



Wedgworth Leadership Institute

Alumni Association Newsletter

Volume 3, Fall 2009

President's Letter

Happy Halloween Wedgworth Alumni! I hope this letter finds everyone well and surviving the extended summer better than our carved pumpkins. They are melting faster than the Wicked Witch of the West in water and there is a certain funk coming from one of them. I guess it's time to get the shovel out.

I can't believe that we are looking at the close of yet another year right around the corner which means that our next WLI Alumni meeting is just a blink away. Nancy and I really enjoyed catching up with a lot of you at Innisbrook at our last alumni meeting and welcoming Class VII into the Alumni Association. What a fantastic weekend with the Ag Commissioner Panel, Square Dance, and the Presidential Hospitality Room. We will be hard pressed to top it next year, but we are sure going to try – perhaps a final Ag Commissioner debate is in order. Planning is under way already and we are visiting sites to try to find the perfect spot. We will be looking for accommodations where we are not so spread out as suggested by several people after the last meeting. Currently, Omni ChampionsGate is one of the forerunners, but we have a few more good options yet to visit. If anyone has any input, please send it on to Nancy, myself, or any board member and we will do our best to take it in consideration.

We were also able to catch up with several alumni at the Landscape Show in Orlando this past month as well. Thanks to Linda Adams and our sponsors for making this happen. There are some photos up on the website. Hannah led us in a Brainstorming session where everyone introduced themselves and stated an issue that they had in their business. Suggestions were offered by the participants as to how they might have addressed a similar situation in their business. It was very enlightening and I believe it could have gone

on for a lot longer if there wasn't an opening night reception to go to.

There was also a mini reunion at the Gator – Troy game outside the O'Connell center with Ray Royce, Bernie and Jayna Hamel, Bill Mang, Mike and Susie Graham, Chris Lance, Hannah, Nancy and I. There was also a cameo appearance by a mystery Gator Girl in one of the photos. I am looking forward to the Florida – Georgia game weekend with mixed emotions. I am not sure my blood pressure can stand another "too close for comfort" victory. Go Gators!!!

The website is up and running and many of you have taken the time to update your information in the directory. If you haven't, I would encourage you to do so at your earliest convenience. This can be a great tool for us if we use it. Mary Frederick has agreed to manage the site for us and we welcome ideas and suggestions to make it better. The site has a lot of capability and we are currently just using a fraction of it. You can visit the site at www.wlianr.com.

We would like to welcome Crystal Matthews to the WLI staff and look forward to her valuable input in the program. Hannah recently sent out an e-mail on her behalf regarding the WLI blog. I hope everyone will take the five minutes it takes to answer the questions – and yes, I will do it as soon as I finish this letter.

Wishing you all a safe and Happy Holiday season,

David & Nancy McDonald

University of Florida's Department of Agricultural Education and Communication Number 1 Department of its kind in the nation

Congratulations to WLI's own Dr. Hannah Carter who is a faculty member of the University of Florida's Department of Agricultural Education and Communication. Identified as the leading department of its kind in the nation by a research team at The Ohio State University after that team conducted a national survey of agricultural education and communication department chairs to rank the top 10 departments.

UF's Department of Agricultural Education and Communication was listed as No. 1 by 25 percent of the department chairs who answered the survey, and nearly half listed the UF department as one of the top two departments. Respondents cited the graduate program, faculty and research program as the department's outstanding features.

The department has worked to strengthen its graduate program in the last decade, and students' visibility on the national scene is another key to the department's success, he said.

Texas A&M University and The Ohio State University ranked second and third, respectively, in the study.

The study's results were presented in May at the annual conference of the American Association for Agricultural Education in Louisville, Ky.

UF's Department of Agricultural Education and Communication is part of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and offers undergraduate through doctoral degree programs, including an online master's degree program for agriscience teachers and extension educators.

Its teaching, research and extension programs

prepare educators, communicators and leaders for the agriculture and natural resources sector in Florida and beyond.



By Lisa Lochridge, FFVA director of Public Affairs

In their first forum of the campaign, four candidates for the agriculture commissioner's race recently met to tout why they should be elected to replace two-term incumbent Charlie Bronson.

The men outlined their platforms at the Wedgworth Leadership Institute Alumni Association annual meeting on Aug. 7.

State Sen. Carey Baker of Eustis, U.S. Rep. Adam Putnam of Bartow, former Suwannee County Commissioner Randy Hatch, and Eric Draper of Audubon of Florida faced off during the Aug. 7 meeting. Baker and Putnam are both Republicans; Hatch and Draper are Democrats.

