

EMERGING TIMES

...growing toward the future

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TALLAHASSEE



Calhoun shares his perspective



By
**Rachel Giles
Bedner**
Growers, Inc.

On our first day in Tallahassee, Class 6 met with FFVA Government Relations Director Butch Calhoun, who laid the foundation for what we would see and hear over the next day and a half. Calhoun shared stories and gave us insight on the inner workings of the House and Senate. Technology has greatly improved the lines of communication within the Legislature. Calhoun showed us an app that has Legislature contact information and real-time session details – very interesting and clearly very useful during the fast-paced session.

Calhoun explained the

process of how an idea becomes a law. After an idea has been developed into a draft bill, it must be taken on by a sponsor. Each bill is assigned to various committees, and the committee chair determines which bills will be heard. After approval there, the bill moves for a vote in the full House. Each bill has three readings. A companion bill must move through the Senate; if it passes there, the two bills go to a conference committee.

We concluded our session with a discussion of upcoming agricultural bills and a briefing of the representatives and senators with whom Calhoun had arranged for us to meet. I am very grateful for this opportunity to get an up-close look at how FFVA is supporting and lobbying for continued growth in agriculture.



Class 6 of FFVA's Emerging Leader Development Program and FFVA board leadership walked the halls of the capitol in Tallahassee March 21-22. They met with legislators and other key leaders to discuss priority issues for agriculture and heard presentations about the upcoming UF/IFAS budget, Farmers Feeding Florida, the Farm to School initiative, and Fresh From Florida's marketing program.

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Florida Farm to School initiative works to put local produce on school plates



By **Andrew Bryan**
Duda Ranches

We can all agree a healthy and nutritious diet is important in the development of our children's future. However, many children do not have the opportunity to have a nutritious meal other than while at school. Beth Spratt, Sean Doran and Tiffany Vause of the Florida Farm to School initiative sat down with Class 6 to discuss this issue.

The Florida Farm to School initiative promotes the procurement of fresh local Florida food for our school systems. This program is federally funded through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in an effort to educate our school systems that locally sourced food is more readily available than they may think.

In 2012, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam moved the state's Child Nutrition Program from the Department of Education to the Department of Agriculture. Since this move, the Farm to School Initiative



has focused on three pillars: procurement to acquire local foods in school meals, nutrition education in the classroom and at the administrative level, and school gardening projects to provide students with a hands-on experience to educate them that their food isn't grown at the grocery store.

The committee works to find better avenues to provide local food from farmers for school meals, as well as ways to make this program beneficial for all parties. Unfortu-

nately, the definition of "local" can sometimes be vague when school food service directors are procuring for school meals. To help overcome this, the group is working with farmers and school systems to develop programs and templates on produce availability, price, and quantity conversions from farm terms to food service terms. Healthier meal options for students, along with nutrition and agriculture education in our school system, form the foundation to a successful future.



New DEP secretary outlines his priorities

During Class 6's lunch at Hopping Green and Sams, we met with interim Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Ryan Matthews to hear about his new



By **Tony Flottemesch**
Lipman Family Farms

role and the department's agenda during the legislative session. Matthews took over after the resignation of Jon Stevenson and said he has the same philosophy and platform as his predecessor. He stressed the importance of agriculture and is passionate about water.

Matthews talked about private property rights and the importance of the permitting process. He said DEP has cut the approval process from 50 days to 20. He noted that the department has to ensure that a permit application is in the best condition to be approved before it is submitted. Matthews said it makes no sense to wait 50 days to deny a permit if it is obvious on Day 3 that the permit would not be approved. That way an applicant doesn't have false hope, and it allows the applicant to make alternative plans and not proceed down the wrong path financially.

Despite the rift between House, Senate and the governor, Matthews said DEP does hope to get things accomplished this session. Passing the budget on time is a high priority. DEP also would like to address the emergency rule for pollution notification, which requires a company that experiences a qualifying event to notify the media. Matthews also talked about SB 10 and the water management issues that need to be addressed with the influx of new Florida residents.

Farmers play a key role in feeding the hungry

Robin Safley, executive director of Feeding Florida, discussed her organization's mission and the role that farmers play in helping to end hunger in our communities. Feeding Florida is a statewide network



By **Emily Buckley Jones**
Walker LLP

of 14 food banks. Working to feed the roughly 3.3 million food-insecure Floridians is no small challenge, but through the hard work of Safley and Feeding Florida, there is hope that the need in our communities is being reduced.

