

# EMERGING TIMES

...growing toward the future

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## FFVA HEADQUARTERS



The FFVA ELDP Class 6 capped off the day at Taylor Farms in Orlando.

## Taylor Farms seeks to be No. 1 for salads and other fresh foods



By **Jeff Searcy**  
Helena Chemical Co.

**F**ounded in 1995 in the Salinas Valley, Taylor Farms was formed with the vision to become North America's No. 1 choice for salads and other healthy and fresh foods. Today it has grown into a multibillion-dollar company with facilities across the United States and Mexico. We got an in-depth tour of the packinghouse facility in Orlando and saw firsthand what goes into making Taylor Farms the successful company it is today.

To start the tour, we were given a brief summary of Taylor Farms and more specifically the Orlando facility. Being a fresh food processing plant, food safety was the No. 1 concern. We were decked out in hard hats, robes and gloves, and even sanitized our gloves upon entering the processing areas.

From as basic as fresh chopped romaine, onions, and bell peppers to complex bagged chopped salad mixes, we learned about the many different product offerings from Taylor Farms.

What was amazing was Taylor's tracking system and ability to trace each product in a bagged salad to its specific farm, even when ingredients may come from different locations. We then headed to the deli side of the plant where the sandwiches, vegetables and fresh fruit are processed and packaged. Between the two processing areas, it was great to see familiar produce boxes from Florida growers.

What was once mainly a processing plant for leafy vegetables, the Orlando facility has grown into a fresh market operation that meets the demands of products with limited shelf life. Taylor Farms now supplies many of the prepackaged sandwiches, salads, and fruit cups we see in convenience stores and coffee shops every day. To top it off, they source many of their ingredients from Florida growers when available.

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## A view of FFVA from 40,000 feet



By **Jordan Yancey Driscolls**

For the FFVA ELDP Class 6, the Maitland meetings kicked off with a “40,000-foot overview” of the association by Mike Stuart, FFVA president, and Alan Hair, chief financial officer of FFVA and FFVA Mutual.

Stuart started off with a brief history of FFVA. FFVA started in the World War II era out of the need for a voice for the vegetable industry because of the Price Control Act of 1942. Other industry obstacles during the 1940s were labor and tax issues — some of the same concerns the FFVA is still fighting for our industry today.

FFVA employs a staff of 170 people consisting of three major branches: FFVA, Florida East Coast Travel Services (FLECTS), and Agricultural Insurance Management.

Under FFVA, the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation non-profit 501(c) (3) was founded in 1991 to focus on industry research and education, and is managed by Sonia Tighe. The foundation also is the branch of FFVA that the Emerging Leader Development Program falls under.

Also under FFVA is the management of Third Party Registrations Inc., a subsidiary that manages limited liability pesticide and herbicide registrations exclusively for FFVA members.

FLECTS provides transportation of H-2A and H-2B guest workers coming into the United States.

FFVA Mutual Insurance Co., formerly Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association Self-Insurers’ Fund, started out in the 1950s helping the Florida agriculture industry with workers compensation insurance. In the mid-1990s, the self-insurers’ fund was converted to a mutual insurance company adapting to market and regulatory changes in Florida. Today, FFVA Mutual Insurance Company is licensed in 10 states and

provides workers’ compensation insurance to several industries including artisan contractors, automobile dealers, motels, restaurants and agriculture. FFVA Mutual is owned by its policyholders and FFVA-AIM Inc., an FFVA subsidiary, is contracted to provide insurance management services. FFVA-AIM Inc. is the largest employer of the FFVA group of companies, with 122 of its 170 staff members dedicated to managing FFVA Mutual.

Hair’s portion of the presentation was focused on the financial results of FFVA.

The statistic that surprised the FFVA ELDP Class 6 the most was that 52 percent of FFVA’s revenue was generated from the AIM dividends. Hair also shared the fact that in the year 2000, 100 percent of the insurance business was in agriculture, and now only about 5 percent of the insurance business is in the agriculture industry. The second-largest revenue generator for FFVA is membership dues at 16 percent of revenue.



The class hears about FFVA’s services from President Mike Stuart.