"The Wedgworth Alumni Association was pleased to sponsor a candidate panel discussion addressing some of the challenges that face Florida agriculture," said David McDonald, co-president of the alumni association. "All of the announced candidates were invited to attend, and we were fortunate to have four candidates take time out of their busy schedule to join us."

The WLI program is designed to develop and equip leaders in the agriculture community to become involved in shaping public policy to benefit the industry at the local, state and national levels.

Draper dropped out of the race 10 days after the forum, citing difficulties in juggling a campaign and his job responsibilities at Audubon. (Because Draper is no longer a candidate, his comments are not included

in this story.) Former Tallahassee Mayor Scott Maddox and former state Rep. Rick Minton Jr. of Fort Pierce, also Democrats, did not attend the forum.

Wedgworth alumni a 'farm team' for ag

In a nod to the leadership represented by the audience of about 85, Putnam opened by saying that WLI's objectives are "perfectly in line with my vision of Florida agriculture and the state as a whole."

"We need an agriculture commissioner who fits a three-part test: Someone who has a real agriculture background, who understands what it is to live and die by the thermometer or rain gauge or pest no one can pronounce; someone who has a passion for the agriculture industry; and someone who has the background to go on the 22nd floor of a condo in Boca Raton and advocate the needs of our industry to people who don't know it exists. Wedgworth can be agriculture's 'farm team' in all parts of Florida."

Each candidate painted a picture of what kind of agriculture commissioner he would be.

Baker, who was elected to the state Senate in 2000, spoke of his years of public service and his experience as a small businessman. "This job has lots of responsibility. It takes a commitment to service. I got my sense of commitment from my father, who was elected to Florida House, served in the armed services, and started our family business in Mount Dora," Baker said. His family has owned and operated The A.W. Peterson Gun Shop in Lake County for more than 50 years.

Calling himself a farmer, miner, cattleman and timber man, Hatch cited his leadership from "just being a county commissioner," but added that he was chairman of the Florida Association of Counties and served on the North Florida Regional Planning Council. A self-pronounced "home-rule authority nut," Hatch said "government at the local level is government at its best."

Citing a "generational shift" that's occurred in industry and the state's population, Putnam said Florida needs a different kind of agriculture commissioner. "We have to break out of our comfort zone and box above our weight class," he said. "The Cabinet position of

agriculture commissioner has been marginalized, and it doesn't have to be that way. We take it for granted that we will always have pro-ag commissioner, and that's a dangerous assumption."

Besides an understanding of commodity-specific problems such as citrus canker and greening, the commissioner must "see megatrends -- water policy, land-use policy that doesn't strap farmers, immigration, food safety, and health and nutrition... We need collaboration and consensus-building outside of the usual suspects. That's vitally important."

Candidates cite bad policy as a major threat

The candidates cited land-use and water policies as the biggest threats to the future of Florida agriculture.

Hatch discussed "the whole land-use issue that's been a topic of much debate in Tallahassee in the past few years. I'm not against urban growth; I'm against urban sprawl. I'm not against development but against developers who don't want to meet concurrency requirements. They don't care about what's good enough for the community ... it's about what's good for them."

Another significant threat is "unchecked, rampant greed at nearly every level in this country," he added. "It's time for people to stand up and say, let's get a level playing field -- that's the job of government."

Putnam cited "water policy that is moving" as a serious threat, but he added others to the laundry list.

"It's public policy at the rule-making level that animals have standing and a trial lawyer can set standards for veal and swine," he said. "It's a death tax that will end the family farm. It's trade deals that are poorly negotiated. It's the loss of crop protection tools that right now allow less than 2 percent of the population to feed the world. What other industry has that kind of efficiency? Yet those tools are eroding. It's misguided public policy and the culture that says, 'Since you're the last one who hasn't sold out, we're going to tell you what to do to your land.' That's offensive and unacceptable."

Baker urged the group to think about the long-term as well as the short-term when considering threats to

agriculture.

“When we think, where do we want ag to be 10 years or 20 years from now, we have to think about what’s going to drive decisions in future. We know it’ll be growth,” Baker said. “It’s typically NIMBY (not in my back yard). No one’s going to want to be around a pig farm or where there are fumigants. That’s where policies arise from growth. Folks who don’t understand agriculture think it doesn’t matter if we don’t farm in Florida.”

Without statutory and even constitutional protections to ensure growers have the right to farm, Baker added, “You’re going to see a continuation of growth pushing local decisions that are bad for ranching and bad for farming.”