Safley reiterated to our group the importance of community involvement in the plight to end hunger. When it comes to food distribution, individuals are more likely to attend an event and get the food they need if it's part of a community event. Education is also vital to providing food-insecure individuals the ability to make healthier choices that improve their overall quality of life, she said.

Access to food is the most important aspect of the formula to end hunger. Access, according to Safley, begins with the farmer. One of the goals of Feeding Florida is to ensure that no food goes to waste.

Through its Farmers Feeding Florida program, Feeding Florida helps farmers donate excess food they may have from harvest. Refrigerated trucks are available for transport. Food banks have processing facilities to handle the influx of donations, and there is an incentive program that helps offset the cost of harvesting and packing the donated food. Feeding Florida works to bring communities together to help end hunger and ensure that all Floridians have a better quality of life.





Boyd listens to concerns over proposed Everglades Agricultural Area land buy

Our thanks go out to Rep. Jim Boyd for taking the time to meet with the FFVA delegation and ELDP Class 6 during our trip to Tallahassee to take part in the 2017 legislative session. Boyd is from District



By **Travis Kuhn**
Spring Valley Farms

71 representing the western edges of Bradenton, Sarasota, and Palmetto. He previously represented the 68th district.

Boyd chairs the House Ways and Means Committee and serves on the Commerce and Rules and Policy committees.

During our meeting, Boyd was receptive to, and supportive of, our input on several controversial topics relating to

agriculture, including SB 10. He was particularly so after hearing more from FFVA board vice chairman Paul Allen of Pahokee-based R.C. Hatton, Inc. regarding the importance of the U.S. Sugar land to vegetable producers in the area and the importance of domestic food supply to national security. Most people don't realize, Allen said, that vegetables also are produced in the area that Sen. Joe Negron wants the state to buy for a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee.

It's my hope that growers will continue to show support for Boyd, a friend of agriculture, so he will continue to show us support.



Rep. Jim Boyd

Caldwell soothes concerns over fate of SB 10



By **John McIntyre**
H. M. Clause, Inc.

Many of our conversations on the Tallahassee trip turned to SB 10, Sen. Joe Negron's bill seeking to buy 60,000 acres of land south of Lake Okeechobee for water storage. Our meeting with Rep. Matt Caldwell was no exception. Caldwell represents the north Fort Myers area in Lee County. In addition to serving as chair of the Government Accountability Committee, he also serves on the Rules and Policy and Ways and Means committees.

On SB 10, Caldwell said the House's plan was to wait, watch and see what the Senate ends up proposing, and

then respond. He said the price tag on the bill was up to \$4 billion and that there were plenty of other projects, in the eyes of the House, that need to be funded ahead of SB 10.

We learned that the state is not ignoring the water quality issues SB 10 is supposedly aimed at addressing. Work is being done on the Herbert Hoover Dike around Lake Okeechobee to raise and strengthen it. The state also is working to restore the Kissimmee River's original path, thus restoring the wetlands around it to help clean and filter water destined for Lake

Okeechobee. Both projects should be completed in the next couple of years and should help alleviate some of the water quality issues affecting Lake Okeechobee.

Caldwell was asked about any plans by the state to upgrade septic tanks in Martin County to help stop nutrients leaching into the St. Lucie River. Caldwell said sewer and waste are the responsibility of local governments, so Martin County should address the issue. Florida's west coast dealt with a similar problem several years ago, he added, and a local tax was levied to help pay for the installation of a city sewer system.

Our meeting with Caldwell was a positive one. We left with a much better feeling regarding the position of the House on SB 10 and the confidence that he is a strong supporter of agriculture in the state of Florida.





Raburn looks out for agriculture in tough Tallahassee environment



By **Jeff Searcy**
Helena Chemical Co.

During the hectic schedule of the ongoing legislative session, we were fortunate to spend time with Rep. Jake Raburn of District 57. Raburn, a strawberry producer and an FFVA member, told us that in 2012 on a visit with Farm Bureau leaders similar to our leadership group, his interest in government was piqued, and it ultimately motivated him to run for office. After giving us a brief rundown of the layout of the chamber and the processes of passing bills, Raburn talked about his goals for the current session.

