

EMERGING TIMES

...growing toward the future

Volume 7 • Issue 6 | September 2018

REFLECTIONS



Class 7 takes stock on a year full of learning and travel

Class 7 of FFVA's Emerging Leader Development Program is wrapping up its year together. From the first introductions at the annual convention in 2017, to the legislator visits in Tallahassee, to the final trip to California's Salinas Valley, these young professionals have taken it all in and formed a strong network along the way. In this final special edition of Emerging Times, the class members reflect on some highlights of the past year and share how the program will help them as they move forward with their careers.



CONTENTS

FFVA embodies unified spirit of specialty crop industry	2
Discussion among class members generated new ideas	3
Networking and people set this program apart	3
Friendships formed have been life-changing, invaluable	4
FFVA invests in members and the future.....	5
'Value' embodies the ELDP experience.....	5
Each session was special in its own distinct way	6
A once-in-a-lifetime chance to learn from influential leaders	7
ELDP helps broaden understanding of agriculture	7
I now have 10 new friends who are only a phone call away.....	8





FFVA embodies unified spirit of specialty crop industry



By **Frankie Montalvo**
Glades Formulating Corp.

FFFVA's Emerging Leadership Development Program had been on my mind for a couple years before I finally applied. Numerous friends and colleagues told me I should apply and talked about how great the program was. I had high expectations, and ELDP greatly exceeded them.

Our class is composed of many FFVA growers in the Glades, so I went in knowing about half of the class. All of our class grew close over the course of the program. I am proud to say I have new friends with whom we (and other ELDP alumni) will help to shape the future of our specialty crop industry in Florida.

This industry has brought us together, and it is because of the membership of FFVA and program sponsors that we have had this opportunity.

ELDP is a great microcosm of how our industry works together to help each other. At all our Florida programs, FFVA



members and employees were instrumental in showing us more about their roles and businesses. In Maitland, we learned a tremendous amount about how FFVA helps grower members navigate the endless and seemingly ever-expanding regulatory environments surrounding labor and other

issues. Tallahassee showed us how board member-growers and FFVA staff work with legislators on key issues addressed during session. On our South Florida production trip, FFVA members opened the doors of their operations and gave us a great view into the process behind FFVA-facilitated commodity exchanges.

The California production trip lived up to the hype and then some. Their growers face many of the same issues but with far more hostile state and local governments and regulations. We also met with associations similar to FFVA that advocate for their growers.

My main takeaway from the program is what FFVA embodies – the spirit of our specialty crop industry and our partners to work together to help each other. I know now that our class, previous and future classes will all be part of this process.





Networking and people set this program apart

The Emerging Leadership Development Program has been an experience I could not have had anywhere else. The knowledge that I have gained on the issues facing agriculture not only in our own state but also in California has been a key reason that I view this program as a success. What sets this program apart is the networking and people we met with to discuss their farming practices and the obstacles they face on a daily basis.



By **Daniel Rifa**
U.S. Sugar Corporation

The team at FFVA that made all of our trips possible went above and beyond to ensure that everyone walked away from this program a stronger leader in the Florida agriculture industry. We will graduate from this program having a broader knowledge of the issues that face all farmers in Florida and how, as leaders, it is our job to help develop solutions. I will always look back on this experience with fondness and gratitude. I want to thank everyone at the FFVA for all of their hard work in making this program a success.



Discussion among class members generated new ideas

FFFVA's Emerging Leadership Program provided a first-class experience for the younger generation in the industry. It was evident after the first meeting that my classmates and I shared the same



By **Myles Basore**
TKM Bengard

passion for Florida agriculture. Having a common dialogue within the class allowed us to generate new ideas that will improve our individual operations in the future.

CEOs, upper management and family business owners were very gracious to have an open-door policy with our leadership class. One statement that kept coming up at each operation was, "You all are the future."

The program informed us as the younger generation on the inner workings of FFVA's mission for the industry and gave us the opportunity to see other operations across the state. Being a part of FFVA's leadership development program was an opportunity I will not soon forget.

A huge thank you to Sonia Tighe, Lisa Lochridge and Alyssa Badalamenti for the hard work they put into to making this year in the ELDP a special experience.



