

News



Fall 2011



Putnam Keynotes 20th Gulf Citrus Industry Banquet

For 20 years, the Citrus Industry Banquet hosted by the Gulf Citrus Growers Association continues to bring together leaders from throughout the Sunshine State! This year's banquet, held in conjunction with Citrus EXPO August 17th and 18th, featured Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam as its keynote speaker. Commissioner Putnam, along with other key industry leaders, addressed the gathering of over 300 growers, industry leaders and guests at this year's event held at the Harborside Event Center in Ft. Myers.

Ft. Myers Mayor Randy Henderson welcomed attendees to his city, and highlighted several of the progressive changes taking place along the Caloosahatchee River in the downtown area. He acknowledged the importance of the region's citrus and agricultural industries to the economies of Ft. Myers, Lee County and the entire Southwest Florida region.

Since GCGA is celebrating its 25th Anniversary, a newly produced video, featuring the association's history, leadership and accomplishments was unveiled as an enthusiastic "kick off" to the festive evening.

Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation President Callie Walker reported that over \$70,000 had been awarded through the foundation to deserving students pursuing college degrees beneficial to agriculture. She noted that the "first" scholarship was awarded at the "first" GCGA Citrus Industry Banquet 20-years ago, and that that award prompted a call for an

expanded effort to support students. She reported that the foundation was formed to enhance GCGA's educational program, including its outreach into the Southwest Florida community. Walker thanked the many attendees for their support, and encouraged others to join and/or contribute to foundation.

Dr. Harold W. Browning, Chief Operating Officer of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), provided an executive update on the efforts of the organization to address the immediate and longer-range "research" needs of Florida's citrus industry. Dr. Browning, using a PowerPoint presentation, showcased the current research projects underway to aid citrus growers in their battle against the Asian Citrus Psyllid and the deadly "Greening" disease. He also highlighted the logistical details employed by the CRDF board to identify and fund research projects that are rated and ranked according to their probabilities of success in dealing with HLB and Canker, the two diseases that are currently and severely impacting the industry. Dr. Browning thanked growers for their willingness to invest their dollars in the research efforts administered through the CRDF.

When introducing Adam Putnam, GCGA's Ron Hamel, who served as emcee for the banquet, noted that although Putnam had previously addressed the Citrus Industry Banquet as a Florida Congressman ...the asso-

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President's Message

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association recently celebrated its 25th year anniversary! Can you believe it's been 25 years in existence - from 1986 through 2011. It seems like just yesterday when the planting boom came to Southwest Florida and to the five-county "Gulf" production region!

Many trials and tribulations have besieged the citrus industry in that time frame, and I am sure that many more will continue. With that said, however, because of the relationships we have built and the inroads that we have made over our 25 years of leadership, "Gulf Citrus" is better positioned to address whatever challenges come our way! We will continue to build upon our solid foundation so that our voice is heard in the coming years.

Labor, e-verify, and harvesting are the new hot topics that will require a greater effort.

Greening research and finding a cure or way to cope with HLB have been in the



Wayne Simmons

forefront the last few years. Labor, e-verify, and harvesting our crops are the new hot topics that will require a greater effort. Water issues have always been crucial to the growers of Southwest Florida. Today, they are even more important to us as Lake Okeechobee water levels are at record lows for this time of year. And with more growth in the urban communities plus an active environmental movement in our region, agriculturalists will need to

intensify their efforts to protect their legal rights to the water resources. GCGA has and will continue to fight for water supplies to irrigate the thousands of acres of citrus in the region!

As you are well aware, government involvement, with its rules and regulations, will remain a major concern for our businesses. We have to be engaged in "the process" and cultivate and elect governmental leaders who understand the needs of our growers, farmers and ranchers.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association will continue to address these issues and many more that may arise. I challenge you, as members of our association, to get more involved in the process and work with the leadership to make our voices heard. We are indebted to the leaders who envisioned this organization 25 years ago. Let us embark and build upon their successes so that in the next 25 years "Gulf Citrus" is looked to regarding all related agriculture issues in Southwest Florida.

I look forward to serving as your president for the coming year, and hope I can live up to the high standards set by the past presidents of this great organization.

