

# EMERGING TIMES

*. . . growing toward the future*

## Emerging leaders reflect as they prepare for graduation



Inaugural class members (left to right): Adam Trott, Andy Ballard, Rob Atchley, Justin Roberson, Michael Hill, Jennifer Hodges, April Roe Porter, Heather Banky, Rachel Walters, Elizabeth Malek.

### A year in review

by Sonia Tighe  
Executive Director  
Florida Specialty Crop Foundation  
ELDP Director

The first class of the ELDP has been an enormous success, exceeding our expectations for the program. This group is engaged, active and very eager to learn. We had the opportunity to get in-depth information from FFVA staff and industry leaders, travel to several operations both

in Florida and California, and visit our legislators in Tallahassee.

Throughout this process this class has become close-knit, and they are developing a new network of peers. They are eager to give back to this industry now.

It has been my great privilege to work with this class. I sincerely appreciate the generous support we have received from FFVA members to ensure the success of the program.



## A gift to share



by Rachel Walters  
Bayer CropScience

Have you ever received a gift that you couldn't wait to share with others? A gift is a thing given willingly to someone without payment. And I am one of 10 who received a tremendous gift from the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association.

Being in the inaugural class of the Emerging Leader Development Program is a huge honor. I have met nine outstanding ambassadors who are the future of Florida agricultural leadership. Having the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of FFVA, travel to Tallahassee to learn from Government Relations Director Butch Calhoun, and witness production practices in Central Florida and California have enabled me to learn more about the individual roles we all play in agriculture.

Participating in the FFVA Emerging Leader Development Program provided me with an opportunity to learn more about Florida's specialty crop industry. I am more knowledgeable about Florida's unique and diverse agricultural industry, so in turn I am aware of the issues these producers face.

ELDP prepared me to have The Head of a Scientist to answer questions based on fact and not emotion. In the program, I continued to develop My Heart of a Farmer to increase my passion for all things agriculture. It is important that I keep My Feet on the Ground and My Hands in the Dirt to provide agronomical solutions to the state's producers. This program gave me Eyes That See Beyond Today, so I can be prepared for emerging pests and the latest consumer concern, while giving me a Voice That Cuts Through the Clutter and a platform in which to share facts about this industry.

Thank you FFVA and ELDP for a gift that I will be able to share with others.

## It runs in the family



by Michael Hill  
Lakeshore Growers Inc.

As I look back on the first year of the Emerging Leader Development Program, I can't help but think about how much of a success it has been. I believe that all of the expectations the FFVA had for this inaugural class were surpassed. It was eye-opening and truly educational for me to see every facet of Florida's agriculture industry, from the field to the grocery store and ultimately the consumer.

When you are focused day in and day out on the task at hand, it is sometimes difficult to keep the big picture in mind, and this program has been very beneficial in doing so. I didn't expect to become so well-rounded in the agriculture industry when I started this program, and I wouldn't dare say that I am an expert now that it is complete.

That being said, the memories, friendships and networking that the ELDP provided are immeasurable. I have grown up seeing my parents and grandparents as active members in the FFVA, and I plan on doing the same throughout my career. I am grateful to the FFVA for giving me the opportunity this past year, and look forward to seeing it grow and succeed in the future.

## Pioneers of the program



by Justin Roberson  
Lipman Produce

Looking back over the past year, it's amazing to think about all of the unique experiences our group shared together. I'm thankful to the FFVA and the supporting members for providing us the opportunity to be a part of such a program.

It's exciting to think that we are the pioneers of a program that has the potential to engage and develop young leaders for years to come. It's been an incredible learning experience and a quality program. Whether it was team-building exercises, plant tours or spending time with the students at RCMA, each experience opened our eyes to the diversity of the agriculture industry.

I think I learned the most on our trip to Tallahassee, where I gained an understanding of the political realm that plays such a critical role in our businesses. Although the ag industry is facing challenges at many levels right now, I'm excited to think of all of the opportunities that lie ahead and what this future generation of leaders will accomplish.

*"For Florida agriculture to continue to persevere into the future, a new generation of leaders has to be cultivated. We must recognize, nurture and empower these selected individuals through leadership development opportunities."*

*- Drew Duda, FFVA board chairman*



## *“Because of the ELDP . . .*

... I have a better understanding of how water, labor, food safety and other key issues affect our industry. I developed great friendships with all of my classmates. I will be able to take the great contacts and skills I have learned throughout this program and apply them to my current position.”