Raburn is working on a general agriculture bill that helps clearly define what is considered agricultural and what is not with regard to tax breaks. This wide-ranging bill covers green belt designations, animal breeding grounds, and expands the radius of restricted-use license tags for farm trucks.

With farming in his background, Raburn understands the need to ensure farmers are getting the exemptions they deserve while weeding out the costly unnecessary breaks. Raburn also is working on a Department of Agriculture and Consumer

Services bill. In what seems rare in today's government processes, Raburn is pushing for reduced fees and lower taxes for citizens on items such as concealed weapons permits.

Raburn discussed the importance of building relationships with the elected officials that represent us. From his position, he feels strongly that learning the important issues directly from the people he rep-

resents is much more effective than hearing from a lobbyist. He stressed the importance of visiting and getting to know officials on a personal level to truly help make a difference on the issues we feel are vital.

It was a great visit with Raburn, and it's good to know we have someone who understands the agriculture industry fighting for us in Tallahassee.



Rep. Jake Raburn discusses the general agriculture bill that he is working on.



Albritton on leadership: You have to be credible

Florida Rep. Ben Albritton's talk with us at Tuesday night's dinner could be summed up with the word "integrity." He focused on getting involved and on leadership.



By **Jordan Yancy Driscolls**

Albritton, a citrus grower, was appointed in 2005 to the Florida Citrus Commission. He was re-appointed in 2007 and elected chairman.

Albritton said that early on he had no interest in running for office because he "didn't want to live in a fishbowl." But he got involved because people influential in his life told him, "If you care about ag, you have to be in the game and be willing to fight."

He echoed that same advice for Class 6. He urged the group to get to know our elected officials. He went on to talk about leadership: what makes a good leader and how to become one.

"Don't be afraid to be in the fight, but know what you are going to say," he said. "To lead, you have to be credible." He cautioned that a fatal mistake in leadership is "trying to be something you're not;" you must be believable and have integrity in what you say and do.



Rep. Ben Albritton

Albritton said that in order to be a good leader, it is important to listen. He encouraged the class to "force yourself to be a creative listener," and if you aren't a good listener yourself, people won't listen to you. He added: "What we say matters. People take away what they hear."

He closed by encouraging our class to build our own skill sets by reading. "If you want to lead, read," he said. He encouraged us to reach out to him for advice but to remember that he will tell the truth, because "hard questions equal hard answers."

Goodson appreciates stewardship of ag producers

During the early weeks of the 2017 Florida legislative session, Class 6 got to see firsthand the inner workings of Tallahassee and received an education of a lifetime.



By **Zach Sweat**
TriEst Ag Group Inc.

Over the course of two days, class members met with senators, representatives, governmental agency heads and the commissioner of agriculture, and had private tours of both the Senate and House chambers.

While the legislative climate for agriculture in Tallahassee this session could be described as cloudy with a heavy chance of rain, members of this group had the chance to meet with a friendly face in Rep. Tom Goodson.



Rep. Tom Goodson

Goodson, chair of the Agriculture and Property Rights Subcommittee and a previous recipient of FFVA's Legislator of the Year award, acknowledged the challenges that agriculturists face and pledged his continuing support for the industry.

"Everything you do to make a living ... people have moved here telling you how you are doing it all wrong. You are the best stewards of the land out of everybody," he said.

While discussing some of FFVA's top legislative priorities with Class 6 and a few members of FFVA's board of directors, Goodson talked about the ongoing need to bridge the gap between producers and consumers.

"Florida has some of the best farmland in the world. Food just doesn't appear from Publix. But do the people know that?" he asked.

As a champion of Florida agriculture and a contributor to the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation, Goodson has been asked to help educate freshman representative members of the needs and importance of the Florida agriculture industry by FFVA Director of Government Relations Butch Calhoun. Goodson, with his friendly demeanor and outgoing personality, is a great asset to have in our corner.



