

News



Spring – 2011



Ft. Myers News-Press executives get “Gulf” citrus growers’ messages!

GCGA Tells “Gulf Citrus” Story

For nearly 25 years...the Gulf Citrus Growers Association (GCGA) has been actively promoting the region’s citrus industry and telling its “story” in one of Florida’s fastest growing urban areas! Through GCGA’s community and governmental relations committees, board of directors and dedicated staff, the association has reached out to the media and urban “publics” in the five-county “Gulf” region. And, it has created and maintained positive relations with its rural leadership.

The historic files of “Gulf Citrus” clearly reflect its “investments” of hundreds of leadership hours and thousands of grower dollars in community outreach and communications efforts. These initiatives are aimed at creating and maintaining a “positive image” for the citrus growers and industry in Southwest Florida.

The association’s efforts are based on public opinion polling and on the key issues related to growing citrus. They are primarily focused on the urban coastal counties, where most of the population resides and the civic/community organizations operate. And, further because the region’s mass media, based in Ft. Myers and Naples, helps to shape public opinion, often the precursor of

the laws, and rules and regulations which impact their operations!

The association has implemented an array of activities and initiatives which have enhanced its stature, and that of SW Florida’s entire citrus growing industry. From media relations to “memberships,” and from sponsorships to scholarships...GCGA’s members are recognized as positive “community” participants.

Media Relations

Recently, executives from the *Ft. Myers News-Press* spent a full day touring citrus grove operations. Although the newspaper has been reporting on the industry for over 20 years, the *News-Press*’ leadership made an extra effort to learn more about growing citrus in SW Florida **now** and in the **future**. President and Publisher Mei-Mei Chan, Vice-President/Executive Editor Terry Eberle, Senior Managing Editor Cindy McCurry-Ross and Community Conversation Editor David Plazas visited three GCGA member groves. The journalists toured Duda Ranches, Immokalee Groves

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President's Message

Can you believe it? GCGA is set to Celebrate 25 Years of Service to "Gulf" citrus growers! I first was elected to the association's board of directors in 1991 when "green" had a very different meaning, and about the same time my family planted a grove with Ambersweet and Flame Grapefruit (so much for good decision-making ability). Seems like yesterday...but that was many years ago!

My Lord and my parents taught me to "be thankful and give thanks," and I am thankful for many things that my participation in the Gulf Citrus Growers Association and Florida's citrus industry have provided. I have had the privilege to serve through the years with many gifted and wise associates and a fantastic staff. My leadership in GCGA also afforded the opportunity to try to influence the various stakeholders...those within our industry, as well as those outside our industry but whose actions impact us...for the benefit of our citrus industry and our region's agriculture.

I can also remember and am thankful for all the **FUN** I have had along the way. Like sucking ants out of clogged microjets, staying up all night running



Carey Soud

pumps on freeze watch, and showing up early one Monday morning to a horde of USDA white vans delivering the bad "Canker" news (that actually turned out pretty good), and \$2.00 per pound fruit prices when everyone wanted to drive the tractor!

One of my fondest memories is of my dad...driving a high crop JD 3020 pulling an old bean sprayer with an oak plank tank (that actually leaked less than the FMC

sprayer we bought many years later) and my brother and I walking along behind that rig with hand-guns spraying \$75/Gallon Roundup...which killed everything including a few young trees! We would be yelling "slow down", especially when we came to the hog ditches used to flood the grove. And I can still remember my dad, the true optimist, who'd always say after a major freeze, "I can see them turning green already"!

My leadership in GCGA also afforded the opportunity to try to influence the various stakeholders...

We certainly have a tremendous number of things to be grateful for. Come join us June 1st at the LaBelle Civic Center to visit with a lot of old friends and to enjoy a memorable celebration of GCGA's past 25 years, and our tribute to those who had "the vision" to put "Gulf Citrus" together and the dedication and perseverance to see it through.

