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Session I: FFVA 2012

EMERGING TIMES

... growing toward the future

Class 2 embarks on yearlong program at FFVA 2012



Members of Class 2 from L to R: Joby Sherrod, Derek Orsenigo, Nick Basore, Carleton Johns, Lee Ann Hinton Coleman, Jessica Kerstein, Amber Kosinsky, Ian Bessell, Jonathan Allen, Tom Mitchell and Thomas Dalton.

The second class of the Emerging Leader Development Program was introduced to FFVA's membership during the Awards Luncheon at FFVA 2012. This was the first step in their yearlong program that will include meetings with legislators, issues seminars and visits to agricultural operations.

"Class 2 has already participated in some educational sessions regarding legislative issues and RCMA, and will be fully immersed in FFVA issues at Session 2," said Sonia Tighe, program director

and executive director of the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation. "Class 1, who graduated at this year's convention, had an exceptional year which culminated in the California production trip. Not only did they get a broader understanding of the issues facing Florida producers, but they developed a wonderful network of peers to work with in the future."

The program is designed to provide participants with the education and tools to become effective advocates for specialty crop agriculture.



The state of the industry update



by Jonathan Allen
R.C. Hatton, Inc.

When an industry is constantly changing as agriculture is, we are forced to develop creative and efficient ways to operate in order to survive. Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam opened FFVA's 2012 Convention by sharing his perspective on the changes occurring in Florida agriculture.

Coming from an agricultural background, Commissioner Putnam not only knows the ins and outs of our industry; he possesses a passion that forms the basis of his vision for the future of agriculture. Being one of four members of the Cabinet who are the Board of Directors for the state, our commissioner can influence more than just agriculture by creating a pro-business climate throughout the state.

Florida farmers produce fruits and vegetables virtually year-round, which presents a huge opportunity and aids in the security of the future of our industry. By supporting local growers, we can assure that the produce we eat is safe due to our food safety regulations while also fueling our economy. Commissioner Putnam strives to encourage further involvement in our Farm to School program, which allows the education of eating healthy foods to be implemented in Florida schools while creating more alternatives for the marketing of our produce. With adolescent obesity at an all-time high, it is more important than ever for kids and parents to understand the value of health education. This program already has had a direct influence in our schools and is establishing an educational value that is critical to the future health of our society.

Agriculture is the second largest industry in the state of Florida. Commissioner Putnam is confident that the state of our industry is strong and continues to challenge himself and all

who may be involved in the industry to develop ideas to overcome the challenges that lie ahead such as immigration, water supply, and food safety regulations. For the future of our industry, the accuracy of our decisions and the way we implement them will allow us to not only overcome these challenges but to use them to our advantage. Our commissioner of agriculture brings to the table an open mind and a hands-on work ethic to further strengthen our industry.

“ Commissioner Putnam not only knows the ins and outs of our industry; he possesses a passion that forms the basis of his vision for the future of agriculture. ”

- Jonathan Allen

Mission possible



by Carleton Johns
Tater Farms

This year's Cracker Breakfast was full of pomp and hearty food that we've come to expect from the opening event of the Annual Convention's final day. The guest speaker was going to have his hands full to divert our attention from our impending food coma. James Olson was the man for the job. Olson, now a professor at the Bush School of Government and Public Service, worked for the CIA for more than 30 years

mainly in overseas clandestine operations. In layman's terms, James was a spy, and he took us on one of his missions that would make the producers of James Bond movies envious.

Even being invited to become a spy is cool. In his final year of law school, Olson was in his dorm room when he got a call from the "government" offering him a job. Without any more information, he was asked to drive two hours to a hotel lobby where "they'd find him." The next thing you know, Olson was an employee of the CIA, he'd been sworn to secrecy, met his wife who was also training to be a spy, and for the next 30 years no one -- including their own parents and children -- would know that they were actually spies for the U.S. government.

Like most of his audience, James spent time on a farm. However, this "farm" taught him how to build makeshift weapons, build and disarm explosives, speak five languages fluently, and yes, how to kill people in hand-to-hand combat. He was sent overseas on various missions where the couple would become regular citizens working full-time jobs during the day and do their spying at night and on the weekends, all while raising three children.