Friendships formed have been life-changing, invaluable



By **Catherine Cellon**
Duda Farm Fresh Foods

Thinking about this past year, I cannot express how grateful I am to have been a part of FFVA's ELDP program. From speaking with senators in Tallahassee to studying automated technologies in California, each trip was a unique experience that I know we all learned a lot from. I am very thankful for all the business owners and employees who took time out of their day to show us around their company and open up to us about the issues and concerns they are experiencing in the industry. It was interesting to hear people from other sections of agriculture experiencing the same problems across the board, specifically in relation to labor. It was a great educational experience to listen to how each company dealt with this issue.

One of the most significant aspects of the program is the friendships -- professional and personal -- we made. The main reason I became interested in a career in agriculture was the great people and camaraderie in the industry. This program has reaffirmed my opinion. When I graduated from college, I only knew a few people outside of my university who worked in agriculture. Through this program, I developed wonderful relationships with people from other companies and departments. Growing closer

to many of these diverse people has definitely been a life-changing experience and one for which I am forever grateful.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sonia Tighe for the tremendous effort she put into organizing each trip and making sure everything ran as smoothly as possible. I'd also like to recognize each and every other FFVA employee that put together this incredible program. Without everyone's hard work, I don't think this would have been possible.





FFVA invests in members and the future



By **Shane Rogers**
J&J Family of Farms

Being part of ELDP Class 7 was a great honor and fantastic learning experience. The FFVA put together a very well-rounded program that allowed us to get a hands-on experience in all aspects of Florida agriculture and a real opportunity to build meaningful relationships with the current and future players across the state. It was amazing how much we were able to do in just one year.

In particular, our trip to the FFVA offices in Maitland really opened our eyes to the tremendous resources available to members and the amount

of dedication each FFVA staff member brings to the table.

From being advocates for the farmer at the federal level to helping growers with marketing strategies and labor solutions, the FFVA goes above and beyond for agriculture in Florida.

The FFVA team is at the forefront of the issues and challenges facing Florida agriculture and they approach with an eagerness to provide measurable solutions and value for each of their members.

During our time together as a class we made important friendships and business relationships that will continue beyond our class. In spite of having a group of fairly diverse skills and career paths the commonality of being a part of Florida agriculture will enrich each of us and pay dividends for the state in the future.



I want to thank the members of the FFVA for creating this unique and valuable opportunity. And I'd like to say a special thank you to Sonia Tighe, Lisa Lochridge and Alyssa Badalamenti for their hard work and amount of time they put into making ELDP class 7 an amazing experience.

'Value' embodies the ELDP experience



By **Philip Grigsby**
Premier Ag Finance

Thinking back over the past year of my experience as a member of the ELDP class 7, the first thing that comes to my mind is value. From building relationships with those in my class/ FFVA leadership, an all-access legislative trip to Tallahassee, meeting with the leading producers in South Florida agriculture and to cap it all off, an exclusive look at some of the world's largest farming operations in California, it's hard to begin to put to words the tremendous value that I

took away from my experience.

Being a young person in agriculture today it is often hard to relate to others who are not directly involved in our business and because there are so few of us in the industry today, it is refreshing to have the opportunity to build relationships with young professionals who share the same mindset. A recurring theme during all of our trips



and meetings was the mounting challenges that face the industry that we are all so passionate about. With state and Federal governments' overreaching regulations in labor, property use/ landowner rights, and every environmental agency public or private watching over our shoulders, it's hard to say who is actually for American agriculture in a positive light at times.

All this being said I am truly grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of this high-caliber program. There is no question that the future of Florida agriculture is bright and I am highly encouraged about the opportunities for the future. It is programs like FFVA's Emerging Leadership Development Program that ensure bright well-connected leadership for the future.



Each session was special in its own distinct way



By **Brent Johnson**
FMC Corporation

As I reflect on the past year as a member of Class 7 of the Emerging Leader Development Program, I can't put into words what the program has meant to me. As I transitioned into a new role with a new company, I was concerned that this was the absolute worst time to be going through a program like this. However, I couldn't have been more wrong. This program allowed me to meet so many people and make so many new friends in the industry that I must say thank you to FFVA for selecting me to participate in such a wonderful program. This program is truly a benefit for those who are

fortunate enough to go through it.

I'd also like to say thank you to my classmates. Many of us started out as complete strangers at the convention last year, and even through all the hectic hotel changes and other events that happened at the convention, I felt that we were able to form a friendship and make connections that will last a lifetime. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Sonia Tighe for all the hard work, dedication and passion that she pours into the program. Without her, this program truly would not be what it is today.