GCGA Set to Celebrate 25 Years of Service

Plans are underway for the Gulf Citrus Growers Association's 25th annual meeting and anniversary celebration of service to Southwest Florida's "Gulf" growers.

The meetings will be held Wednesday, June 1, 2011, at the LaBelle Civic Center. The festivities will begin at 10:30 a.m. with the annual business meeting. That session will be followed by a steak (prepared by the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association) luncheon, with all the trimmings. And then a "special" 25-year recognition "tribute" to GCGA's "founding" members and leaders will complete the day's celebration of service!

"Our association has reached a major milestone in serving the citrus growing industry of the 'Gulf' production region of Florida for 25 years," said Ron Hamel, executive vice president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. "Many leaders and members have 'invested' their time, talent and financial resources to the success of

our association...and they should be recognized and thanked for their foresight and generosity. This extra-special celebration should provide us with the opportunity to reflect on the past...but focus on the future as we work together for the benefit of the citrus growers in our region," he added.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Scholarship Foundation will also hold its annual meeting on June 1st in conjunction with GCGA's annual business meeting. Reports from the foundation's officers will be presented and the annual business of the organization will also be conducted.

Association members and special guests will be receiving 25th Annual Meeting and Anniversary invitations along with RSVP cards for the luncheon. Although there is no charge, members and guests must "register" to attend! Please return the RSVP card, e-mail or call the GCGA office at (863) 675-2180.



Gulf Citrus Growers Association 2010-2011

Board of Directors

Carey Soud, President

Wayne Simmons, Vice President

Wade Timpner, Secretary

Callie Walker, Treasurer

John R. Alexander

Don Barwick

Mark Colbert

Emmett Evans III

Joe Hilliard II

John Hoffman

Tom Kirschner

Paul Meador

David Wheeler

Ron Hamel

Executive Vice President

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Publisher's Statement

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Editor: Ron Hamel

Gulf Citrus Growers Schedules 2011-12 Director Elections



2010-2011 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors

(Front, Left to Right) Mark Colbert, Wayne Simmons, Paul Meador, Tom Kirschner and Don Barwick. (Back Row) Ron Hamel, John R. Alexander, David Wheeler, John Hoffman, Callie Walker, Wade Timpner, Carey Soud, Joe Hilliard II and Emmett Evans III.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's board of directors has scheduled the series of "county elections" for citrus grower representatives to serve on the 2011-2012 association board. This year's county elections will be held on May 19th and 20th.

Wade Timpner, GCGA Secretary and chairman of the nominating committee, notes that each of the association's five counties is entitled to at least one director to serve on the board. The county directors will be elected by citrus grower members during each county's "annual meeting"

and according to GCGA's by-laws.

All communications, including the schedules and by-laws information regarding county elections and the participation forms and ballots will be sent to each "Gulf Citrus" voting citrus grower member at least a couple of weeks prior to the elections. Based upon the association's current "grower" membership, Charlotte, Glades and Lee counties will each vote to elect one director. Collier will elect three (3), and Hendry five (5) directors.

The dates, times and locations of each

"county" annual meeting are listed below. Ballots to elect the two (2) "At Large" directors will also be sent out with the voting schedule and detailed information.

Again this year, the GCGA board has recommended that the association's two "At Large" directors be elected by ballot. So please make sure to vote for these directors with the "official" ballot labeled "At Large" that will be included in the election information packet.



Directors' Elections

Thursday, May 19th

Charlotte County (One director)
8:30 a.m. Charlotte Administration Bldg.
Port Charlotte

Hendry County (Five directors)
2:00 p.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

Friday, May 20th

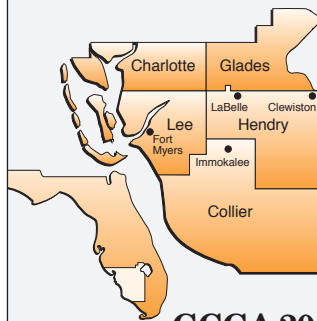
Glades County (One director)
9:00 a.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

Lee County (One director)
9:15 a.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

Collier County (Three directors)
11:30 a.m. UF/IFAS SWFREC
Immokalee

Wednesday, June 1st

25th Annual Meeting
LaBelle Civic Center



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.