Olson then took us on a declassified mission that he went on in Russia, spying on the Soviets. There are too many details to list (he has a book out titled *"Fair Play: The Moral Dilemmas of Spying"*). But highlights include him being followed everywhere by the KGB, having a microphone embedded in his ear canal and wearing an antenna that intercepted all KGB radio frequencies so he could listen to what the KGB was saying about him, diving out of a moving car with his family still inside, and getting the tar beat out of him by KGB agents at the end of the day because they knew he was up to something but they couldn't prove what it was. At one point during his story, we were pretty sure that he was going to pull off a full face mask and reveal that he was a completely different person. Believe me when I tell you that this guy made Tom Cruise in *"Mission Impossible"* look like...well, Tom Cruise today.



Class 2 stands to be recognized during the Awards Luncheon at FFVA 2012.

Challenged to do more with less



by Thomas Dalton
Farm Credit of Central Florida

Drs. Mario Palma and John Van Sickle gave attendees of FFVA's Annual Convention a lot to ponder about the current and future outlook for the fruit and vegetable industry. The topics covered both macro and micro trends, including consumption and changes to food safety and labor laws.

Palma discussed the types of produce being demanded by consumers. In the past, most fruits and vegetables could be considered seasonal, but in our global economy seasonality has all but disappeared. He noted that because of food safety concerns consumers strongly favor fruits and vegetables grown in the United States. This home-grown bias has further developed via the popularity of cooking and food shows into a locally grown farm-to-table movement. The popularity of the farm-to-table move-

ment is evidenced by the growth of local farmers markets, which have increased substantially over the past couple of years. This growth has been fueled by consumer demand for healthier choices or "functional foods." As explained by the presenters, functional foods are foods that have a potentially positive effect on health beyond basic nutrition.

With the unmatched variety of fruits and vegetables now available for consumers year-round and the change from the government dietary guidelines' food pyramid to "My Plate," which places more emphasis on eating fruits and vegetables, one would expect consumption to be growing. However, in recent years consumption has declined. This can be easily linked to falling incomes associated with the recession and the rising cost of fresh produce. Relative to all other food groups, fresh fruits and vegetables have increased in price exponentially.

Increasing retail prices coupled with a rise in imports, labor laws and water and chemical regulations pose an unenviable challenge for American producers. American farmers are challenged to produce more with less while competing on a sometimes uneven playing field to feed our growing population.

RCMA: Not just day care



by Lee Ann Hinton Coleman
Hinton Farms Produce, LLC

Judy Brill spoke to our group about the history and mission of the Redlands Christian Migrant Association. RCMA is a non-profit organization that has been helping migrant workers since 1965 by providing them with day care and preschool education services. One of the biggest goals of RCMA is to help families. The child care provided by RCMA allows mothers to work to help earn money for the family. RCMA also works to increase public awareness of the lifestyle of migrant and seasonal farm workers.

RCMA is present in 21 counties, and during the season its 1,500 employees serve 8,000 children. Employees of the organization are very loyal. Often, employees are from a family that once received the benefits of RCMA as farmworkers. The organization raises funds through programs such as its annual Christmas card drive. RCMA earns matching funds of up to \$16 for every dollar raised.

There is a "Shower of Love" program going on to gather much-needed supplies for the Wimauma Academy, a charter school for kindergarten through eighth grade that opened in 2005.

Our group chose to participate in a shirt drive. We collected all sizes of men's and women's long-sleeved shirts. These shirts were donated to RCMA so parents can have a clean shirt to change into when they come to pick up their children from the centers. This will prevent children from coming in contact with dirt and pesticide residue that the parents may have on their clothes from working in the fields.



Education and teamwork are key



by Jessica Kerstein
Lipman

According to Marian Johnson, senior vice president of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, the state's demographics and political affiliations are changing. During one of the Issues Forums at FFVA's Annual Convention, Johnson said the largest bloc of voters is no longer senior citizens; it's people age 30 to 49. This shift affects what issues are at stake – and education and conservation of natural resources are now at the forefront. It's important for us to understand what these changes mean and how they could affect agriculture.

Florida House Rep. Ben Albritton (R- Polk County) said it best: "Our greatest threat is not water, pests or labor – it's us being apathetic." As responsible food suppliers, we do our due diligence to care for the environment and communities where we operate. And we know there are certain elements out of our control – like the weather. But we can effect positive change in our industry by researching and staying informed.

