

EMERGING TIMES

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Emerging Leaders learn about FFVA and current issues during second session



Members of Class 2 with the clothing and items they collected for the Redlands Christian Migrant Association.

Members of FFVA's Emerging Leader Development Program met Nov. 7-9 at FFVA's Maitland office for their second session, which focused on major issues facing the industry and the work of FFVA. Activities included an overview of how the association operates, presentations from staff members and activities designed to help class members get to know themselves and each other better.

The group had a chance to mingle with FFVA's executive committee over lunch and heard about research related to the perception of locally grown produce conducted by the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education.

During the two months between FFVA 2012 and their first session the class worked diligently to collect shirts and other items for the Redlands Christian Migrant Association.

"RCMA distributed the shirts to migrant families at four Migrant Head Start centers in Plant City, plus centers in Dover and Dade City," said Kathy Vega, RCMA's area coordinator in Plant City.

"They were happy to get the shirts," Vega said. "And they were happy to learn that there were people out there that wanted to help them take care of their children."



Foundation enhances industry through research, outreach



by Nick Basore
TKM Bengard Farms, LLC

The Florida Specialty Crop Foundation is dedicated to providing practical solutions to the many concerns facing today's agricultural industry. The foundation strives to achieve this through research, education, and philanthropy.

The organization has four strategic goals. The first is to "conduct research and education initiatives that will serve as major contributions to long-term sustainability of Florida specialty crop producers." The FSCF develops close relationships with industry stakeholders and key trade members. It provides research for grant proposals and manages block grants dealing with child nutrition, farm labor contractor training, bacterial spot, and more.

The foundation's second goal is to "enhance the lives of children of those working in the specialty crop industry, and of young people pursuing careers in agriculture." The FSCF partners with programs such as the Redlands Christian Migrant Association to help provide quality child care services for agricultural workers. The foundation also has begun its second year running the Emerging Leader Development Program, which identifies up-and-coming leaders in Florida agriculture and provides them with the education and tools to tackle many of the issues facing the industry.

The third goal is to "develop fundraising strategies to be financially secure and independent." The foundation receives direct public support such as the Annual Convention's Benefit Auction and Golf Tournament, as well as by securing a quarter-million dollars in grants. The foundation has been approved for three new grants in 2013 for nearly \$590,000.

The final goal is to "increase awareness of foundation goals, activities and accomplishments by increasing communication among the foundation, the agricultural industry and the general public." By issuing newsletters and keeping a regularly updated website, the foundation strives to keep members informed and increase its visibility at major events.

Florida agriculture is fortunate to have such a hard-working and diligent resource in the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation. It provides education and works to solve tough industry challenges while striving to improve the well-being of agricultural workers and their families.

A chance to show our true colors



by Carleton Johns
Tater Farms

No leadership training would be complete without first determining the personality types of the leaders being trained. Dr. Hannah Carter was there to assist us with just that. Dr. Carter is the director of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute. She also teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on leadership development at the University of Florida and in her spare time conducts workshops on leadership for businesses and organizations. She was honored with the Outstanding Leadership Program Director award earlier this year.

Fresh off of a quick lunch break, Dr. Carter began her four-hour marathon session by helping us each recognize our personality type as represented by one of four colors. After answering a litany of character-based questions we discovered that our group was largely composed of "oranges" and "golds." Basically, we all are some combination of creative, competitive, organized, skillful and driven, and we just aren't too concerned with how you feel about it.

Once we knew our classmates' colors, we learned the importance of being



Ian Bessell and Joby Sherrod participate in one of the leadership development activities facilitated by Dr. Hannah Carter.

able to recognize the "color" of others that we work with and how to better approach each color to be more successful at getting them to produce our desired results rather than alienate or offend them. Additionally, we learned what job types are better suited for each color and what jobs are not. Dr. Carter then brought us back to reality by showing us the differences of what each color thought of themselves vs. how other colors viewed that type of person. By the end of the session, I think most of us had already pegged our family members and were ready to administer the test to them to see the results.