## FFVA committed to helping members navigate food safety law



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

**W**hen the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act was signed into law in 2011, it presented the biggest reform of food safety rules and regulations our industry has seen in more than 70 years. The new law focuses on preventing foodborne illnesses rather than waiting to respond to them.

Tasked with helping FFVA members navigate these new regulations is FFVA Food Safety and Sustainability Manager Jill Dunlop. Dunlop not only helps with government compliance, her expertise helps members prepare for non-governmental third-party audits as well.

In the recent ELDP session, Dunlop explained the roles and responsibilities of safe food production. Food producers are tasked with producing safe food while the government sets standards, conducts inspections, and enforces standards to ensure that safe and wholesome products end up on the consumer's plate.

Of the seven rules in FSMA, FFVA focuses its outreach to members on primarily two: Preventive Controls for Human Food, and Standards for Produce Safety.

Preventive Controls primarily applies to food manufacturing and offsite packaging facilities and is much heavier in documentation and recordkeeping, according to Dunlop. Of the two rules, preventive controls is the only one with current compliance dates, which began earlier in 2016 for

### Food Safety Modernization Act

- The most sweeping reform of our food safety laws in more than 70 years
- Signed into law by President Obama on January 4, 2011
- Ensure the U.S. food supply is safe through prevention



facilities classified as large.

The Produce Safety rule classifies operations as a farm versus a food facility, creating different regulations than the Preventive Controls rule. It mainly applies to operations that grow, harvest, pack and hold produce in a raw or natural state.

Regardless of which rule applies, FFVA is committed to its members to ensure they continue to stay in compliance and maintain our status as a leading agricultural production state.

## Demand increases for workers through H-2A program



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

**A**s Class 6 sat around the conference table awaiting the next speaker, answering emails and sending text messages, FFVA Director of Labor Relations Mike Carlton walked in with a large stack of brown expandable folders filled with documents. He opened up his presentation with a clear warning: Labor can be a lot like

"a mosquito in a nudist colony." We all got a good laugh.

Carlton gave us insight on his role and responsibilities. We discussed the H-2A guest-worker program and the ever-increasing need for it. Demand has steadily increased in the past few years. Florida alone has seen an increase from about 2,000 to 17,000 workers in less than 10 years. The H-2A program can offer a consistent number of productive workers when growers are faced with a harshly diminishing workforce. However, agricultural labor is more heavily regulated than our nuclear power plants, Carlton said.

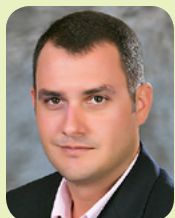
The costs associated with the H-2A program are high and include housing, transportation, a higher wage, visas and processing fees. Also, it can take months to process the request forms. I was shocked to learn the large expandable brown folders contained only one application – hundreds of pages of paper for one request for anywhere between one worker to hundreds of workers.

Fortunately, FFVA's Labor Relations Division is available to assist growers with the application process by filing paperwork and providing information and resources to help ease the complex process.



## Foundation focuses on research, education and philanthropy

**D**uring the November session, we heard from ELDP Program Director Sonia Tighe. In addition to her ELDP responsibilities, Tighe also serves as the FFVA director of membership and the executive director of the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation.



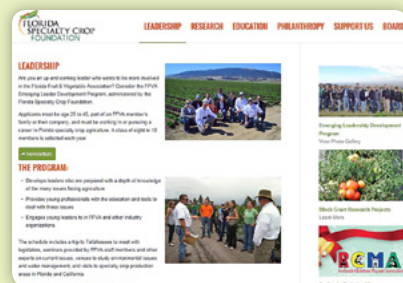
By **John McIntyre**  
**H. M. Clause, Inc.**

Perhaps the most interesting part of Tighe's presentation was an in-depth look at the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation. The foundation has three main areas of focus: research, education and philanthropy. When it comes to research, we learned that the state of Florida gets approximately \$4 million per year from the federal Specialty Crop Block Grant program for grants to fund research projects.

The research focus of the foundation is to partner with UF/IFAS, USDA and others to receive funding for research projects. With the recent realignment of FFVA's committees and formation of a research committee, FFVA is working toward getting growers to drive the direction of the research projects that receive funding.

