

# News



Fall – 2006



## Expo Posts Record “Citrus” Attendance

From every perspective, the 15th annual Citrus Expo will long be remembered as one of the key events that re-invigorated Florida’s citrus growing industry! Held August 23rd – 24th at the Lee Civic Center in Ft. Myers, the multi-faceted event offered growers and industry leaders countless networking and educational opportunities over the two-day period. The record crowd of over 2000 added excitement and enthusiasm to the industry’s top gathering of citrus-related folks from throughout the “Sunshine State”. The 2006 Citrus Expo was co-sponsored, for the first time, by *Citrus Industry Magazine/Southeast AgNet*; Gulf Citrus Growers Association; Highlands County Citrus Growers Association; Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association and the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences/Southwest Florida Research and Education Center.

Gary Cooper, President, Southeast AgNet and *Citrus Industry Magazine*, was truly elated with the event’s success. “Not only did we breathe new life into the Expo this year, but we set a higher standard for future Citrus Expo events and activities,” he said. “The plan-

ning and executions by the re-organized and expanded steering and program committees worked beautifully, and this year’s event smashed all attendance records for both the seminars and trade show. I was particularly pleased to have seen so many growers and leaders from so many different areas throughout the citrus belt and so many bona-fide growers from other countries as well,” Cooper added. Through Cooper’s multimedia network, a new Citrus Expo blog was created during the event. GCGA members are invited to log on to [www.AgNetOnline.com](http://www.AgNetOnline.com) and find the Citrus Expo category!

Gulf Citrus Growers Association Executive Vice President Ron Hamel noted that the addition of the Highlands County and Peace River Valley Citrus Grower Associations to the co-sponsorship “partnership” created new dimensions for the event. “It brought additional leadership and ownership to the table...to the benefit of all our organizations, the industry and the Citrus Expo,” Hamel said. “The net results speak for themselves!”

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# Gulf Citrus Growers Association Elects 2006-07 Officers

At its 20th annual meeting on June 6, 2006 at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in Labelle, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association elected its officers to serve the organization during the 2006-2007 season. Elected to lead the association are the following:

**President:** David Wheeler  
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

**Vice President:** Mark Colbert  
Duda Farm Fresh Foods

**Secretary:** Wade Timpner  
George Austin, Inc.

**Treasurer:** Miller Couse  
Gram & Couse Farms

Wheeler, a 1986 graduate of the University of Florida's College of Agriculture



**David Wheeler**

with a degree in Food and Resource Economics, was re-elected to a second term as president. He began his citrus

business career as an owner/operator of a gift fruit operation in Lake Placid. He joined the family's citrus business in 1990 as a grove manager for Wheeler Farms, Inc., a company owning groves in Southwest Florida, the "Ridge" of Highlands and Polk counties and on the east coast of the state. He is now president of Wheeler Farms, Inc.

Governor Bush recently appointed Wheeler to serve on the Florida Citrus Commission, representing citrus growers in the region. He is past president of the Florida Production Managers' Association and a director of the Dundee Citrus Growers Association in Central Florida. Wheeler is a graduate of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources administered through the University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences.

He spent his formative years in Central Florida, graduating from Winter Haven High School and Polk Community College. He is married (wife Anne Marie) and has three children (David, Jr., Laura and Anna Grace). He is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Placid.

## GCGA Recognizes Jackson at 20th Celebration



As part of its "special recognition" ceremony at its 20th annual meeting, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association "thanked" Wayne Jackson of Jackson Citrus for his many years of support to the organization. Wade Timpner, (left) received the honor on behalf of Jackson.

## Association Thanks Gardinier for Service



Stephan Gardinier (left) is recognized for his seven years of service as a GCGA board member and as a vice president of the association. Gardinier also served as chairman of the membership committee and provided enthusiastic leadership for "Gulf Citrus"!



### Gulf Citrus Growers Association 2006-2007 Board of Directors

**David Wheeler**, President  
**Mark Colbert**, Vice President  
**Wade Timpner**, Secretary  
**Miller Couse**, Treasurer  
**Emmett Evans, III**  
**Billy Heller**  
**Joe Hilliard, II**  
**John Hoffman**  
**Paul Meador**  
**Mike Murphy**  
**Steve Smith**  
**Dallas Townsend**  
**Callie Walker**  
**Ron Hamel**  
Executive Vice President

#### Publisher's Statement

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# Association Launches 21st Year; Seats New Board



## 2006-2007 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors

(L to R) Ron Hamel, Billy Heller, Mark Colbert, John Hoffman, Wade Timpner, David Wheeler, Callie Walker, Dallas Townsend, Steve Smith, Emmett Evans, III, Joe Hilliard, II and Mike Murphy. Absent from photograph are Miller Couse and Paul Meador.