This session was hands down the most entertaining of the day, yet also very applicable to our day-to-day lives. We all learned a little something about ourselves and each other.



FFVA President Mike Stuart speaks with class members about the structure and operation of FFVA.

Realistic but grim picture of ag labor



by Ian Bessell
ABC Research Laboratories

Class 2 held its second session at FFVA headquarters in Maitland. We spent several days learning about the inner workings of FFVA and how the membership is fortunate to have such a talented group of folks supporting their industry.

Mike Carlton, FFVA's director of labor relations, gave a presentation titled, "Ag Labor: What do we do now?" It could have just as easily been called, "Gloom, Despair and Agony on Me." Carlton painted a realistic and at times grim picture of where things stand regarding labor issues and the recent election.

Immigration once again will be a dominant political issue for the coming year, and there is no good solution for agriculture currently on the table. Carlton explained the status of some of the various proposed legislative options at both the state and federal levels. In Georgia, a mandatory state E-Verify program has cost the state millions of dollars and resulted in the loss of thousands

of full-time jobs. He also took a closer look at the current H-2A guest worker program, which provides a stable and productive workforce "usually" at the time needed. However, Carlton explained that this program presents many challenges: It is expensive, bureaucratically complex and involves working with an adversarial U.S. Department of Labor.

Our industry must send a strong message to our elected officials that we need a solution to this lingering problem once and for all. It should not be left up to each state to deal with. A stable, reliable workforce is integral to the survival of agriculture in Florida and nationwide, and whatever solution is finally implemented needs to provide for this critical industry requirement.

Research digs into 'local' label for produce



by Thomas Dalton
Farm Credit of Central Florida

Recently Class 2 and FFVA's executive committee were afforded the opportunity to hear a presentation about research into consumer perceptions of locally grown produce in Florida. The presentation was by Dr. Tracy Irani and Rachel Divine of the UF/IFAS Center for Public

Issues Education. The research was funded by an FDACS block grant supported by FFVA and the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation. The presentation covered the first year of the project and explained consumers' perceptions of what is local, the value of local food, the perception of the local food movement, Florida's attempt at branding, and the economic impact of locally grown food.

Individual consumer perceptions of what is local vary widely. Consumers classify locally grown food from county to state to region to food grown in the United States. Researchers also found that consumers' definition of local is product-specific. In general, consumers in the survey preferred locally grown food such as Florida tomatoes, but for items such as apples (which aren't produced here) they preferred apples grown in the United States over foreign-grown apples.

Consumers in the focus groups placed a high value on locally grown products, but the product has to have quality, the price has to be fair, and access to the product has to be convenient. In the past few years, access to local products has improved because of the local food movement and a significant increase in farmer's markets. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, since 1994 the number of farmer's markets has increased more than 300 percent. That jump, coupled with the increased presence of local food and produce at restaurants, has made locally produced vegetables, fruit and other products easily accessible. Additionally, with the boon in the local food movement, grocery chains and retail specialty stores are selling more local products as well.

The increased demand for local foods in Florida has definitely made an impact on the state. The economic impact of local food on Florida is represented by 38,573 jobs, an increase in gross domestic product of \$2.26 billion, \$1.28 billion in labor income, and \$4.14 billion in output. The effect of local food on Florida's economy is significant, and it is imperative that producers and politicians formulate a plan for continued success.



Learning how to have crucial conversations



by Jessica Kerstein
Lipman

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other." -- John F. Kennedy

Dr. Hannah Carter couldn't have started her presentation with a better quote. Understanding different personality types is crucial to being both an excellent leader and learning to work effectively with many personality types.

Dr. Carter did several interesting exercises with us to shed light on how we react in everyday situations. For one, she asked us to simply write our names. For such a simple task, we were amazed by the confusion in the room. Some of us wrote just our first name; others wrote their whole name (including middle name). Some wrote their name in cursive and others in print. In another exercise, she read us a story called "Drama by the River," and then asked us to rate the characters from best to worst based on their actions. Once we rated them on our own (which was a very easy task), we then broke into groups and had to agree on the ratings of the characters. The second part was much more difficult because we all related to different characters in the story. The third exercise was to describe our perfect work scenario. All three of these exercises seemed elementary at first, but they were so impactful because we learned that the slightest different view of a situation can make all the difference. However, knowledge of those differences can allow them to be a source of growth rather than a source of conflict.