Another interesting fact we learned is that it takes \$70,000 per year to run the ELDP program. However, individual participants only pay \$1,000. This leaves the daunting task of raising an additional \$6,000 per person,

or \$60,000 each year, to fund the leadership program. The Emerging Leader Development Program is a yearlong program consisting of six sessions including a trip to California



to view agricultural production on the West Coast. The program targets FFVA members ages 25 to 40 and is designed to engage younger members to get them more involved in FFVA and the state's specialty crop industry.

## Sustainability: Producing more with less

**T**o stay profitable and maintain a high quality of life, the goal of FFVA members has always been to produce higher yields with less loss. This sentiment was explained to the ELDP Class 6 by Barney Cherry, general manager of The Andersons.



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

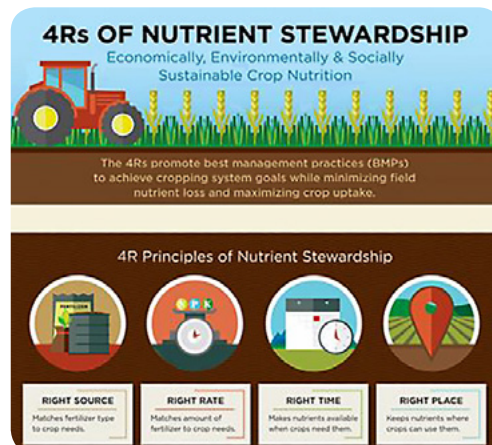
Sustainable and efficient agriculture was the theme of the session as Cherry explained what was important for The Andersons and FFVA members.

"Sustainable agriculture is about producing more food with less resources," Cherry said. To do so, members must develop a vision of sustainability. "If you want to make a difference, change how you do things. If you want to make a huge difference, we need to change how we see things."

For FFVA producer and trade members, sustainability revolves around changing the products we use and the way in which we apply them. Cherry said we don't need to necessarily view regulation as an enemy. He explained this sentiment by saying our members help shape the industry, and if we don't do it, someone else will. "If we wait too long, we lose control," Cherry said.

To continue to be in the forefront of regulations, Cherry explained that FFVA members can start by following the 4 Rs of plant nutrient application: Use the *right source* and the *right rate* at the *right time* and in the *right place*. He also explained how future generations need to embrace change that comes along with new technology. "You have got to do different things. You can't farm like you did 20 years ago."

Cherry challenged Class 6 and other young industry leaders. "If you don't get involved, someone else will. Somebody has to have a voice."





# Center for Public Issues and Education seeks to connect growers and consumers



By **Jeff Searcy**  
Helena Chemical Co.

**W**hen I think of the University of Florida and the agriculture industry I often think about IFAS Extension as the only resource to gather research and information to aid farmers in their quest to produce a quality crop that consumers demand.

Although growing a successful crop is a tough task, understanding what specific crops to grow to meet consumers' demands is vital. We

were introduced to Dr. Joy Rumble of the University of Florida's Center for Public Issues and Education, better known as the PIE Center. Rumble explained how consumers tend to have a lot of misconceptions about and mistrust of agriculture. The PIE Center's goal is to conduct research and help consumers and producers gain a better understanding of the agriculture and natural resource issues we face today. Rumble's presentation, "Connecting Growers and Consumers: Six Years of Collaboration," gave us a good picture of its mission.

Rumble covered many of the PIE Center's findings in its research between consumers and producers. First, a large percentage of consum-



**Center for Public Issues Education**  
IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
**UF/IFAS**

ers prefer to buy "locally produced" food, but there is quite a gap on what is considered local. Second, convenience drives the buying decisions of food purchases. Third, consumers strive to get the highest quality product available. Finally, the center found that although those three factors are important, at the end of the day price trumps everything for a majority of people.

Next, Rumble covered the crop-specific research findings on Florida blueberries and peaches. As Florida growers are trying to increase demand for their products, the PIE Center's research found that most consumers don't know when Florida blueberries and peaches are in season. Producers can take this information and market their products to increase awareness of their crops.

By gaining a better understanding of consumers' demands and what drives buying decisions, the PIE Center is well on its way to helping connect growers and consumers. Their research is valuable as we continue down the path in Florida's challenging and ever-changing agriculture industry.



A young lady learns about the Florida blueberry season. Consumer research on blueberries was a PIE Center project.