GCGA Recognizes UF/IFAS' Dr. Phil Stansly

At the 20th Gulf Citrus Industry Banquet held August 17, 2011 in Ft. Myers, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association presented its "special service" award to Dr. Phillip A. Stansly, a University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences entomology professor. Dr. Stansly is based at UF/IFAS' Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) in Immokalee, where he has been actively engaged in teaching and research for over 23 years. The scientist has focused his efforts on the insects that attack citrus, vegetables and sugarcane crops inflicting diseases and economic impacts to them.

In making the presentation, Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Ron Hamel noted that Dr. Stansly has been a true leader and "pioneer" in reducing the populations of Asian Citrus Psyllids in the "Gulf" region's citrus groves. The inscription on the laser-engraved walnut plaque read: "For Outstanding and Dedicated Leadership in the Development and Implementation of Florida's 'First' Area-Wide and Cooperative Initiative Aimed at Reducing Asian Citrus Psyllid Populations and the Spread of 'Greening' in the 'Gulf Citrus'

Production Region. And, for His Tenacious Efforts to Sustain the Fight Against this Vectorial Pest."

Dr. Stansly is actively engaged in providing scientifically-based professional leadership through GCGA's efforts to create and implement "Round #4" of the region's Asian Citrus Psyllid area-wide cooperative dormant sprays within the "Gulf" Citrus Health Management Area's (CHMAs). This effort has been scheduled for the late fall and early winter.



Dr. Phil Stansly (left) receives GCGA's "Special Service" Award from Ron Hamel (right).



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Publisher's Statement

Florida Gulf Citrus News is published biannually by the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, Post Office Box 1319, LaBelle, Florida 33975, (863) 675-2180. Postmaster, please send address change to the address above. **Editor: Ron Hamel**

Citrus BMP Manual & “Gulf” Cost/Share Program Update

In early 2006, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association hosted the “official” release of the “Gulf Citrus” Best Management Practices (BMP) Manual, and began encouraging the region’s growers to complete and file a “Notice of Intent” (NOI) with the Florida Department of Agriculture and participate in the program. Such action qualifies a citrus grower to be operating under a “Presumption of Compliance” with state water quality standards according to the FDACS’ Office of Water Policy.

To date, over 100,000 acres within the “Gulf Citrus” region have been enrolled in the BMP program since GCGA, along with UF/IFAS and FDACS, initiated the “sign-up” effort.

During the past year, FDACS in collaboration with UF/IFAS and industry leaders have embarked upon a mission to consolidate “the regional” citrus manuals into a “statewide” version. Bill Bartnick, environmental administrator Florida Department of Agriculture, says, “The Florida Citrus BMP manual modification is designed to consolidate the three exist-

ing regional BMP manuals (including the Gulf) and the ‘Ridge Citrus Rule’ into one document. Doing so will eliminate duplication but will also preserve regional production specificity, where needed.”

Currently, a “draft” of the Florida Citrus BMP Manual is being reviewed by the UF/IFAS citrus agents and a “final” draft will be prepared following the agents’ input.

To be eligible, growers must have a signed Notice of Intent with FDACS!

The “final” draft will be field-tested in the different production regions by FDACS and FDEP. Following that “field test,” the consolidated manual with scientific documentation will be submitted to FDEP for initial verification. The rulemaking process will follow next. The manual’s adoption is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2012.

“Gulf Citrus” Cost/Share

The association has been notified by FDACS that \$50,000 in cost/share funding has been made available to citrus growers in the “Gulf” region who are participating in the BMP program. To be eligible, growers must have a signed NOI with FDACS! The funds are available on a first come, first serve basis, and the BMPs must be employed by June 2012.

Gulf citrus growers interested in participating in this funding should immediately contact Mr. David “Bo” Griffin in the FDACS Okeechobee office at (863) 462-5881 or e-mail: David.Griffin@freshfromflorida.com.

Griffin suggests growers consider the addition of a variable-rate spreader to their operation which can reduce nutrient runoff, and qualifies for cost/share funding. Other practices that qualify include chemigation/fertigation infrastructure; flash board riser conversion/repairs; on-site water retention projects; low volume irrigation conversion and other precision application equipment.