Even so, we know that we will face opposition regarding certain issues – the same concerns that have long plagued our industry. Issues such as labor, pest control and water use will continue to be debated by lawmakers, and bills that have negative implications for growers, laborers – and ultimately, the economy – will arise. But if we stay informed and meet with lawmakers, we can make our voices heard, Albritton said. If we educate ourselves and others, we can work together to help stop bills that are detrimental to agriculture.

But we need to do more than just staying informed – we also need to work together. State Rep. Joe Abruzzo (D- Palm Beach County) encouraged us to not focus on our party affiliations but rather the issues at hand. If we put our differences aside, we

can make progress for Florida's agriculture community.

Agriculture contributes significantly to Florida's economy – and it's up to us to educate the government when bills or laws could have disastrous effects for an entire industry. To learn more about the issues that affect our industry, visit www.ffva.com and click on "Government Relations" under the "Services" tab.



Commissioner Putnam joined the leadership classes for their meal at the opening luncheon.

A labor of love



by Ian Bessell
ABC Research Laboratories

Class 2 met with Butch Calhoun, director of government relations for FFVA, in its first session of the year. Calhoun said the 2012 legislative session in Tallahassee was dominated by the reapportionment process, which requires that in the upcoming election every member of the state Legislature and

every congressman have to run for re-election in newly drawn districts.

There were 66 candidates running for 30 remaining state Senate seats (10 were elected in the primary); 167 candidates running for 79 State House seats (41 were elected in the primary); and 77 candidates running for 25 congressional seats (two were elected in the primary). Voters had 11 Constitutional amendments to consider on this ballot.

He provided a recap of the 2012 state legislative issues affecting agriculture interests. Verification of employment eligibility (HB1315) never got a committee hearing, which was considered a big success. Other bills that passed included the electricity sales tax exemption (HB7087/HB821), the ag industry bill (HB1197/HB1021), the numeric nutrient criteria rule (HB7051), the Department of Citrus bill (HB1237/HB1239), and a farm vehicles bill (SB1998).

In the budget approved for the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, there were no cuts – another big success. The state Department of Agriculture's \$1.4 billion budget was cut by \$4 million. The only bill on the FFVA radar not passed was the sovereign lands bill (HB1103), which died in committee. Calhoun said that the emerging state issues for the 2013 session will be immigration, immigration, and immigration. Other issues will include sovereign lands, ag water legislation, water management districts' 20-year planning, and the IFAS and FDACS budgets.

With so many different bills moving through Tallahassee, the FFVA membership should sleep better at night knowing they have Calhoun, a 23-year veteran, to represent their interests. Most important, after spending some time with him, it becomes apparent that not only is he very good at what he does, but he also really enjoys what he does.



Biding our time



by Nick Basore
TKM Farms

Mike Carlton, director of the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association's Labor Relations Division, gave an insightful view into the bleak state of agricultural labor and its uncertain future. Carlton presented two programs that are being used but are not mandatory in Florida: E-Verify and H-2A.

E-Verify is an online system that allows employers to enter a person's personal information into a database and within a number of seconds you will know if the person is authorized to work in the United States. As you can imagine, this system has many flaws. Studies have shown that 30 percent of the names come back ineligible to work because the information was typed in wrong. Multiple people can use the same information without the system knowing the difference, and you must hire an employee first before you run E-Verify. If a name is returned as

unauthorized to work, you have to dismiss the employee in a very cautious way or face litigation. Mandatory E-Verify laws have already been enacted in Georgia and Alabama. Studies estimate that this legislation has caused a decrease in farm labor workers of 30 percent to 50 percent.

H-2A is a guest-worker visa program run by the federal government. Workers must be interviewed at the American consulates in their country of origin (e.g. Mexico). If the applicants pass the interview, the grower must transport them to the worksite, provide housing under strict mandates and pay workers a premium wage. The positions must be advertised locally and if any U.S. citizen applies for the position, you must hire them. The H-2A program is riddled with flaws and senseless over-regulation. It needs to be completely revamped if ever required by law. Companies that have chosen to implement this program have experienced hefty fines, substantial internal and legal costs, and a massive surge in paperwork.