# Florida tomato industry thrives by adapting to change

**T**he cliché “The only constant is change” rings true throughout Florida agriculture, but particularly so in the Florida tomato industry. During our November session at the FFVA main office, Reggie



By **Travis Kuhn**  
**Spring Valley Farms**

Brown, executive vice president of the Florida Tomato Exchange, shared with us his personal experiences highlighting how the industry has morphed and responded over the years to the pokes and prods from outside influences.

The prods started on the supply side with the introduction of the North American Free Trade Act and a Mexican tomato industry that took full advantage of its new market access. The demand side added to the strain with increased interest in specialty tomatoes and flashy packaging, reducing sales and shelf space of Florida-grown round tomatoes. Perhaps the greatest blows to the industry have been in the form of negative publicity, first incorrectly as the source of a major salmonella outbreak in 2008 and second in emotionally based accusations of modern day slavery.

These changes and challenges have highlighted the determination and innovation of an industry that should be studied and imitated. In response to price dumping, Florida tomato growers went on the offensive, litigating against unfair market practices by Mexico and Canada. In response to food safety concerns, tomato growers across the entire United States came together to adopt regulations to ensure their product would never be the source of a major food-borne illness. In response to accusations of slavery, the industry stood up for itself but also recognized a need for transparency and sought out methods to maintain social accountability.



The changes continue, and the court of public opinion is not always just, but the Florida tomato industry continues to fight for the right to grow safe, nutritious produce at fair prices with good and equitable treatment of its employees. The agriculture industry is fortunate to have Brown and his colleagues as trailblazers and warriors, showing the world what a determined group of entrepreneurs, this time in the form of tomato farmers, is capable of.



## Assessing the ‘true colors’ of our personalities

**D**r. Ricky Telg of the University of Florida’s Center for Public Issues Education presented the True Colors personality assessment to our class during our seminar at FFVA.



By **Tony Flottemesch**  
Lipman Family Farms

Personality assessments have been around for decades and began with the work of Carl Jung, who used four classifications (Thinker, Feeler, Sensor and Intuitor). Over the years, this model has been redefined and built upon.

In the 1950s, Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs added another layer to Jung’s original work by using a pairing system (i.e. introvert / extrovert).

Then, in 1967, David Keirbey developed a different method of categorizing personalities by using four different classifications (Idealists, Rationals, Guardians and Artisans).

In 1978, Don Lowry developed the True Colors assessment by using four colors to represent personality characteristics. For instance, gold personalities tend to be punctual, organized, dependable, thorough, etc. We each have one color that is our dominant type, and the other three colors depict our personalities in descending order. During the course of this exercise, we ranked ourselves based on how we related to the colors based on what personality traits that color

represented. It was obvious when looking around the room that the dominant colors that individuals picked really did match their personalities.

This exercise helped us see the behavior

Know thyself...  
and learn about those around you

With personality type **(True Colors)** you can:

- Understand yourself better.
- Understand others better.
- Improve communication and team atmosphere.

**You have all four colors in you.**  
**Learn how to use them.**

characteristics that determine what color others’ personality types are so that we are better able to understand and react to our friends, families, and co-workers. This can help us communicate better and strengthen our relationships with the people we interact with on a daily basis.

## Knowing the rules, players in the world of regulation

**D**an Botts, vice president of industry resources at FFVA, discussed with Class 6 the various groups that regulate the agriculture industry. For pesticides, according to Botts, there is oversight from

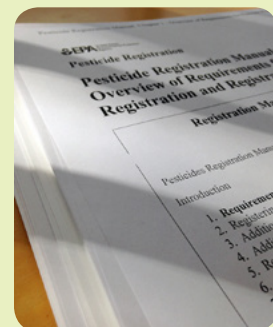


By **Emily Buckley Jones**  
Walker LLP

the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, which balances risk exposure for pest control and regulates pesticide registration, while the state of Florida handles inspection and enforcement.

Botts said that by 2070, Florida will require three times the water we have available now. But who will regulate it? There is the U.S. Clean Water Act, which establishes the basic structure of pollution discharge, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which deals with surface water. At the state level, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services regulates consumptive use, while the Fish and Wildlife Commission, along with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, oversees the overall supply. That’s a lot of cooks in the proverbial kitchen.