For me, there wasn't a particular trip that stood out over the others because they all were special in their own way. However, the production trip to Belle Glade was perhaps the most beneficial for me and my development as a professional in Florida. Because I'm not a native Floridian, I didn't completely understand the



complexities of agriculture in the EAA. The trip to Belle Glade and the opportunity to visit many of the amazing growers in the area certainly benefited me in understanding the complex rotations with sugar cane, leafy vegetables, sweet corn and other crops.

I want to say sincere thank you to all of those who took time from their busy schedules to visit with Class 7. I think I speak for the entire group in saying our time together taught us more than you will ever know.





A once-in-a-lifetime chance to learn from influential leaders

I am privileged to have been selected for Class 7 of the ELDP. Over the past 12 months, I was exposed to several educational and unique events that enlightened me and our entire class.



By **Maria Cavazos R.C. Hatton**

The group of 10 began this journey as complete strangers, and now we have created lasting relationships that will help us continue to support Florida Agriculture.

This program has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn fundamental information from influential leaders in the industry. It all started when we met at the FFVA headquarters and learned about all the support the association provides to its members. The Tallahassee trip was an eye-opener because most of it was new to me, including how a bill becomes law to the important role Butch Calhoun plays. However, as many would agree, the California production trip was where I found myself amazed by their growing conditions, varieties, technology and the immaculate facilities.

Thank you to all who support this program... especially to Sonia Tighe for her time and effort in creating an itinerary that has enhanced my professional life and allowed Class 7 to network with individuals who share a passion for agriculture. This is magnificent experience that more young leaders should pursue to increase their knowledge in many aspects of the industry.

ELDP helps broaden understanding of agriculture

The ELDP program provides a unique opportunity to network with peers from different arenas of Florida agriculture. We were able to come together, learn about one another and share unique experiences



By **Adam Roe Wm. G. Roe and Sons**

together throughout our travels with the program. FFVA's member network opened its arms for us, sharing views of their farms and packinghouses as well as industry insight.

However, learning does not stop in your comfort zone. Many of us were familiar with fields, packinghouses and crop talk. Then we arrived in Tallahassee. That trip was a look into a foreign world – a unique chance to sit with lawmakers and hear about issues and politics. All the work that goes into legislation that benefits agriculture and working to protect us against harmful legislation is a daunting task.

Production trips to both South Florida and California were huge highlights of the program. It was educational to see growers of similar crops in different growing regions with different sets of challenges. Getting a look at the social and political challenges that California growers are facing was an eye-opening experience. Growers are taking these challenges head-on and working to comply with ever-changing standards.

Young people in Florida agriculture should look at FFVA's leadership development program as a way to learn and grow from industry peers and leaders. Seize the chance to get involved. Thank you to everyone who makes this program possible – it is an invaluable resource.





I now have 10 new friends who are only a phone call away



By **Justin Pettit**
Blue Hammock Farms

The past year with EDLP Class 7 was an experience I will always remember. I was the only class member who could not attend the convention because of a little accident, and at first was unsure if I was going to be able to fulfill my commitment. I am so thankful I pushed through and had the opportunity to be part of the program. It opened my eyes to things that I don't always take the time to slow down and understand.

What FFVA does for its members and how it supports Florida agriculture is incredible. The staffers who are dedicated to certain areas of expertise are a key reason they are so amazing and great at what they do. The history and knowledge in the room at our

Maitland session alone was unbelievable and instantly made me understand the value and importance of being an FFVA member.

Our Tallahassee trip gave us a snapshot of being in the capital during an election year, and all I can say is, "Wow." There was so much going on with so little time, and the number of important people in one place was astonishing.

Our Florida production tour with the Western Growers guys was great. Whether we looked at lettuce, a sugar cane burn, sweet corn or celery, we saw it all over a few days and were able to witness the amount of work and dedication it takes on a daily basis to make those operations seamless.

We reconvened as a group in late summer for our California trip, where we saw West Coast agriculture on a grand scale. California is at the forefront of major issues with a higher minimum wage, lack of good labor, and many other rules and regulations



that also loom in our near future. The trip drove home the importance of becoming involved in the future of Florida agriculture because we all have a voice. Becoming involved is the only way to be heard in important situations.

I would like to thank Sonia Tighe for everything she did for us. It's not an easy job putting this program together and making it run flawlessly. Sonia does an amazing job. The ELDP has been invaluable, and I now have 10 peers whom I will always call friends, and I know they will always be only a phone call away.