Roth wants to ‘do big stuff’ during first term

Rep. Rick Roth, a Republican who represents District 85 in northern Palm Beach County, is no stranger to agriculture. He grew up in Belle Glade and is a



By **Simon Bollin**
Hillsborough County Economic Development Council

longtime vegetable and sugar cane producer. In addition to being president of Roth Farms, he also serves on the FFVA board of directors and the Palm Beach County Farm Bureau. Roth was elected to the Florida Legislature in 2016. He attributes his successful campaign to two things: good timing, as District 85 was a vacant seat due to redistricting, and help from many people through 30 years of volunteering on various boards.

Roth said his first big surprise upon arriving in Tallahassee was that he was assigned to all of the committees he requested: Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee, Agriculture and Property Rights Subcommittee, Commerce Committee, Oversight, Transparency and Administration Subcommittee, and the PreK-12 Quality Subcommittee.



Rep. Rick Roth

While in the Legislature, Roth wants to “do big stuff,” and he has introduced and co-sponsored

several bills to accomplish that task. HB 321 proposes an amendment to the state constitution to require a 66.66 percent vote to pass a constitutional amendment instead of the current 60 percent. HB 1211 directs the South Florida Water Management District to take specific actions related to Lake Okeechobee discharges and rehabilitation of the Herbert Hoover Dike.

Roth encourages business people to run for office and for farmers to get to know their elected officials. He left us with this thought: “There is a God and a plan for the country. Who better to tell that story than a farmer?”



A look behind the scenes of Fresh From Florida

During our experience at the Capitol, Class 6 met with Jackie Moalli, Morgan Edwards and Dan Sleep from the Florida Department of Agriculture and



By **Andrew Bryan**
Duda Ranches

Consumer Science’s Marketing and Development Division to discuss the inner workings behind the “Fresh From Florida” marketing program.

Since 1990, FDACS has provided Florida producers the opportunity to join the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign (FAPC), which allows access to benefits of programs such as Fresh From Florida. Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam has largely helped pave the way for members to gain access to the benefits of the program. This program provides Florida producers significant marketing advantages such as the opportunity to use the “Fresh From Florida” logo on their packaging, print and digital marketing material, supermarket promotions using the grower’s name, as well as the ability to provide consumers an in-person experience in the form of trade shows and in-store sampling.

Consumers want local, healthy and safe produce. With the efforts of the Fresh From Florida program, this is happening. On average, a consumer must see something seven to 10 times before the thought begins to resonate in their minds. To accomplish this, the program runs TV and radio commercials in three-week cycles and produces a print and social media campaign promoting seasonal availability as well as seasonal recipes.

Next time you are in the grocery store, look for the Fresh From Florida logo and support our local Florida producers!



UF/IFAS works to protect budget requests during tough session



By **Emily Buckley**
Jones Walker LLP

During our Tallahassee trip, Class 6 met with Sydney Stone from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences' Office of Government Affairs to discuss this year's legislative priorities.