GCGA 2010-2011 Board of Directors

Charlotte County

Emmett Evans III
Evans Properties, Inc.

Collier County

John Hoffman
Barron Collier Partnership
Tom Kirschner
Cooperative Producers, Inc.
Paul Meador
Gulf Citrus Partners LP

Hendry County

John R. Alexander
Alico, Inc.
Mark Colbert
A. Duda & Sons, Inc.
Joe Hilliard II
Hilliard Brothers
of Florida, LTD.
Wayne Simmons
LaBelle Fruit Co. LLC
Carey Soud
Soud Family Partnership

Glades County

David Wheeler
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

Lee County

Wade Timpner
George Austin, Inc.

At-Large Seats

Don Barwick
Heller Brothers
Packing Corp.
Callie Walker
English Brothers

11th GCGA "Country Gala" Festive & Successful



2011 Gulf Citrus Growers "County Gala"

Top Left: Gene McAvooy and the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association "prepared" the tasty steaks!

Top Mid: Callie Walker, GCGA treasurer, greets Hendry County Commissioner Tris Chapman.

Top Right: (L to R) Edison Dean Bob Jones, GCGA President Carey Soud and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Lewis enjoy a chat.

2nd Left: Fred Walters wins "bucket raffle" prize and Ali Pool presents the goodies!

2nd Right: Ron Hamel, GCGA v.p., (L) presents \$1000 "grande prize" check to the Adams'.

3rd Left: Shelby Rashford (L) helps the raffle/auction team!

3rd Right: Over 300 Gala attendees "checked-in" at the registration desk.

Bottom Left: An animated Jack Burges, veteran GALA auctioneer, keeps the biddin' going!

Bottom Right: Nice "round up"!

Ya'll come back: GCGA "Country Gala" March 31, 2012.



Over 300 folks, including "locals" and friends from surrounding cities and counties, enjoyed the 11th Annual "Country Gala" hosted by the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. The LaBelle Civic Center was turned into a decorative "meetin' hall" packed with fresh Florida citrus, greenery, hay bales...and lots of "goodies," the kind ya want to own, and the kind ya want to eat! The April 2nd "Gala" evening was another grande success from both "fun" and "fund-raising" perspectives. The "Country Gala" has become GCGA's top event to financially support its community outreach and governmental relations activities in Southwest Florida!

This year's event was supported by 79 generous "sponsors," including 12 plati-

num, 28 gold and 39 silver! In addition, over 60 local businesses and resorts donated raffle and auction items!

"We are truly blessed by the level of support that the association receives for the 'Country Gala'," said Ron Hamel, executive vice president of GCGA. "Our friends in the SW Florida community, including the fine dining facilities, the major resorts and many other businesses... really pitch-in to help us make this event successful," he added. "This effort shows that our industry has a lot of support in this region of the Sunshine State!"

"We wish to thank the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association for continuing to prepare their special 'cattlemen's cut' ribeye steaks for the Gala, and Peggy

Hampton for her 'secret salad' and 'fixins' that round out a meal that folks are still raving about," said Hamel.

This year's raffle and auction "team," including Ali Pool, Sonya Carns, Diana Ramirez, Callie Walker, Rachel Walters and Mallory Milliken, kept "Gala Auctioneer" Jack Burges hoppin' throughout the evening. And, Bernadette Rashford, along with her daughter Shelby and husband Gary...provided "back-up" support for the volunteers.

It takes a whole lot of time, talent and support to make the GCGA "Country Gala" such a success! Please thank ALL our volunteers, sponsors and contributors (on page five)...for their support of this year's event!