... I am more confident as a member of the Florida agriculture industry. I understand more of the verticals, horizontals and major issues the industry faces, and the convention will be immensely more valuable. There will be friends in ag businesses wherever I go. ”

... I take a much wider view of the world of agriculture than before. I have been able to see different challenges as they relate to different growers of different crops in different states. I have also been able to see that though we are separated by geography, we are all subject to many of the same challenges.”

... I have met wonderful people whom I would not have had the opportunity to know otherwise. I have had the opportunity to learn about how important commodities banding together is when fighting for causes – labor, water, etc. I feel more confident in discussion about industries that fall outside my own.”

... I have developed relationships among my peers that will help me throughout my career. I am now able to think about the agricultural industry in a more comprehensive manner from what I’ve learned through our discussions about presentations, farm and facility tours, current issues and politics.”

... I have formed new relationships and have gained a better understanding of our dynamic industry. Through our sessions in the fields, the board room and the state capital, I have formed friendships with a diverse group of individuals and have a much better understanding of the many hats farmers and agribusiness leaders need to wear in order to succeed in today’s agriculture industry.”





## A value-added program



by Elizabeth Malek  
Glades Crop Care, Inc.

I really enjoyed being a part of the first leadership class in the ELDP Program. The presentations and tours were fantastic. I built lasting relationships among my class, and I was able to meet with current leaders in our industry and the Florida Legislature.

I learned many things during our sessions this past year; but most important, I learned what qualities and characteristics a good leader has, how to lead, and why our agricultural industry in Florida needs good leaders. We are facing many issues such as fumigation restrictions, water quality, labor challenges, competition, marketing, and food safety -- to name a few.

Developing leaders is an important key to helping our growers, the industry, and agriculture as a whole. Because of this leadership program, I now have a more complete picture of the Florida agricultural industry, and I understand my role and responsibilities as a young leader.

I believe that Florida agriculture will see direct benefits from this program in the future when young leaders like us begin to have a greater impact. This program is helping to build a foundation for young leaders to stand on by strengthening our skills and showing us a clear vision of a prosperous future for Florida agriculture. I would not have had this type of experience without this program. It has been very valuable to me, and I know that it will be valuable to Florida agriculture.

*"Ultimately the  
Emerging Leader  
Development Program  
will provide a  
formidable return on  
investment for the  
industry and FFVA."*

*- Christian Leleu  
FFVA board member*

## An enlightening experience



by Jennifer Hodges  
The Andersons  
Plant Nutrient Group

Over the past year I had the opportunity to visit with legislators in Tallahassee, tour specialty crop production areas in both Florida and California, learn about the many issues affecting our industry, participate in a dinner meeting with Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam, and take part in many other informative events.

The FFVA Emerging Leader Development Program has offered so many enlightening experiences, and I feel blessed to have been part of such an amazing association and group of people.

Throughout the program we participated in many educational sessions that broadened our perspective on agriculture and opened our eyes to what is needed to keep this industry strong and successful.

Although our curriculum has come to an end, I am excited to continue the great relationships I have developed over the year with classmates, FFVA staff and board members, and other key members of our industry.

I would like to give a big "thank you" to Sonia Tighe for planning such great sessions, keeping us on time, remaining calm when our bus got a flat tire in California, and really making the most of our year together. We will miss you!

## Worth your while



by Rob Atchley  
A. Duda & Sons

Has it been a year already? The past year with the ELDP has been a great experience. New acquaintances, production trips, educational sessions about FFVA, and Tallahassee were all highlights.

When I talk to people about applying for the class, there is always one question that pops up. Is this a good use of my time? The answer is a resounding yes.

Where else besides the ELDP would I have met a vice president of artichoke production? How many of you can say the same?



*"We had very high hopes for this program when it was conceived as part of our strategic planning process. But, it has clearly exceeded those big expectations. It's becoming clear that it's one of the best things we've ever done in terms of getting early and mid-career members of our industry actively engaged in the association."*

*- Mike Stuart, FFVA president*







## All-access pass



by Adam Trott  
Rabo AgriFinance

Looking back on my experience with the inaugural class of FFVA's Emerging Leader Development Program I am amazed at what we accomplished in just one year. From meeting with industry-leading growers, processors, associations and legislators, our access to important members of our industry was unmatched.