Labor is an ever-growing problem. The government has made attempts to fix the issue but has yet to come up with a workable system. In Florida, Gov. Rick Scott has listened to FFVA and the grower community and understands the devastating implications of requiring these systems here.



Joby Sherrod uses time between sessions to network.



The Emerging Leader Development Program was again the beneficiary of the annual Benefit Auction, which raised \$17,335.



Getting to know Class 2 . . .

Amber Kosinsky **Wish Farms**



University/Degree:

University of Florida - bachelor's in advertising and master's in business management

What do you hope to gain from the program?

A well-rounded view of different aspects of the ag industry

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

A fresh perspective on marketing and branding

The most interesting place you've traveled:

After graduating from college I backpacked through Europe visiting six countries in a month

Joby Sherrod **A. Duda & Sons, Inc.**



University/Degree:

University of Florida - master of science in horticulture

What do you hope to gain from the program?

New friends and new experiences

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

Innovative solutions for industry problems

The most interesting place you've traveled:

Puerto Rico

Derek Orsenigo **Grower's Management, Inc.**



University/Degree:

University of Florida - bachelor's in agricultural operations management

What do you hope to gain from the program?

More knowledge about all aspects of Florida agriculture

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

I'd like to strengthen the industry through stable, safe and economical production

The last book you read:

"The Swamp" by Michael Grunwald

Tom Mitchell **Riverfront Packing Company, LLC**



University/Degree:

University of Richmond - bachelor's of biology
University of Alabama - master's of business administration

What do you hope to gain from the program?

A broader knowledge of all types of agriculture in Florida

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

I hope to provide leadership and influence other young members of ag to get more involved

The most interesting place you've traveled:

Japan

Jonathan Allen **R.C. Hatton, Inc.**



University/Degree:

Florida Atlantic University - bachelor's in business management

What do you hope to gain from the program?

I hope to broaden my knowledge of the ag industry nationally and internationally

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

A better knowledge of the future of labor and economics as well as marketing

The last book you read:

"A Land Remembered" by Patrick D. Smith



Jessica Kerstein Lipman



University/Degree:

Florida State University - bachelor's in international affairs
University of Florida - master's in business management

What do you hope to gain from the program?

Leadership skills and knowledge from industry leaders to help further my career goals and aspirations

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

I would like to develop my skills and become an industry leader who helps the needs of our industry as a whole

The most interesting place you've traveled:

Morocco

Nick Basore TKM Farms



University/Degree:

Western Michigan University - bachelor's in accounting

What do you hope to gain from the program?

Connections and leadership

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

My personal time, leadership and the willingness to learn

The most interesting place you've traveled:

The Vatican

Carleton Johns Tater Farms



University/Degree:

University of Florida - bachelor's in construction management

What do you hope to gain from the program?

New friendships and industry contacts

What do you hope to contribute to ag?

I hope to continue representing Florida agriculture as a responsible industry

The most interesting place you've traveled:

Costa Rica

Thomas Dalton Farm Credit of Central Florida



University/Degree:

University of South Florida - master's in business administration

What do you hope to gain from the program?

Industry knowledge and contacts

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

Solid financing advice

The last book you read:

"Blink" by Malcolm Gladwell

Ian Bessell ABC Research Laboratories



University/Degree:

University of Florida - master's in agribusiness

What do you hope to gain from the program?

A better understanding overall of the ag industry in Florida and the rest of the United States

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

Insight into the food safety aspect of the produce industry

The most interesting place you've traveled:

Alaska

Lee Ann Hinton Coleman Hinton Farms Produce, Inc.



What do you hope to gain from the program?

Leadership skills and knowledge in our industry

What do you hope to contribute to agriculture?

Leadership

The most interesting place you've traveled:

Hawaii



Special thanks to DuPont Crop Protection for partnering with FFVA to become the first sustaining sponsor of the Emerging Leader Development Program by pledging \$20,000.



Congratulations to Class 1 members who completed their program at FFVA 2012 with a graduation ceremony at the closing dinner. From L to R: Sonia Tighe, program director, Adam Trott, Elizabeth Malek, Justin Roberson, Michael Hill, Rachel Walters, Jennifer Hodges, Rob Atchley, Heather Banky, April Roe Porter, Andy Ballard and Keith Mixon, FFVA board chairman.

Class 2 completed its first session at the FFVA office last week. Look for those stories in the next issue.