At its 20th annual meeting on June 6, 2006 at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association “officially” seated its 2006-2007 board of directors. The GCGA board was formally seated, following annual election meetings in each of the organization’s five counties as outlined in

the association’s by-laws. The two “at-large” directors were elected through balloting among the association’s grower members.

The newly elected leadership will direct the association as it works to represent the needs of the citrus growing industry in Southwest Florida’s “Gulf”

production region, which includes Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties. Please refer to the information below regarding the GCGA directors and the counties they represent. These grower leaders are volunteering their time for the betterment of the entire industry, and appreciate your support.

## GCGA 2006-2007 Board of Directors

### Charlotte County

Emmett Evans III  
Evans Properties, Inc.

### Collier County

John Hoffman  
Barron Collier Partnership  
Paul Meador  
Gulf Citrus Partners L.P.  
Mike Murphy  
Cooperative Producers, Inc.

### Glades County

David Wheeler  
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

### Hendry County

Mark Colbert  
Duda Farm Fresh Foods  
Miller Couse  
Gram & Couse Farms  
Joe Hilliard, II  
Hilliard Brothers, Inc.

Steve Smith  
Alico, Inc.

Dallas Townsend  
Dorlas Ranch

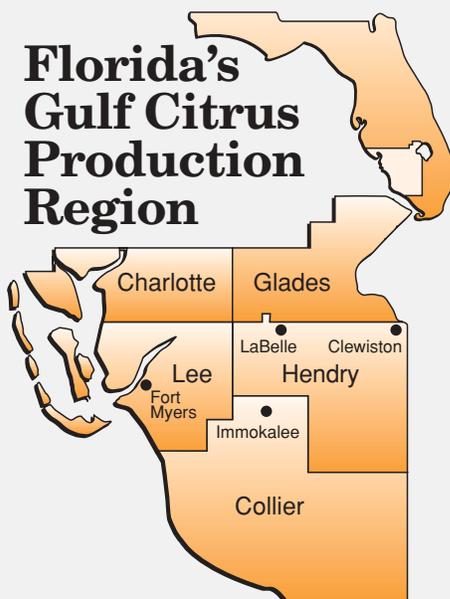
### Lee County

Wade Timpner  
George Austin, Inc.

### At-Large Seats

Billy Heller  
Pacific Tomato Growers  
Callie Walker  
HUPA, Inc.

## Florida's Gulf Citrus Production Region



## Committee Chairmen Appointed to Serve for 2006-2007 Season

GCGA President David Wheeler recently appointed the following individuals to chair the association’s operating committees. Please contact these leaders for updates and information related to their respective committees.

### Community Relations

John Hoffman

### Governmental Affairs

Steve Smith

### Labor Relations

Billy Heller

### Long Range Planning

George Austin

### Production & Research

Mark Colbert

### Associate Member

Robert Murray

# “Gulf Citrus” Celebrates 20 Years of Service to Growers

This year’s Gulf Citrus Growers Association annual meeting marked the 20th year milestone of the organization’s service to the region’s citrus growers. The membership of GCGA gathered June 6th at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle to celebrate 20 successful years of leadership, and to recognize the individuals who worked tirelessly to build and sustain the organization.

In addition to the traditional election and seating of the association’s board of directors and officers, the highlight of the session was a special 30-minute commemorative PowerPoint presentation which captured the key leadership, events and activities linked to the GCGA’s twenty-year history. The presentation featured each of the association’s presidents and chronicled the issues addressed and the milestones reached during their tenures. Presidents Hugh English, George Austin, Chet Townsend, Billy Heller and David Wheeler each provided “personal reflections” of their experiences and service. Dr. Bernie Lester, secretary of the organization for several years, offered his perspective on the “formative” and “growing” years of “Gulf Citrus”. Dr. Lester noted that the association’s success was due to the competent, dedicated leadership ... and the organization’s focus on the key local issues impacting growers at the regional level. Lester specifically listed water management, land use, taxation, governmental, community and media relations as those key areas of focus. The association would like to thank Dr. Mongi Zekri, UF/IFAS Multi-county Citrus Agent; Carol Pendrey, Hendry County Cooperative Extension Service; Julie Carson, UF/IFAS, Southwest Florida Research and Education Center and Chet Townsend for their assistance with the commemorative PowerPoint presentation.