Crucial conversations are those where opinions vary, stakes are high, emotions run strong and the outcome could have a big impact on the quality of your life. How we handle these conversations makes all the difference. We can choose to avoid them, face them but handle them poorly, or face them and handle them well by resolving issues through

dialogue to benefit the situations we care most about. To be successful, it is important for all parties to feel comfortable opening up and to receiving opposing views.

Dr. Carter's session will certainly help me communicate in both my personal and professional life more effectively. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people."

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- Jessica Kerstein

Global environmental regulations will shape the future of agriculture



by Amber Kosinsky
Wish Farms

"Why would anyone become a farmer?" That was the initial title for Vice President of Industry Resources Dan Botts' presentation during our visit to the FFVA office. After sharing insight about his role at FFVA and discussing the environmental regulatory framework in Florida and beyond, I'm not sure anyone in the room could answer that question.

The reality is that the agricultural community

faces many complex challenges that are unique to our industry. Botts' review of regulation and intricate issues was, I admit, overwhelming. As we know, our world is now a global marketplace. Consumers have come to expect fresh produce on the shelves in their grocery store year-round. The knowledge of what is "in season" has been skewed as imports and exports around the world continue to increase.

Europe is setting the global market standard for accepted pesticide use. The European Union's effect on the international import market is ever-changing and inconsistent. The environmental regulations include pesticide, nutrient and water use, climate change and dietary exposures -- all extremely complex issues on the forefront of governmental reform. Non-regulated societal demands such as public perceptions and attitudes, the media, market drivers and global relationships also play a significant role.

According to Botts, global sustainability is the new mantra of future regulation. It is crucial for the agricultural industry to globalize our process by creating a single unified plan that is recognized and accepted internationally, specifically on pesticide use. The question of how this will be done while meeting the dietary and nutritional requirements to feed 9 billion people is still being determined. Botts' hope is that the agriculture community commits to the necessary research up front rather than reacting. As direct ties to agriculture get more distant with each new generation, the hope is that individuals learn the issues and get engaged starting at the local level to create positive and effective change.



Challenges and opportunities for Florida produce



by Tom Mitchell
Riverfront Packing Company, LLC

Mike Aerts, director of Marketing and Membership for FFVA, not only presented some of the challenges facing Florida growers but also discussed unique opportunities available to farmers to combat some of the risks in marketing their product.

One challenge that Mike discussed in detail was Maximum Residue Level (MRL) Harmonization. As an international shipper of fresh grapefruit, I can relate to the challenges created when different countries have different accepted MRLs for almost every pesticide used in production. For instance, a level acceptable in the U.S. might not be acceptable in Japan and could significantly disrupt trade. In addition, we ship citrus north of the border so Canada's overhaul in its MRL tolerance process was eye-opening. Specifically, there will no longer be a default MRL level of 0.1 ppm if the product does not have an established Canadian MRL. Therefore, tolerances must be established for thousands of products, a task that could take up to 10 years to accomplish. The impact to Florida growers could be far reaching, as Canada is Florida's number 1 export sector.

Mike also leads FFVA's Agricultural Exchange Management Group and discussed the benefits of agricultural marketing organizations or exchanges. Under the Capper-Volstead Act, agricultural producers can collectively meet to discuss supply and demand issues and develop marketing strategies. Certain

requirements must be met to qualify as an exchange, but the benefits, including better pricing for the producer, could be well worth the effort.

Finally, Mike closed his presentation by discussing the global food supply and the inability to feed the world's growing population. Although most of the day's discussions centered on the challenges facing Florida produce, I was encouraged about the opportunities available to those who are willing to navigate the regulatory waters. As Frank A. Clark said, "If you find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere."