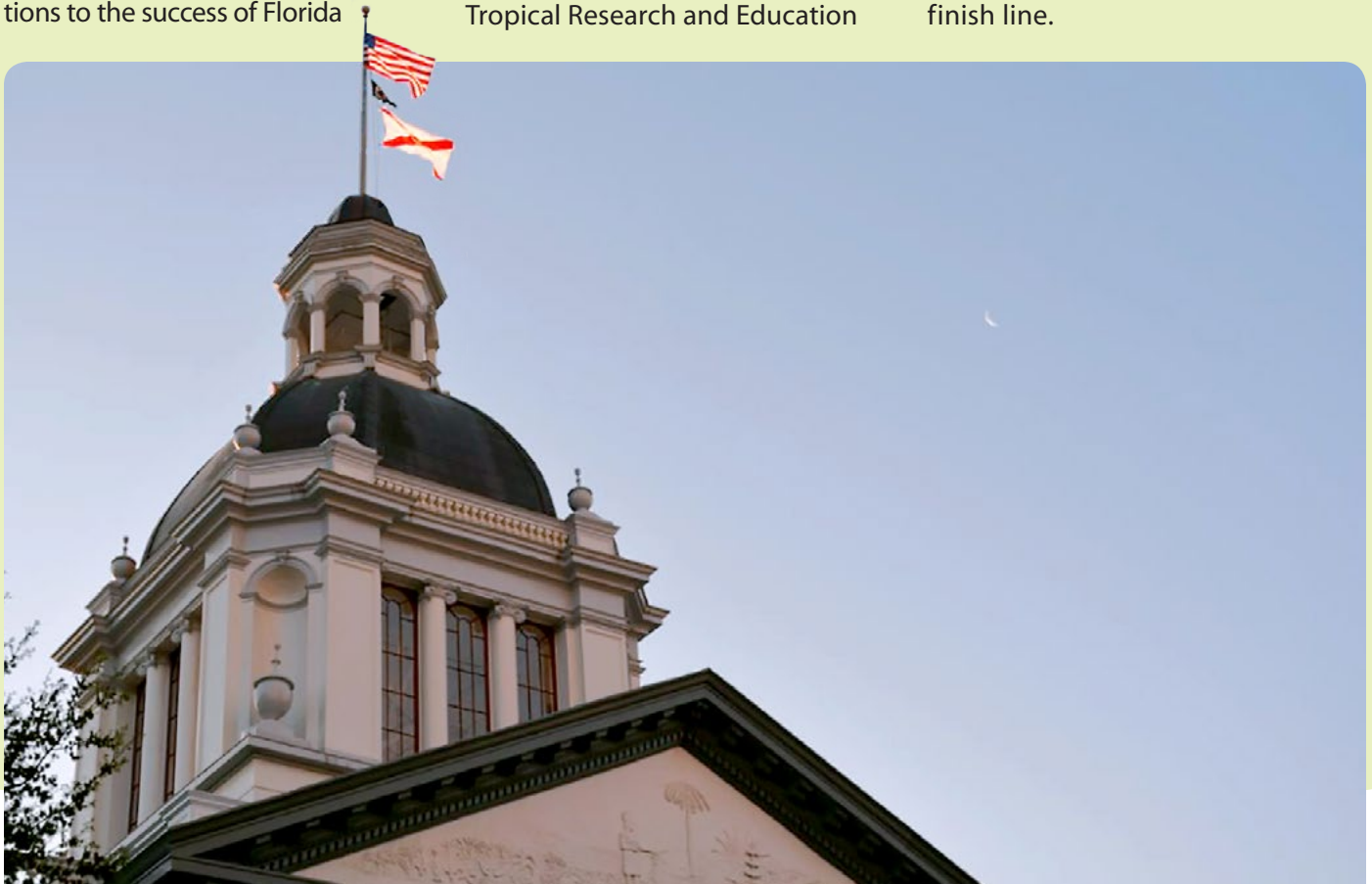
IFAS is responsible for the research and development of Florida's agricultural, natural resources and food-related industries. Its contributions to the success of Florida

agriculture are innumerable. This legislative session is proving to be a tough climate for budget issues, but that has not stopped IFAS from aggressively working to fund projects that will better help the industry and educate consumers.

One request is for \$1.8 million for water quantity and quality BMP support, which will develop the next generation of agricultural BMPs. BMPs focus on conservation, water quality, and preservation while allowing producers to farm profitably. IFAS also is requesting funds to upgrade the Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center and the Southwest Florida and Tropical Research and Education

Centers in Immokalee and Homestead. These centers provide vital research on which farmers and communities depend.

This session has been difficult for anyone with major budget items. The House has been through exercises that would cut 10 percent from higher education, the budget through which IFAS is funded. This posturing of the House has many in higher education concerned. However, through the hard work of Stone and her boss, Mary Ann Gosa-Hooks, it is safe to say that IFAS is in the hands of the right leaders to get them through this session and push these projects over the finish line.





Grimsley is a hard-working businesswoman, legislator

To conclude our visit to the state's Capitol, FFVA's Government Relations Director Butch Calhoun arranged a session with Republican Sen. Denise Grimsley of District 26.



By **Rachel Giles Bedner**
Growers, Inc.

Originally from Sebring, Grimsley is a nurse and hospital administrator, as well as a businesswoman, citrus grower and rancher. She has been in the Florida Senate since 2012 and recently announced her candidacy for agriculture commissioner in 2018.

Grimsley said she makes it her goal to help others navigate regulatory agency issues, and her priorities are focused on the rural

economic development bill and the agriculture budget.

Our meeting with Grimsley took place in the newly remodeled Senate Chamber. The room was impressive and grand. It was lined with portraits of past Senate presidents and balcony seating for onlookers.