For more Gulf Citrus news, go to www.gulfcitrus.org

Florida’s Gulf Citrus Production Region

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association represents citrus growers with thousands of acres of citrus in Southwest Florida’s “Gulf” region, which accounts for about 25% of the state’s total fruit production. The region’s citrus industry generates nearly \$1-billion of total economic impact.



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Committee Chairs Appointed to Serve for 2011-2012 Season

GCGA President Wayne Simmons appointed the following leaders to chair the association’s operating committees for the coming year.

Please contact these volunteers for updates and information related to their respective committees.

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Robert Murray

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Association Hosts 15th "Gulf Classic" at Verandah

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association hosted the 15th Annual "Gulf Classic" May 13, 2011 at Verandah Country Club. Twenty-nine (29) teams competed in this year's tournament, reflecting continuous industry-wide support of this GCGA event.

The "Gulf Classic," coordinated and directed through the association's Associate Member Committee, is one of key "special events" which financially supports the organization's community and governmental relations programs in the region.

"Our association is truly thankful for the continual sponsorship support of the "Gulf Classic" by both grower and associate members," said Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president. "The Associate Committee is to be commended, once again for putting on a first class event," he added.

The 2011 "Gulf Classic" Tournament Committee included **Alison Pool**, Brown and Brown Insurance, Chairman; **Stacy McCullough**, Farm Credit of Florida; **Jeff Campbell**, Campbell Insurance; **Julie Forrest**, Stallings Crop Insurance, Corp.; **Rachel Walters**, Bayer CropScience; **David Wilkison**, Stantec; **Robert Murray**, Griffin Fertilizer; **Sarah Markle**, Valent USA; **Sonya Carns**, Ag-Tronix, Inc.; **Cody Hoffman**, Syngenta and **Bernadette Rashford**, GCGA.

This year's "Gulf Classic" featured a \$1000 cash prize drawing for registered golfers, a 50-50 putting contest, individual "special hole" prizes and "awards" for the first, second and third place teams.

This year's "first place" winning team was sponsored by Gulf Citrus Harvesting & Hauling, Inc. and included **Lawrence Williams**, **Jesse Reyna** and **Ricky O'Ferrell**. Winning "second place" was the team from Car Two, comprised of **John Paul**, **Mike Halloran**, **Eddie Rodriguez** and **Jason Dyess**. Coming in "third place" was the Orange Co. team including **Jerry Newlin**, **Jim Mercer**, **Buddy Strickland** and **Bob Hamilton**.

Winners of the 15th Annual "Gulf Classic" individual awards were: Most Accurate Drive, **Bill Arrington**; Longest Drive, **Eddie Rodriguez** and **Ricky O'Ferrell**; Longest Putt, **Craig Nelson**; Closest to the Pin, **Charles Lanfier** and **Joe Hilliard** and Putting Contest, **Dan Pool**.



First Place Team Sponsored by Gulf Citrus Harvesting & Hauling, Inc.
L to R: Jesse Reyna, Lawrence Williams, Ricky O'Ferrell and Gene Hillman



Car Two Places Second!
L to R: John Paul, Jason Dyess and Eddie Rodriguez



Howell Wins \$1000 Cash Grand Prize!
Stacey Howell of Bayer CropScience was the lucky winner of the "Gulf Classic's" second \$1000 cash prize for participating golfers in the tournament. Rachel Walters presents the "big bucks" at the luncheon.

2011 Gulf Classic Tournament Sponsors

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association would like to thank the "Gulf Classic" sponsors

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Putnam Keynotes Gulf Citrus Industry Banquet

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ciation was extremely proud and honored to have him back to deliver his remarks as Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture!

Commissioner Putnam highlighted his agricultural "agenda" for his first term as the state's top farmer. Topping his list were water, energy, pests/diseases and school nutrition.

Putnam called "water" the most important long-term issue facing Florida and urged all parties to work together to develop strategies that benefit agriculture, urban communities and the environment alike. The Commissioner promoted support for the current structure of five water management districts and warned against the state moving to a centralized, statewide system. He predicted that moving to a single water management system would essentially create "water wars" between the coastal and interior counties and between north and south Florida.