Treading water through rough tides



by Derek Orsenigo
Grower's Management, Inc.

Florida growers are constantly faced with many challenging issues each day, and water is always at the forefront of those issues. During the second session of this year's Emerging Leader Development Program, Kerry Kates presented Class 2 with an in-depth and detailed look at the numerous water issues facing Florida growers. Serving as FFVA's specialist on water and natural resource issues, Kerry serves as the members' representative on many key issues such as water management, use and quality. He also represents FFVA on laws and regulation regarding water at the state and federal level. Kerry serves as a liaison between the FFVA grower members and the key state and federal agencies, which include EPA, FDEP and FDACS, along with the water management districts.

Over the past few years there have been

several urgent water quality issues that could have crippling effects on the state's most stable and second largest industry. Because of the significance of these many legal issues, it is extremely beneficial for the fruit and vegetable growers around the state to have industry representatives such as Kerry to serve them. The positive impact he has made can be seen in helping the growers wade through the legal and political jargon while on their way to understanding and implementing programs such as BMPs and other water quality monitoring plans. His extensive interaction with the water management districts and growers has led to improved compliance issues, better results on water quality management practices and an encouraging outlook on the future of Florida's water quality and quantity.

It is a tremendous support for the growers to have a group like FFVA and someone like Kerry who represents the growers to the fullest when it comes to dealing with tough issues in Tallahassee and Washington DC. While Florida farmers have a vested interest in the stability and future of our environment and state water, it takes a special person to represent us. Kerry understands the ins and outs of the many water supply and water policy issues. It can be a tall order to deal with the many state and federal agencies and the plethora of regulations and laws day in and day out. Kerry is able to successfully serve the growers while working very diligently and efficiently and bringing about the best positive results for those who make up Florida Agriculture.



All about FFVA and being influential leaders



by Joby Sherrod
A. Duda & Sons, Inc.

At the opening session of Class 2's orientation at FFVA's Maitland office, President Mike Stuart and Chief Financial Officer Alan Hair spoke to us about the makeup and organization of the association as well as its functions.

After some candid conversations concerning the general election that had just taken place, we were presented with an overview of FFVA, its corporate structure, board and committee structure, and the organization and makeup of the staff.

Founded in 1948, FFVA has 188 Producer Members and 192 Trade Associate Members. The association and its subsidiary companies have 170 combined staff. As members of the agricultural community, we are fortunate to have such a strong, well-managed organization that works for our benefit supporting and promoting Florida agriculture.

Concluding our three-day program, Sonia Tighe, executive director of the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation and ELDP program director, stitched together the concepts we had been discussing and directed our mindset toward using these skills to be influential leaders. She pointed out that by keeping an ethical center in our decision-making, analyzing the needs of our customers and competitors, influencing our colleagues in a positive manner, and dealing with conflict using a non-confrontational approach, we can help to create a shared sense of purpose in our organizations. That is a true mark of an influential leader.

Telling the story of Florida agriculture



by Lee Ann Hinton Coleman
Hinton Farms Produce, Inc.

Lisa Lochridge, director of public affairs for FFVA, took time to speak with our group at our second session. She gave us an overview of her responsibilities as well as an outline to follow for strategic communications practices for our own businesses. Lisa discussed her work with FFVA and her role of communicating to key audiences, both internal and external, about what the organization is doing.

She gave us tips to use to be a more effective communicator (newsletters, bulletins, websites, social media, face-to-face visits) in getting the correct story out. She also outlined tips and procedures for media relations and crisis communication, stressing the importance of being prepared and having a specific crisis plan. In the event of a disaster or emergency, this would enable you to be prepared to respond quickly, and in a positive manner.

Lisa's presentation was very informative, and the tips and suggestions that she gave us will be an advantage to me in updating the public relations and crisis management plans within my own businesses.

Class 2 will be holding a book drive to benefit the children and parents of RCMA and encourage you to do the same. Books of all reading levels are needed. For more information on how to donate contact:

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The class travels to South Florida to tour agricultural operations during their next session in January. Look for those stories in the next issue.