After our session with Grimsley, our class participated in a mock legislative session, where we argued over our preposterous bill and voted by the press of a button.

Altogether, it was a remarkable time, and we truly appreciate all that Grimsley does to help our agricultural community.



Rep. Denise Grimsley

Class tours medical cannabis operation



By **Simon Bollin**
Hillsborough County Economic Development Council

Some members of Class 6 started our Tallahassee trip early with a tour of the Surterra Wellness medical cannabis facility. Surterra is one of the first companies in Florida to grow, process and sell medicinal products derived from the marijuana plant.

Surterra has two growing facilities

in Florida, located in Hillsborough and Leon counties. Plants are grown from cuttings and take 10 to 12 weeks to reach maturity. Each plant is marked with a bar code. In order to maintain inventory-control records required by the state, plants and buds are weighed at each step; at harvest after being dried and ground, and following the extraction process. Discarded plant material is weighed, ground and used in compost that is put back into the bedding material for the new plant cuttings. The extracted oil is further refined onsite, then transported to Sur-

terra's wellness center in Tallahassee to be blended with other essential oils and/or put into distribution containers such as spray bottles, aerosols, or oils for medicinal use.

cannabis, doctors must take required courses through the Florida Medical Association, and then must register as a qualified ordering physician through the Department of Health, Office of Compassionate Use. Patients who wish to receive medical cannabis must be seen by a registered physician for at least 90 days before being prescribed it for treatment.

The use of medical cannabis for qualifying medical conditions became legal in Florida when Amendment 2 passed in January. Nevertheless, cannabis still remains illegal under federal law.

It was an interesting tour of a unique growing operation that has the potential to become a new industry in Florida. The Surterra staff members were very knowledgeable of their industry and were great hosts, providing an abundance of information and frankly answering our questions.

to prescribe medicinal





Putnam discusses challenges and bright spots on the horizon



By **Tony Flottemesch**
Lipman Family Farms

During Class 6's lunch at the Governors Club, Commissioner Adam Putnam stopped by to talk about the agriculture industry and how it is affected by the decisions and bills passed in Tallahassee by our elected representatives.

The issue on everyone's mind was SB 10, the bill to buy land south of Lake Okeechobee in the Everglades Agricultural Area for water storage. At this writing, it was expected to be a close vote. If it does eventually pass, it likely could negatively affect the budget. One of the biggest challenges with SB 10 is educating the public about the bill. Since residents in general don't understand that this won't fix the problem, they aren't properly informed to tell their representatives how they would like them to vote. Putnam talked about the public awareness challenge with this bill and touched on other challenges with the agricultural industry, including the weather and Mexican ag products flooding the market and sending prices down.

He also pointed out some bright spots and potential, one of which would include President Trump. Commissioner Putnam believes Florida could make Trump look good, and that Trump could use Florida as an example of the trade agreements



At lunch, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam gave his perspective on SB 10 and the Trump administration.

and immigration policies he is promoting. Florida has its share of illegal immigrants that are both criminals and law abiding and contributing members

of society; and the Florida agricultural industry is being hurt by the low-cost produce crossing the border and putting American jobs in jeopardy.



ELDP News



▲ **Ashley Layson (Class 5)** was promoted from director of marketing to chief marketing officer for Farm Credit of Florida. Layson served as director of marketing for three years at Farm Credit of Florida and was previously the director of marketing for Alabama Ag Credit. In her new role, she will manage the expanding marketing department and oversee all marketing initiatives while reporting to the board of directors. "I am thrilled to serve the agricultural industry through this new leadership position. Farm Credit of Florida takes great pride in nurturing and supporting the growth in both their member/customers and their employees," she said.



▲ **Jonathan Allen (Class 2)** talks with children at Frostproof Elementary, where he was a guest by Facetime for "Ask a Farmer." The kids learned about corn, green beans and cabbage, and each one got to eat or take home a sample.

▶ **Jeff Goodale (Class 3)** has been promoted to director of domestic sales for Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc. In his new role, Jeff is responsible for managing internal sales initiatives: Western sales, Eastern sales, Wellington replenishment sales and citrus/global sales. He also continues to be responsible for logistics.



Class 6 would like to thank Jones Walker LLP and A. Duda and Sons for the delicious Tuesday dinner.