GCGA executive vice president Ron Hamel provided personal comments and observations from his 18 years of service as general manager. Hamel said, “In my professional 30-year career in association management at the local, state and national levels... I have never worked with and for a more dedicated, respected and effective group of ‘volunteer’ leaders ...than the group down in the ‘Gulf’ region. I am truly honored and humbled to serve the association with such a great group of leaders and individuals.” Hamel publicly thanked the officers, board, com-



**Top:** Founding President Hugh English addresses the association’s membership as part of the special presentation on GCGA’s twenty-years of service. Past presidents were recognized for their service to the industry. **Left:** President David Wheeler (center) and Victor Beer, one of GCGA’s founding directors, “cut the 20th-Year anniversary cake” to begin the celebration! **Right:** Rachel Walters of Bayer CropScience was thanked for her continual and enthusiastic service to the association. She chaired the associate member committee, and in addition has been actively involved for many years.



## 10-Year Associate Members Recognized

GCGA appreciates the excellent interest and support of its associate members. (L to R) Joe L. Davis, Jr., Joe L. Davis, Inc. Realtors; Ray Bassett, Aglime Sales, Inc.; John Catrett, Oakley Groves, Inc.; Mike McGee, Packers Supply Co.; Anthony Pascher, Wheeler Brothers, Inc. Presenting the awards GCGA President David Wheeler.

mittee chairs, volunteers and members who have helped to make GCGA the effective organization that it is today.

The 20th annual meeting luncheon was sponsored by Syngenta Crop Protection (Bob Gregg and Dave Herndon) and by Southeast AgNet/*Citrus Industry*

*Magazine*. The association thanks these sponsors for their continual support. Other related business and recognitions, held in conjunction with the 20th annual meeting, are featured throughout this issue of the newsletter.

# 15th Annual Expo Attracts Record Crowd

## Trade Show - continued from page one

Over 120 exhibitors/booths filled the Lee Civic Center. The continuous flow of growers throughout the exhibit hall pleased the purveyors of goods and services ranging from agri-chemicals to irrigation equipment and from crop insurance to citrus-related artwork. The Expo continues to set the mark for the largest and best-attended trade show for Florida's citrus industry. The added feature of the "Beast Feast" lunches, a Gary Cooper creation and concept, kept attendees "networking" at Expo trade show!

## Seminar Program

Under the theme: "Citrus Production In Transitional Times", the seminar program featured hands-on sessions on fighting the citrus canker and greening bacterial diseases led by South American growers who have battled both for years. Updates on the status of both diseases in Florida were also provided by FDACS and UF/IFAS experts. These sessions were sponsored by the Florida Production Managers' Association. Growers were also updated on the industry's current economic perspectives from key UF/IFAS and Florida Department of Citrus speakers. The labor relations and immigration reform issues were presented by the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association's staff. These sessions were sponsored by Syngenta Crop Protection. Presentations were made before "standing room only" audiences on both days. All presentations have been posted on UF/IFAS' SWFREC website: <http://swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/events/expo/>.

## Citrus Expo Banquet

One of the highlights of the two-day event was the Gulf Citrus Expo Banquet. This year's event, attended by nearly 400 growers, leaders and special guests, featured addresses by key agricultural leaders who work to support Florida's citrus industry. Congressman Adam Putnam said, "This industry, because of its unity, has been able to succeed where others around the country have failed." He encouraged the industry to work for additional support for research and marketing through the upcoming 2007 farm bill, which is expected to address "specialty crops" such as fruits and vegetables to a greater extent.

Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Bronson thanked the industry for continuing its work to address citrus canker and the new "greening" bacterial diseases that are plaguing the industry. He pledged his continual support for the reformulation of plans, under the new CHRP program, to fight these two diseases. Bronson also promoted the new "farms to fuel" program aimed at creating non-petroleum-based fuel.

Ken Keck, executive director of the Florida Department of Citrus, encouraged attendees to study the department's marketing programs. He noted that they are professionally created and implemented to create demand for Florida citrus and citrus products. He thanked the attending growers for their support of the department.

Gulf Citrus Growers Association thanks Dallas Townsend for his service as master of ceremonies for the banquet.



### Citrus Expo = #1 For Networking Opportunities!

**Top:** Expo banquet continues as 1st Class event. **Top Left:** Ken Keck highlights FDOC's marketing efforts. **Top Right:** Sonya Tuten of Ag-Tronix Inc. displays at the trade show. **Center Left:** Congressman Allen Boyd attends Expo! **Center Right:** GCGA President David Wheeler welcomes banquet attendees. **Lower Left:** Congressman Adam Putnam participates in industry's largest event! **Lower Right:** Southeast AgNet interviews Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Bronson.