On top of that we formed strong relationships within our impressive group of young professionals which will hopefully be the future leaders in our industry. I hope to stay involved with the program after our graduation to provide any assistance I can.

A special thanks to Sonia Tighe who planned, organized and executed the program with such enthusiasm and precision.



Anthony Gallino, vice president of sales for California Giant Berry Farms, speaks to the class in one of their many strawberry fields. Class members were able to sample some berries right from the plants.

## United we stand



by April Roe Porter  
Wm. G. Roe & Sons

My time in the Emerging Leadership Development Program has opened my eyes to a much broader agriculture industry than I previously knew. Yet while we all represent a different part of the industry, our underlying goals and concerns are the same. Whether we're located in Florida or California, in production or marketing, row crops or tree crops, there is a deep sense of loyalty to the industry. It was so encouraging to hear how time and time again the industry has united to address the issues rather than let competition and pride impede problem solving. Perhaps, unlike other industries, agriculture doesn't have the option to wait for laws and regulations to "work themselves out".

In the folks we met, there is a strong

commitment to devise new ways to get around the problems, address them head-on with agencies, and forge ahead despite adverse conditions. Our class saw firsthand that this is a strong-willed industry with a rich history of success and hard work. There is more heart than red tape and a determination to not let anything bring down what generations upon generations have built. What an example for our class of emerging leaders to see!

Even more evident than cooperation and standing together as a united industry was the sense of urgency to mentor new leaders and educate those who show an interest in agriculture. Meeting people and industry groups as part of the Emerging Leader program was like walking in with top security clearance and instant trust and credibility. No question was taboo and the answers were honest and deep. Had any of us met with the presidents, vice presidents of marketing and production managers as just ourselves from our companies, I imagine only a fraction of the knowledge would have been shared. I

was overwhelmed with the encouraging words, general warmth and mentor-like attitudes that were shown to us everywhere we visited. Not only did we learn about the industry, but we met and learned from the best of the best - and they all spent substantially more time with us than I would have ever imagined their schedules would allow.

It was very evident that the current leaders in the ag industry are prioritizing fostering the new leaders. We are fortunate to be a part of an industry that welcomes emerging leaders with open arms, allowing us to learn with our hands and offer a new perspective on a centuries-old trade.

I was honored to spend a year getting to know the agriculture industry alongside so many other engaging and accomplished peers. I am excited to get more involved and hopefully do the same for a class like this years down the road.



## Tokens of wisdom



by Heather Banky  
U.S. Sugar Corporation

In any experience you should always walk away with something, whether it is a symbolic token to commemorate where you have been, a lesson learned or a new one to be taught to others. Over the past year we were exposed to people who had a wonderful passion for what they do with lifetimes of experience filled with both success and failure. We had a priceless living education at our fingertips.

We were asked prior to being selected for the leadership class what we expected to get out of this program. Looking back, I am most surprised that some of my most valued tokens from the experience were ones that I had least expected.

## Expanding knowledge



by Andy Ballard  
Hundley Farms

The Emerging Leader Development Program has allowed me to expand my scope of agricultural knowledge, make many great friends and connections, and have many fond memories of unique experiences I would not have had if I hadn't been chosen to participate in the ELDP.

Although my comfort level, knowledge and experience mostly includes the growth and production of sweet corn, sugar cane and green beans, the ELDP expanded my knowledge from growth and production all the way to environmental and governmental impacts of agriculture.



Heather Banky diligently takes notes during session 5 in California.

*"As a member of the FFVA executive committee I am very excited about the ELDP and the experiences shared by the inaugural class as they prepare to be recognized at FFVA's annual convention. Sonia Tighe has done an outstanding job managing the program, handling scheduling and travel for the group, gathering industry support, as well as challenging each participant to stay engaged and reap the full benefit of this opportunity. I am grateful for the Florida ag industry's support in helping to cultivate our next generation of leaders. The ELDP has exceeded our expectations in its first year and will continue to grow and be successful in the future."*

*- Paul Orsenigo, FFVA executive committee member*