In international regulation, Botts said, farmers have to deal with the European Union and Codex – a “food code” established by the World Health Organization, along with many other national laws and treaties. If that wasn’t enough regulation on the American farmer, there are other external regulators, such as consumer markets and uniformity, Botts said. Within all of this regulation are activist platforms that continue to make farmers’ jobs even harder. Extensive regulations and numerous regulating entities make organizations such as FFVA all the more important. FFVA ensures they are familiar with the players and the rules of the regulators so that the farmers can continue to focus on producing their crops.







# Marketing, MRLs and other mayhem



By **Kyle Hill**  
Southern Hill Farms

Unlike other industries, the commodities we produce in agriculture have a limited shelf life. Because of this, retailers often have the upper hand when negotiating prices. They know the longer they wait, the more desperate the farmer will become to ensure the crop gets sold.

Situations such as this may force the farmer to take whatever price is offered. Farmers may be at a grave disadvantage when bargaining with a business that is much larger and has many more resources at its disposal. For these reasons, the Capper-Volstead Act was passed in 1922 exempting agricultural marketing organizations from a significant portion of the anti-trust laws. This allows the entire sector to come in as one and set a price that they can all agree upon, creating a cooperative or an "exchange."

Exchanges allow all parties to be profitable. This reduces competition among growers because they don't compete with each other on prices and when to go to market. It also provides better forecasting information for growers to use in their negotiations, such as how many acres are to be harvested, as well as when the product will be ready. Farmers have increasingly used the cooperative

model as it suits their economic and social needs, and the significance of the Capper-Volstead Act has grown accordingly. The legal protection from prosecution under the antitrust laws provided by the Act has allowed agricultural cooperatives and exchanges to grow and prosper; without such protection, a wide range of these activities would be hampered or prohibited.

The primary purpose of the Capper-Volstead Act was to empower farmers and agricultural producers to market, price and sell their products through cooperative means. For an exchange to be successful, it helps to

have membership making up approximately 85 percent of the volume in that region. A limited number of handlers helps as well, and all members must be accountable with one another. If members all agree on a price, they must stick with it. One member breaking the agreement will hurt the entire exchange.

As a blueberry grower, I see the disadvantages that Florida blueberry growers have in selling their fruit. Currently, there is not a blueberry exchange in the state. I believe that if growers could come together, we could successfully create an exchange that benefits everybody.

A screenshot of the Sunshine Sweet Corn website. The header features the "sunshinesweet" logo with a corn cob icon and the tagline "Fresh from the Sunshine State". Navigation links include "Retail", "Media", "Contact", and a search bar. Social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest are present. A green navigation bar lists: "Growing Sweet Corn", "Health Benefits of Corn", "Sweet Corn Recipes", "How to Cook Sweet Corn", and "Sweet Corn Tips". The main content area shows a large image of a corn cob with labels for "AUSTRALIA", "EUROPE", "ASIA", "AFRICA", "NORTH AMERICA", and "SOUTH AMERICA". Below this is a section titled "Grilled Corn Recipes from around the World" with a link to "View Infographic". A social media sharing bar shows "Like 1K", "Share", "Tweet", "Share", and "77". Below this is a section titled "Sunshine Sweet Corn" with a paragraph about the versatility of sweet corn. To the right is a video thumbnail titled "How to Steam Sweet Corn" showing a corn cob being cooked, with the text "BASIL BUTTER" at the bottom.

The class heard about the advantages of commodity exchanges from Mike Aerts, FFVA's marketing and supply chain director and manager of the Florida Sweet Corn Exchange.





## Be prepared in the event of a crisis

**L**isa Lochridge, director of public affairs for FFVA, discussed with Class 6 how to best communicate in a crisis. It is important to have a crisis communication



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

plan and the appropriate people prepared and in place to deal with both internal employee and external media and customer communications. The three types of crises are immediate-violent, sudden (for example, a weather event such as a tornado); smoldering: There are warning signs, but no action taken; and sustained, which is more ongoing and more difficult to resolve. As with any crisis management, early detection and having a plan are key strategies.