Thanks

to our
**Country Gala
Sponsors!**



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Florida Grower Magazine ♦ Galloway Ford ♦ GOWAN ♦ Graves Brothers Company
Gulf Citrus Management, Inc. ♦ Gulf Harvesting, Inc. ♦ Higginbotham & Soud, PA
HSA Engineers & Scientists ♦ J.B. Ranch ♦ JBT Food Tech ♦ Johnson-Prewitt & Associates, Inc.
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Southern Heritage Real Estate ♦ Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber ♦ Sun Country Citrus Hauling, Inc.
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Everglades Farm Equipment Company ♦ First Capital Realty (Jack Burges)
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The Veranda Restaurant ♦ 'Tween Waters Inn ♦ Verandah Golf & Country Club
Yara North America, Inc.



GCGA Tells “Gulf Citrus” Story

continued from page one

and Ranch One Cooperative, where company reps discussed their operations along with the key issues and challenges they are facing. At Duda’s, Mark Colbert discussed water management.

At Immokalee Groves, Paul Meador discussed labor related issues and demonstrated mechanical harvesting. And, at Ranch One, Mike Murphy and Tom Kirschner focused on “canker,” “green-

tries. Between GCGA “grower” spokespersons and its staff, the region’s mass media relies on credible and knowledgeable sources for their reports.

Community Relations

Through GCGA, citrus growers are active members of the region’s key “business” and “economic development” groups. They include The Chamber of

Commerce, the Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Lee County’s Horizon Council & Foundation, and the Glades and Hendry County EDCs. These groups are comprised of local and regional leaders who are engaged in “business-related” and “community” issues. Educating these leaders on citrus/AG issues and concerns helps build support

for our industry, as well as make it part of the local business community!

The association’s “memberships” also include groups focused on water resources, including the American Water Resources Association/Florida Section and the Caloosahatchee Citizens Association. GCGA was recently recognized for its decade of support for the annual SW Florida Water Resources Conference. These efforts help establish “Gulf” citrus growers as good stewards of the region’s natural resources, and enables “conversation” on citrus BMPs and conservation.

Sponsorship/Support

The association also sponsors/supports several local activities and events. From the feeding programs of the Community Cooperative Ministries (CCMI) and the Harry Chapin Food Bank...to the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA), the Southwest Florida Council Boy Scouts and county 4-H programs... GCGA “invests” thousands of citrus-grower dollars in local service-oriented efforts. Over the years, these contributions have contributed to our positive public image.

Scholarships/Education

The first “GCGA” scholarship was awarded in August of 1992 at the Gulf Citrus Expo Banquet. Since that 1st award, over \$70,000 has been given through GCGA and its Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation. As part of GCGA’s community outreach, the foundation also supports the Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber’s scholarship program, which makes annual awards to deserving Hispanic scholars with agricultural backgrounds. Participation for over 13 years in programs sponsored by the Hispanic Chamber earned GCGA the group’s “2009 Honoree of the Year.”

Annually, “Gulf Citrus” presents “Brilliant Orange” awards to Hendry County’s outstanding 1st-year teachers, who are recognized at the Golden Apple Banquet, which it also sponsors. GCGA supports other educational programs in Glades and Lee counties, and has contributed to programs at Edison State College and FGCU.

These combined efforts over the past two decades have helped to create a “positive image” for the “Gulf” citrus industry here in Southwest Florida. Through GCGA...citrus growers are actively “telling the citrus story” here in the region!



John Hoffman (R) meets with Leadership Lee County class to discuss citrus production issues in the “Gulf” region.

ing” and “black spot,” the diseases plaguing the industry. The *News-Press* group was also briefed by Dr. John Dunkelman and his staff on the research and extension efforts of the UF/IFAS “team” at the SW Florida Research and Education Center.

“We learned so much and enjoyed getting acquainted,” wrote Mei-Mei Chan in a note to the association. “Thank you for a fabulous and informative day.”