Since Lake Okeechobee is central to the water supply for all South Florida users, including agriculture, Putnam focused much of his remarks on the current Lake "O" situation. Reporting that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans a four-year moratorium to assess the effectiveness of repairs to the Hoover Dike at a time when more water needs to be stored for future use, Commissioner Putnam said, "That's unacceptable! That's unacceptable to communities around the lake. That's unacceptable to agricultural users. And, that should be unacceptable to anyone concerned about water and water quality in Florida," he added. He suggested that a moratorium would further delay the goal, already estimated to take 20 years, of raising lake levels and potential water supplies. "When you have more water, you have options. When you have no water, you have no options," said Putnam. "These water issues are vital to the state, and nothing is more important than Lake Okeechobee," he added.

Putnam also criticized the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its attempt to preempt Florida's water quality standards and impose new federal water quality standards, numeric nutrient criteria (NNCs) on the state's lakes, rivers and other water bodies. "We're committed to challenging the EPA on numeric water quality criteria, which is flawed science," Putnam said.

Commissioner Putnam's comments prompted the Ft. Myers *News-Press* to publish an editorial supporting many of his key points, including the need for Lake Okeechobee storage for supply.

He also commented on his efforts to promote energy crops and water storage on farm lands. "This gives agriculturalists more options for their land," Putnam said. "I am working to add value to farmland," he noted.



20th Citrus Banquet & EXPO Highlights!

Top Left: Over 150 booths showcased at the "tradeshow"! **Top Right:** State FFA officers enjoy the festivities. **Second Left:** Dr. Harold Browning provides CRDF update. **Second Right:** Mike Brennan from Senator Rubio's staff (left) meets with Commissioner Putnam and Mei-Mei Chan (2nd from right) Ft. Myers *News-Press* Publisher. **Bottom Left:** State Senator Liz Benacquisto (left) greets Hendry Commissioner Karson Turner (right). **Bottom Right:** GCGA President Wayne Simmons (left) meets with Commissioner Putnam (middle) and Marty McKenna, Chairman of the Florida Citrus Commission.

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“Gulf Citrus” Prepares for “Round #4” in Psyllid/HLB Fight



Following three successful area-wide coordinated dormant sprays to reduce the populations of Asian Citrus Psyllids in the “Gulf” region, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association is preparing for “Round #4.” Since last season’s sprays, the region has formed the “Gulf” Citrus Health Management Area (CHMA), which encompasses citrus groves in the core growing areas of Collier, Hendry and Lee counties. Growers in Glades and Charlotte counties are being included within CHMAs reflecting those counties’ key growing areas, and will be included in efforts to blanket the entire “Gulf” production region with coordinated spraying. The collaborative “Gulf” team includes GCGA, FDACS/DPI, UF/IFAS’ multi-county citrus agent and SWFREC scientists, and aerial applicators.

Mark Colbert, chairman of the GCGA production and research committee, continues to strongly promote the area-wide dormant sprays. “Our efforts have clearly reduced the numbers of psyllids in our region,” said Colbert. “I am hopeful that the spray program will expand in a scientifically sound way such that I can reduce the total number of sprays and know that by doing so...I am not shortening the life of the grove by the reduction of costly applications,” he added.

Dr. Phil Stansly, UF/IFAS entomologist who has been a catalyst in coordinating and implementing the cooperative area-wide sprays echoes Colbert’s assessment. Citing recent data from the USDA/FDACS surveys of over 4,800 citrus blocks statewide, 625 in our five-county area, Dr. Stansly reported that the three counties entirely covered by the “Gulf” CHMA (Collier, Hendry and Lee) ranked near the top of the list in terms of low psyllid counts at “3,” “2” and “4” psyllids per 50 taps, respectively. (see chart) “These results are encouraging,” he said.