Baker said voters need to understand policies that are enacted today will ultimately affect their food source. “These property-rights issues are going to become more and more critical,” he said. “We know the pressure for agriculture won’t get less; the issues that growth poses are political ones ... Our challenge is to put into effect protections so that tomorrow we’ll have sustainable agriculture.”

Improved economy, smaller government are key

The candidates closed by summarizing their priorities. Putnam and Hatch focused on the need to revive the economy, while Baker spoke of the importance of the small business community and the need for government to “get out of the way.”

Baker told the group he doesn’t use a lot of words, but focuses instead on action. “An indication of future behavior is past behavior,” he said. “In running a small business, I’ve had all the challenges a small business man has every day opening the door and making a living.”

He also talked of broader experience that qualifies him for the job, including tours in Iraq as a member of the Florida National Guard. “I’ve led troops on combat operations. I’ve managed people and made decisions under some of the most terrible circumstances imaginable,” he said. And he pointed to his stint as chairman of the agriculture appropriations committee, which involves overseeing and determining funding

priorities for the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ budget.

“I have a passion for a strong agriculture industry in the state,” he said. “I’ve stood shoulder-to-shoulder with other ag groups in the state. I will put principle above politics. Service is a commitment that I’ve proven over my life and experience. I’ll serve with honor and be honored to serve.”

Hatcher cited his experience as a county commissioner in exercising fiscal responsibility. “I had to balance budgets when there was little money,” he said.

“We have so many issues that are going to fall on us in these next few years -- food safety, homeland security, and tools of terrorism that we may deal with,” he said. “It will take someone who has experience, who understands international relations as they relate to agriculture, and has background in production agriculture.”

Hatcher spoke at length about the dire financial straits many farmers find themselves in today. Devaluation of farmland has hurt growers’ ability to finance the next season’s operation, he said, adding, “We’re going in the wrong direction. We need to make sure farmers are able to get the credit they need in order to operate and feed us.”

Putnam cited specific improvements needed for a 21st century Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which he said “is organized in silos right now.” He called on the department to be more efficient and “customer friendly.”

Putnam suggested the school lunch program be housed with FDACs instead of the Department of Education, and cited the opportunity to expand education outreach by bringing biology, life sciences and chemistry teachers to the farm.

He closed by urging Wedgworth alumni to be fully engaged in the race. “It’s the singular most important race for the future for agriculture,” he said. “If we distort the mission of agriculture with the wrong commissioner, the result would be devastating.”

The 2nd Annual WLI Gathering at the Landscape Show was a great success!

On October 1st, over 20 WLI alumni gathered for a networking opportunity at FNGLA's Landscape Show. This was the second time that FNGLA has made available agenda time and space for WLI alums. Special thanks go to Linda Adams (Class IV) for organizing the event and for several generous alumni who sponsored refreshments. The hour flew by with great conversations, an educational brain-storming session and words of welcome and support from Mr. Michael Sallin, Chairman of the Landscape Show and Mr. Ben Bolusky, Executive Vice President of FNGLA.



Alumni in the News

Halsey Beshears Wins Farm Credit/FNGLA Young Nursery Professional of the Year

Congratulations to WLI Class V member Halsey Beshears, Simpson Nurseries in Monticello, FL on winning the 2009 Farm Credit/FNGLA Young Nursery Professional of the Year Award. This award is presented to an FNGLA member who is under 39 and has made an outstanding contribution to the industry.

The Farm Credit/ FNGLA Young Nursery Professional of the Year Award is an established partnership between Farm Credit Associations of Florida and the

Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association. Beshear's name will now be submitted to the Southern Nursery Association (SNA) as Florida's nominee for the David E. Laird Sr. Memorial Award awarded annually by SNA.

Jorge Abreu - 2009 Gran Caiman Del Ano Award Winner

Congratulations to Jorge Abreu (WLI Class VII), Homestead, FL for being selected as this year's Gran Caimán by the University of Florida Association of Hispanic Alumni. Jorge is President and Owner of West Kendall Nursery, Inc. and has two degrees from the University of Florida, one in Animal Sciences and the other in Environmental Horticulture with a specialty in Nursery Management.

Since graduating from the University of Florida, he has become an advocate of the University's Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC)'s research, teaching, and extension programs in Miami-Dade County and has been a staunch advocate of the university's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). He has actively lobbied in favor of his industry at the national and local level and was instrumental in helping to secure \$15 million in repair and renovation funds for the over 100 IFAS facilities across the state.

He serves as the president of the Miami-Dade Chapter Florida Nursery Growers and Landscaping Association (FNGLA) and acts as an advisory board member for both TREC and IFAS.