The *News-Press*’ trip prompted a discussion of GCGA’s 25-years of service to the industry, and its pending celebration of that milestone. In follow up, “Gulf Citrus” was contacted by business reporter Laura Ruane, who has covered citrus and agriculture for many years. Ruane wrote excellent stories featuring the association’s programs and the status of the “Gulf” citrus industry. She also drafted an article featuring Callie Walker, GCGA’s treasurer and daughter of founding president Hugh English.

In addition to its contacts with the *Ft. Myers News-Press* and *Naples Daily News*, broadcast reporters from WINK, NBC-2, ABC-7 and FOX-4 are regular callers to the GCGA office regarding “citrus/AG” news. And Valerie Alker of WGCN-FM public radio keeps her listeners updated on the region’s citrus and agricultural indus-

Southwest Florida, the Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Lee County’s Horizon Council & Foundation, and the Glades and Hendry County EDCs. These groups are comprised of local and regional leaders who are engaged in “business-related” and “community” issues. Educating these leaders on citrus/AG issues and concerns helps build support



“Brilliant Orange” award winners Ansley Cockram (L) and Ginnie Anderson (R).

for our industry, as well as make it part of the local business community!

Many of these same groups develop the “Leadership” programs in the region, which attract young leaders that plan to get active in their communities. GCGA helps to sponsor them, and has also coor-

“Gulf Citrus” Completes “Round #3,” Creates “Gulf CHMA”

For the third consecutive year through the Gulf Citrus Growers Association (GCGA), the region’s citrus growers coordinated their spraying efforts to reduce the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) population in SW Florida. Called “Round #3,” the initiative included two dormant sprays: one before the end of 2010 and the other during the first 45 days of 2011. The area-wide, coordinated spray ‘team,’ includes GCGA, UF/IFAS and SWFREC, FDACS/DPI, grower team captains and applicators.

Dr. Phil Stansly, UF/IFAS entomologist based at the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center in Immokalee who is a leader in the effort, reports that a total of 52,422 acres were sprayed by air during the effort at least once, and 35,674 were sprayed twice. He also noted that although fewer acres were sprayed aerially this round, more were treated using low volume ground equipment. Stansly speculates that the frequency and total acreage sprayed was equal to or greater than the previous two dormant seasons, which is estimated to be over 108,000 acres.

“Unfortunately, the December freeze followed by the warm January induced a large early flush and provided the psyllids with cover and oviposition sites ... effectively cutting 30 days off the dormant season,” he explains. “So growers that did not spray before mid-January may not see the same control levels as in the years before. We were caught off guard this year by the freeze and then the early flush...so going forward, growers should redouble their efforts to get at least one spray on by January 15th to avoid this problem,” he added.

However, Stansly reports that recent DPI/CHRP surveys indicate that psyllid

counts in the “Gulf” area have decreased more than 3-fold during the dormant season. Statistically, that is from 9.1 per 100 taps averaged over 76 blocks in November, to 2.3 per 100 taps averaged over 69 blocks in April, as reported by the surveys.

“There is little doubt that coordinated dormant sprays are the single most effective measures that growers can take to reduce ACP populations...and the spread and severity of HLB in their groves,” Stansly added.



Gulf CHMA Status

Since 2008, coordinated area-wide sprays have been a reality in SW Florida, and have served as a model for the formation of citrus health management areas (CHMAs) throughout the state’s citrus growing areas. Following meetings and discussions with members of the “GCGA psyllid suppression team” and the association’s board, it was recently agreed, that a “Gulf” CHMA need not encompass the entire “Gulf Citrus” production region

...which includes **all** of Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties. Growers in northeastern Glades County indicate that they are working with the Highlands County growers, and those in Charlotte County are in a contiguous area that would work more efficiently as an independent CHMA. Therefore, according to Dr. Stansly and Paul Mears, FDACS/DPI, the newly created “Gulf” CHMA will include the citrus acreage that has been coordinated with good success since 2008, thanks to the excellent cooperation among growers, applicators and agencies. That CHMA will encompass groves in the core Collier, Hendry and Lee growing areas, which are being served by volunteer “team captains.” GCGA and its “team” will also collaborate with the two CHMAs that are within the “Gulf” production region.

