherries while driving success at the point of sale. She brings deep roots in the produce industry, having grown up working alongside her family in their orchard and family business. Auna combines firsthand industry knowledge with a strategic mindset, curiosity, and a passion for continuous learning in an evolving industry. Outside of work, she is an avid reader, competitive bowler, and published poet.



Bryson Nix

- Hendersonville, NC
- Orchard Manager
- Apple Wedge Packers & Cider

Bryson Nix is a sixth-generation apple grower and second-generation apple packer, shipper, and cider maker from Henderson County, NC. She serves as Orchard Manager for Apple Wedge Packers, where her family grows fresh-market apples while also packing and shipping fruit for growers across NC and the East Coast. Rooted in a vertically integrated family business, Bryson is passionate about sustainable farming practices, stewardship of the land, advancing mechanization, supporting local jobs, and advocating for the apple industry at both the local and national level. She is committed to carrying her family's agricultural legacy forward while helping strengthen the future of the American apple industry. As a 2026 NextGen Fellow, Bryson looks forward to learning from and connecting with fellow leaders across the industry.



James Rowley

- Santaquin, UT
- Farm Manager
- Cherry Hill Farms

James Rowley is a Farm Manager at Cherry Hill Farms in Santaquin, UT, where he helps oversee orchard operations with a focus on apple production. He earned a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Business from Utah State University. James is passionate about agriculture and the work of growing quality fruit while supporting family farming and the apple industry. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his wife and daughter and making the most of time together as a family.



Kelley Chase

- Haslett, MI
- Social Media Manager, Peach Ridge Orchard Supply
- Legislative Aide/Constituent Services, Office of State Rep. Greg VanWoerkom

Kelley Chase is from the Fruit Ridge region of Michigan and graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Education. She serves as Social Media Manager for Peach Ridge Orchard Supply and also works for the Michigan House of Representatives as a Legislative Aide. Kelley is passionate about advocating for the apple industry and strengthening connections between growers, consumers, and policymakers. She hopes to build a career focused on agricultural advocacy and public policy.



Guadalupe “Lupe” Villaseñor

- Pasco, WA
- Crop Insurance Agent
- Insure.ag

Guadalupe “Lupe” Villaseñor grew up in the orchards of Chelan, WA, where a childhood rooted in tree fruit inspired both a deep respect for growers and a lifelong commitment to supporting agriculture. Today, she serves as a Crop Insurance Agent and founding team member at Insure.ag, a next-generation agency serving specialty crop and row crop growers across the West Coast. Lupe advocates for both English- and Spanish-speaking growers, helping them navigate the programs and policies that protect their livelihoods. She also serves on the board of the Washington Apple Education Foundation, where she works to expand opportunities for students from tree fruit families. Outside of work, Lupe farms alongside her fiancé in Oregon and is honored to bring a grower-first perspective to the 2026 NextGen class.



Nettie Hurry

- Biglerville, PA
- Sales & Product Development
- Adams County Nursery

Nettie Hurry is a fifth-generation member of her family's fruit growing and nursery business, Adams County Nursery, in Aspers, PA. She earned a degree in Plant Science from Penn State University and a Master of Horticultural Science from North Carolina State University, where she also worked as an extension agent. Nettie returned to her family farm five years ago and now works in Product Development and Sales, focusing on evaluating new fruit varieties, supporting growers, and building strong industry partnerships. Her favorite days are spent in the test blocks, connecting with growers, or working alongside her brothers.



Nick Willett

- Yakima, WA
- Applications Manager
- Gilbert Orchards

Nick Willett works for Gilbert Orchards out of Yakima, WA, where he was born and raised. Over the past decade he has held multiple roles, currently serving as the Applications Manager. Fluent in Spanish, he oversees a variety of programs including orchard renovations, organic certification, digital applications and their crop insurance program, effectively communicating across various departments and the language barrier that is prevalent in today's agriculture. These varying roles have led to his interest in learning more about agricultural policy at the national level with the desire to become a better leader and more informed representative of the apple industry.



Stephanie Rojas

- Kennewick, WA
- Human Resources Director
- Taggares Fruit Company

Stephanie Rojas has worked in agriculture — specifically within the apple industry — for nearly a decade. Her deep roots in agriculture drive her passion for making a meaningful impact within the industry. Working across a diverse range of responsibilities has given Stephanie a unique perspective on how decisions made at the top directly affect people on the ground. She believes the industry’s greatest opportunity lies in how well it supports and advocates for its workforce, communities, and consumers. Stephanie is honored to be part of the USApple NextGen Fellowship Class of 2026 and looks forward to learning, collaborating, and helping strengthen the future of the industry.



Scott Kneeland

- Appleton, NY
- Orchard Manager
- Russell Farms Inc.

Scott Kneeland is an Orchard Manager at Russell Farms Inc. in Appleton, NY. After graduating college with a degree in Business Management, he worked in the restaurant industry, where he gained valuable experience in food safety. His current role includes oversight of the farm's spray program, pruning, and harvest operations, along with involvement in food safety, farm safety, and H-2A labor contracts. Outside of the farm, Scott enjoys spending time outdoors, watching and playing sports, and being with his family.



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