David Wheeler Re-elected to Florida Citrus Commission

Congratulations to David Wheeler (WLI Class IV) on his re-election to the Florida Citrus Commission.

Wheeler, president of Wheeler Farms in Glades County, oversees production and marketing of grove operations. Previously, he served as general manager.

Wheeler has worked in the citrus industry for 21 years and currently serves as president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. He is a board member of Dundee Citrus Growers Association and past president

of Florida Production Managers Association.

He holds a degree in food resource economics from the University of Florida.

Wheeler serves as chair of the Planning & Evaluation Committee and vice-chair of the Domestic Marketing Committee.

Eric Hopkins was recently named to the Board of Directors of Farm Credit of South Florida

Eric Hopkins a Class V graduate of WLI has recently been named to the Board of Directors of Farm Credit of South Florida. Congratulations Eric!

News from the WLI Office

Since Class VII's graduation in August, it seems as though the WLI office has been busier than when a class is in session! There's a lot of great things going on and we are gearing up for the new year and a new class!

We received the best news last week—our endowment is finally generating interest again! Since the downturn in the economy, our endowment, which is invested in the UF Foundation endowment pool, has not generated any interest. We stopped generating interest close to two years ago, thankfully, we had the money in the bank for Class VII and were able to provide members of Class VII a stellar program experience.

Since we are now earning money again on our endowment, we are breathing a sigh of relief and are putting plans together to launch Class VIII next year. We may still have to do a bit of fundraising depending on our interest income, but the future for Class VIII is much brighter than it was earlier this year. At this point, we are tentatively planning to begin the nomination and selection process for the summer of 2010, with Class VII beginning in November of 2010. Please keep in mind potential applicants as our

greatest source of program participants is the alumni association.

Last month, I was fortunate to attend the annual meeting of the International Association for Programs of Agricultural Leadership (IAPAL)—this group is all of the ag leadership program directors from around the world. At this meeting we had representatives from Scotland, New Zealand, Canada and 27 states. It was a great time to recharge my leadership programming batteries, to learn from other directors and to listen to some interesting educational sessions. The group of directors is a very supportive and sharing group. They are also very complimentary of our Florida program as many of the directors have had the opportunity to interact with several of the WLI classes and they also are interested in our dynamic and active alumni association, something that most programs are lacking.

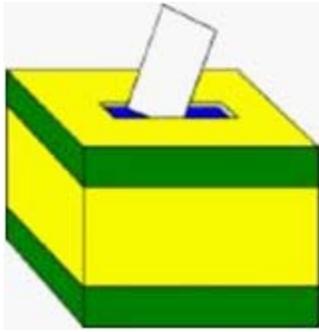
Next week I have the good fortune to travel to Prague in the Czech Republic to give a presentation at the International Leadership Association annual meeting. There will be over 600 leadership educators at this meeting and I'm honored to have my research chosen for presentation. The research that I will be sharing was conducted with Class VII and their iPod experiment. I am also working on several journal articles on my findings and will include a write-up in the next WLI newsletter.

We are also gearing up for an in depth program review and strategic planning session to be held in February 2010. It's been about ten years since the program has been thoroughly reviewed and to date, this program has never had a mission or vision statement. We are looking forward to this process of strengthening the program and providing future direction. This process will only be successful with the involvement of WLI alumni and I'm hoping that many of you will be willing to serve on our review and planning team. More information will be forthcoming.

Whew! In addition to all of this, Janice and I are busily updating databases and in general reorganizing all that is the WLI while we have the time and energy!

All my best for a productive and enjoyable fall!
-Hannah

WLI Suggestion Box



Because 200 heads are better than 1—if you have ideas about the WLI, please feel free to send them to me at hscarter@ufl.edu. It can be anything—from the program, to the websites, to social media—whatever you think would serve to further strengthen the program and alumni association.

The best idea suggested that's implemented will receive a prize and a "shout out" in the next alumni newsletter. Send in your suggestions!

Join WLI Alums for the Mason Jam 2010!!

The Mason G. Smoak Foundation presents Mason Jam 2010 hosted by Eric Church and Friends at the Lakeland Center Arena in Lakeland, FL on February 5, 2010. We may try to reserve a block of tickets for WLI alumni. If you think you might be interested in attending, please email Hannah (hscarter@ufl.edu) with how many tickets you might need. We aren't purchasing them now, we just want to get an idea of the size of the block. For more information on the Mason G. Smoak Foundation, please visit: <http://www.masongsmoakfoundation.org/>.



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