As the CHMA concept is developed statewide, questions are being asked. For example, other than continuing our dormant spray program, where should CHMA actions go in the future? Dr. Stansly reports that grove pest and disease management can be greatly enhanced by real time data on pest/disease incidence. He noted that USDA/APHIS and FDACS/DPI/CHRP are in the process of stepping up ACP monitoring at three-week intervals on 6,000 acres throughout the state, including the “Gulf” region. Stansly questions if this effort will be sufficient to optimize pest/disease management as a key component of “successful” CHMAs. He suggests that a broad, cooperative effort to obtain and share real time data would surely enhance CHMA success and should be considered as the industry plans its strategy for the future.

GCGA V.P. Simmons Serves on CRDF 2011-12 Board

At the annual meeting of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), the 2011-2012 board of directors was officially seated. Gulf Citrus Growers Association Vice President Wayne Simmons serves on the CRDF board, and also on its committees/sub-committees. Mark Colbert, GCGA board member, was appointed to the newly formed Commercial Product Development Committee. The citrus growers of SW Florida are well represented by these GCGA leaders.



2011-12 Citrus Research and Development Foundation Board

L to R: Jerry Newlin, Dr. Mark R. McLellan, Bobby Barben, Tom Jerkins, Hugh Thompson, Joe L. Davis, Jr., Marty McKenna, Dr. Joseph C. Joyce, Ricke Kress, Ben McLean II, Bob Stambaugh and Wayne Simmons.



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LaBelle, Florida 33975

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GCGA Scholarships Break \$70,000 Mark

Through the generosity of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, and the members and contributors of the GCGA Scholarship Foundation...over \$70,000 in scholarships have been awarded to deserving students entering Florida colleges and universities.

The association awarded its first scholarship in August 1992, to Gwen Brister, a harvesting supervisor at Barron Collier Company's Silver Strand (north) grove, during the first Gulf Citrus Expo Banquet. Since that initial presentation, students throughout Florida's citrus production areas have received thousands in support of their education.

In addition to supporting students pursuing citrus/AG and related degrees, GCGA's financial support efforts also include participation in the SW Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's, the University of Florida's and Florida Gulf Coast University's scholarship programs.

In October 1999, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation, Inc. was officially certified in Florida

as a "not-for-profit" corporation and began operating under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The association's leadership felt that creating a separate "not-for-profit" foundation that would be managed under GCGA, would further enhance its efforts in education. And, since its formation 12 years ago, the "Scholarship Foundation" has been able to attract members and contributors who enable it to make awards twice a year to students registering for the spring and fall semesters.

This year the foundation has 32 members/contributors and is actively working to increase its financial resources. President Callie Walker presented the need for additional support for the foundation at a recent GCGA board meeting, and encouraged the group to "talk up" the effort. In the next few weeks GCGA Scholarship Foundation members will be receiving "dues renewals" for \$25, as well as a request for a donation. In addition, the GCGA membership will also receive applications to join the foundation.

The foundation's leaders encourage your participation and support for this program!

Currently serving on the board are Callie Walker, president; John Hoffman, vice-president; Joe English, secretary/treasurer; Norm Todd, director and David Wheeler, director. Dr. Mongi Zekri assists the foundation by promoting it to students and to the industry, and also by participating in the scholarship selection process.

Student applications can be obtained through Dr. Zekri and/or the GCGA office and the scholarships are awarded for the spring and fall semesters.

The organization will hold its annual meeting on June 1st in conjunction with the GCGA's annual meeting and 25-year Anniversary Celebration.

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the support of**



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