Dr. Stansly recapped the “Gulf’s” area-wide spraying efforts. “The region is going into its 4th season of cooperative action to control the psyllid. During the 2008-09

season, we saw how effective an area-wide dormant spray could be in providing global suppression. During the 2009-10 season, we added a second dormant pre-Christmas spray and were again pleased with the results. For the 2010-11 season, we repeated the 2-dormant spray plan. However, the December 18th freeze caused considerable defoliation in some groves, and the warm weather in January induced an early flush on partially defoliated trees, providing fodder for psyllid reproduction. This compromised the effectiveness of some January sprays,” Stansly explained. “The most effective ACP spray of the year is the one

put on in mid-winter...so it’s important to get it right,” he said. “Therefore, growers should either plan for the 2nd spray to go on by January 15th, or be ready to get a spray out within 3 weeks of a hard freeze.”

Now that “the CHMA” concept is being initiated statewide, and the Departments of Agriculture have expanded their surveys to 6000 blocks every three weeks, the data collected should lead to better pest suppression.

Greg Carlton, Chief, FDACS/DPI Bureau of Pest Eradication and Control, reports that 83% of Florida’s citrus acreage, over 400,000 acres, is now in CHMAs. Carlton noted that DPI is pleased with the progress the industry is making.

According to Dr. Stansly, the CHMA concept is evolving from an area-wide spray plan toward a more knowledge-based management system, thanks to the monitoring efforts of the citrus health response program (CHRP), as well as the efforts of individual growers. “How can we use this information to fine tune and extend our own efforts?” he asks.

As Colbert recently expressed, “While our current CHMA recommendation of two dormant sprays is quite effective, it is not sufficient for controlling the vector or preventing the HLB disease from being spread in our groves.” He added, “I am anxious for the researchers to figure the situation out for us growers.”

As expanded ACP surveying moves ahead, the “Gulf” CHMAs “team” leaders continue improving the effectiveness of the program based on the results. Dr. Stansly agreed that the additional data will help to determine where the “hot spots” are, so that efficient strategies can be employed to deal with them. The leadership “team” is putting together its strategies for “Round #4,” based on the results to date. The “game plan” will be distributed to all citrus growers in the region within the next few weeks through various communications methods including the new Florida CHMA website: www.flchma.org!

CHRP Psyllid Survey

August 9, 2011		Average Psyllids per 50 Taps	Number of Blocks Sampled
Rank	County		
1	Palm Beach	0	8
2	Hendry	2	281
3	Brevard	2	98
4	Collier	3	128
5	Volusia	3	55
6	Alachua	3	1
7	Lee	4	99
8	Okeechobee	4	71
9	Hernando	4	33
10	Sarasota	4	18
11	DeSoto	5	256
12	Manatee	5	240
13	Hillsborough	5	190
14	Osceola	5	113
15	Charlotte	5	62
16	Highlands	7	487
17	Pasco	8	194
18	Glades	8	54
19	Lake	10	413
20	Citrus	11	5
21	St. Lucie	12	279
22	Hardee	13	314
23	Polk	14	852
24	Martin	14	153
25	Orange	15	104
26	Indian River	16	224
27	Marion	17	66
28	Seminole	25	5
29	Putnam	57	2

GCGA & AG Leaders Meet on Lake Okeechobee Issues



GCGA Hosts “Lake Okeechobee Issues” Session With Commissioner Putnam

Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam (standing second from right) and Mike Joyner, Chief of Staff (seated far right) meet with growers, farmers and ranchers to address the key issues impacting their water supplies from Lake “O.”

Coordinated by the Gulf Citrus Growers Association...grower, rancher and farmer leaders recently met with Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam and his chief of staff Mike Joyner to discuss Lake Okeechobee and its vital “water supply” role for thousands of AG acres in South and Southwest Florida.

GCGA President, Wayne Simmons chaired the meeting at First Bank in Clewiston with Commissioner Putnam. Others attending the two-hour session

attendees on the recent changes to “the lake schedule” due to the Army Corps’ concerns with the Hoover Dike, which surrounds the lake and is undergoing needed repair. Due to the condition of the dike, the Corps has lowered the amount of water that can be stored in the lake during the wet season and released to water users in the dry season. The “dike” situation, which triggered less water storage in the lake, has contributed to water shortages and restrictions for legal water users, he

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) have issued a LaNina watch, signaling, more than likely, the region will be facing continued...if not more intense...dry conditions throughout the approaching “dry” season!