Three goals of a crisis management plan are to protect public health, protect your brand, and return to normal operations as quickly as possible. A crisis management plan should assess potential risks and provide opportunities to mitigate those risks, but it also should establish what to say, how to say

it, and to whom, and when to honestly and concisely release information to the public and to your employees.

Members of your crisis management team could include president, CEO, food safety director, and PR director, among others. Each team member should have clearly defined responsibilities in any given situation, from securing the incident site to fact-gathering to media monitoring. When dealing with the media, you need to know your key messages and two or three different ways to relay those messages. FFVA offers its members assistance in developing a crisis communication plan. Don't wait until a crisis has already occurred to develop a plan.



**Lisa Lochridge, FFVA's director of public affairs, emphasized that every organization needs a crisis management plan.**

## FAST TRACK offers quicker route to new citrus varieties



By **Andrew Bryan**  
**Duda Ranches**

**D**uring the November session at the FFVA Maitland headquarters, Class 6 of the ELDP was presented with an eye-opening discussion on the current status of Florida's fresh citrus industry and its future.

Peter Chaires, executive director of Florida's New Varieties Development and Management Corporation and the executive vice president of the Florida Citrus Packers Association, discussed

the issues and challenges along with the restoration and maintenance plans of Florida's fresh citrus industry.

Chaires reported that within the last 10 years, Florida's fresh citrus industry has experienced a decline of about 500,000 acres and two-thirds of its producing members transitioning their acreage to juice fruit production. This is in result of the declining fruit quality because of citrus canker, citrus black spot and – worst of all – citrus greening. However, the industry has advocates like Chaires fighting for a resolution.

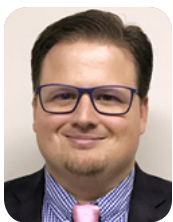
Organizations such as the NVDMC are hard at work developing new varieties



and strategies to provide the industry with new and improved offerings. New varieties, expanded maturities, increased color and increased quality are at the top of the list. However this takes a considerable amount of time for such a task. This is where the Citrus FAST TRACK program comes into play. This program was designed to provide growers the availability of these desired varieties and rootstocks quickly, rather than the previous approval time of 15 to 20 years. Growing varieties without years of historical data is risky. However, these risks provide a promising future for Florida's fresh citrus industry.



## FFVA focuses on protecting water for agriculture use



By **Jordan Yancey Driscolls**

**K**erry Kates, FFVA's director of water and natural resources, gave an insightful presentation on the current water issues facing Florida agriculture. Kates focuses on land use and water use permits, spending most of his time on water supply planning and water quality.

The two largest water users are agriculture and the public. Agriculture at one time was the largest water user, but public water use is now the largest. It is very important

for agriculture interests to continue to fight for their water use allocations, which is a big focus for Kates and the FFVA.

For the water quality portion of the presentation, he shared optimism and uncertainty around the recent political elections and political plans.

State Senate President Joe Negron's plan to build a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee is one area of controversy. The opposition is pointing to a study by UF that lists the importance of treating water north of Lake Okeechobee as well.

Kates also touched on the Numeric Nutrient Criteria established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The NNC has its own impacts and controversy. The system employs a

"one size fits all" approach and could cost Florida agriculture billions in lost revenue due to less farmable land. The state of Florida eventually won a lawsuit that allowed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to develop its own nutrient standards program called TMDL, or total maximum daily load. The TMDL is the maximum amount of a given pollutant that a body of water can absorb and stay healthy.

If agriculture operations are within the boundaries of the TMDL program, the operations must comply with Best Management Practices. "The BMPs are designed to benefit water quality while maintaining or even enhancing agriculture production," Kates said.



## ELDP News



▲ **Jennifer Lytch (Class 1)** and her husband, Adam, are proud to announce the birth of Sarah Grace Lytch on November 9 at 7:21 a.m. She weighed 7 pounds, 7 ounces, and was 20 inches long.



▲ Katherine "Kate" Ann Atchley was born December 6 at 3:01 a.m. to **Cathy (Class 3) and Rob (Class 1) Atchley**. Kate was 7 pounds, 11 ounces.

■ **Kevin Yue (Class 5)** was re-elected as Chair of the Lipman Family Council in October.



Thanks to The Andersons, class members enjoyed a delicious variety of snacks during their Maitland visit.