The AG leaders called on Commissioner Putnam to assist in finding equitable solutions to the Lake Okeechobee management crisis so that agriculture can remain sustainable in the region.

Commissioner Putnam pledged his support to work with the Army Corps of Engineers, the South Florida Water Management District and local governmental and agricultural leaders to address the issues discussed at the session.

Calling Lake Okeechobee “the liquid heart” of all of South Florida’s water supply needs, Putnam has already been engaging the water managers. “I believe that repairing the dike is of critical importance to the future water supply needs of South Florida. If we are unable to rehabilitate the dike and return the Lake Okeechobee stage operations schedule to one that more closely reflects the schedule prior to discovering that the dike was vulnerable, then we will be in an almost constant state of water shortage for all legal water users,” said Putnam.

The leaders of GCGA, the Florida Farm Bureau Federation and other AG groups will remain engaged with Commissioner Putnam, his staff and the South Florida Water Management and the Corps of Engineers’ leadership to improve the situation for agricultural users in the LOSA, as well as throughout the region.

Calling Lake Okeechobee “the liquid heart” of all of South Florida’s water supply needs, Putnam has already been engaging the water managers. “I believe that repairing the dike is of critical importance to the future water supply needs of South Florida.”

were: Joe Collins, Chairman of the SFWMD Governing Board, Mark Colbert, Miller Couse, David Davis, Craig Korbly, Jeff Kreiger, Gene McAvoy, Tom MacVicar, Tommy Perry, Irene Quincey, Charles Shinn, Carey Soud, Ken Smith, Sonny Stein and Callie Walker.

Tom MacVicar, who represents the “water supply” interests of many agriculturalists in the South Florida region, provided an historic overview of Lake Okeechobee and its regulation schedule, which the South Florida Water Management District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers use to manage the lake. As one of the region’s most knowledgeable leaders on Lake “O,” and Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA) issues, MacVicar updated Commissioner Putnam and

explained. The current drought has compounded the water shortage situation.

MacVicar also reported that the recent development of “adaptive protocols” by the water regulators aimed at providing greater “balance” in water allocation to legal users and the environment, have been severely criticized. The SFWMD’s Governing Board has been getting pressured by all sides to provide much needed lake water during this year’s record drought. Lake Okeechobee water levels are currently over three feet below historic levels.

The region’s agriculturalists, who rely on lake water to irrigate their crops, are currently under “Phase III” water use restrictions imposed by the South Florida Water Management District. Recently, the Southeast Climate Consortium and the



Foundation Awards Hispanic and Fall Scholarships

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation recently made award presentations to deserving students seeking college degrees related to citrus/agriculture. As an important part of the association's community relations efforts, the scholarships reflect the region's citrus growers' support of higher education.

During the summer, the foundation awarded a \$1000 scholarship to Carolina Lerma, a Mariner High School graduate whose family has been in production agriculture for many years, in conjunction with the Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The presentation by foundation president Callie Walker was made at the 19th Annual Gala & Scholarships Presentation hosted by the Hispanic Chamber. The event featured FOX 4's Patrick Nolan, local university presidents and other media representatives. GCGA has been recognized by the chamber as one of its special honorees for its years of continual support to the organization and its scholarship program.

For this fall semester, the foundation



**GCGA Scholarship Foundation
President Callie Walker
"highlights" 2011 student awards
at Gulf Citrus Industry Banquet.**

awarded five scholarships totaling \$2500. The students recognized for academic achievement were Daniel Blank, Jason Soud, Theodor Stansly, Jamie Yates and

Assma Zekri. Each received a \$500 award.

At the 2011 Gulf Citrus Industry Banquet in Ft. Myers, Callie Walker, GCGA Scholarship Foundation President, reported that over \$70,000 has been "invested" in deserving students since the association began making awards in 1992. She noted, however, that this past fall, the program attracted more qualified students than supporting funding. She thanked foundation supporters, but called on all attendees to "step-up" and "support" the program through memberships and contributions. Membership application and contribution forms are available through the GCGA office, as are student applications.

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