## Thank You 2006 Banquet Sponsors!

### Platinum

Atlantic Blue Trust • Bayer CropScience  
Farm Credit of Central Florida • Farm Credit of South Florida  
Farm Credit of Southwest Florida  
Florida Department of Citrus & The State of Florida  
Southern Gardens Citrus

### Gold

Brandt Consolidated, Inc. • Cargill Juice North America, Inc.  
Chemical Dynamics, Inc. • MANA • Oswald Trippe & Company, Inc.  
Pavese Law Firm • The Bonita Bay Group • WilsonMiller, Inc.

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Agrilience LLC • BASF Corporation  
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Bergemann & Seliger Law Firm  
Burson-Weathers Real Estate Company  
DuPont Crop Protection • FMC FoodTech • Goway Company  
Lykes Bros.Inc./New Harvest Inc. • Oakley Groves, Inc.  
Pacific Tomato Growers, Ltd. • Plant Food Systems, Inc.  
SunTrust Bank

# Gulf Growers Implement Citrus BMPs In Region

With the ink barely dry on the Gulf Citrus Best Management Practice (BMP) Manual and through the assistance of the Florida Department of Agriculture's (FDACS) Office of Water Policy and the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) growers are aggressively enhancing their water quality initiatives in the Caloosahatchee basins. Immediately following the manual's adoption into state statute, "Gulf" growers were quick to put FDACS' 2006 cost/share funds to work. Initially, five projects were funded and completed as part of the public/private partnership! The first five projects were implemented by Bryan Beer, LaBelle Grove Management; Barry Daniels, Pacific Tomato Growers; Tom Kirschner, Ranch One Coop; Paul Meador, Everglades Harvesting & Hauling and Tom Kirschner, Cooperative Three.

Recently the Gulf Citrus Growers Association sent its grower members an updated brochure entitled "Gulf Citrus Cost/Share Procedures" which outlines the details of program participation. For the 2006/2007 budgeting cycle, FDACS' Office of Water Policy has allocated \$227,700 in cost/share funding. These



## Gulf Citrus Growers Put BMPs to Work in Southwest Florida!

Barry Daniels of Pacific Tomato Growers works with USDA/NRCS and the Lower West Coast Mobile Irrigation Lab to incorporate the new Gulf Citrus BMPs into the company's groves. His efforts were among the first in the region to utilize "cost/share" funding!

funds are being distributed through the Southwest Florida Resource Conservation and Development Council here in the region. In addition, to simplify implementation of the citrus BMPs, UF/IFAS is staffing up to assist growers. Dr. Brian Boman, IFAS' BMP coordinator, recently announced that Geovanne (Gio) Stingham

and Chambal Pandey will comprise the UF/IFAS BMP Implementation Team in the region. They will assist growers with grove evaluations, the "BMP checklist", cost/share funding and other aspects of the program. Growers are encouraged to contact Gio at (863) 993-4846 or E-mail: [stingham@ufl.edu](mailto:stingham@ufl.edu) to participate.

## GCGA Expresses Growers' "Concerns" About Future Water Supply

During the past few months, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association has been focused on several key issues related to the region's growers access to water for irrigation. At the top of the list are the proposed modifications to the level of Lake Okeechobee and consumptive use permit renewals.

### Lake "O"/Caloosahatchee

Regarding the efforts by the US Army Corps of Engineers to lower the "management level" of Lake Okeechobee, the association joined with other agriculturalists to deliver the message that the proposed changes could create water supply shortages for crops and cattle. The USACE and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) have been facing severe public media criticism for the weather-driven lake releases down the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers. Also impacting Lake O's level is the stability of the Herbert Hoover Dike at higher elevations. The USACE conducted a study, the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule Study (LORSS) and held a series of workshops as part of the process to change the regulation schedule from the

current WSE schedule. The LORSS calls for managing the lake at lower levels.

GCGA sent written comments expressing grower concerns with the proposed lower lake levels. In addition, Ron Hamel, executive vice president presented the association's statements to Col. Paul Grosskruger, the new commander of the Corps' Jacksonville District at the public hearing September 14th in Ft. Myers. Hamel pointed out that past experience, like the drought of 2001, proves that lower lake levels put growers at greater risk for economic impacts. "During the 2001 drought, citrus growers relying on Lake O and the Caloosahatchee lost over \$35-million due to rationing of water. Some growers were cut back over 60% of their minimum crop need," he said.

Although the USACE and SFWMD have proposed temporary forward pumps to allow more water to be provided to agriculture if the lake level drops below gravity flow levels, Hamel noted that to date, the alternative had not received the permits and support to be able to count on it. Due to public input, the USACE has

delayed its decision on the "tentatively selected plan" (TSP). Hamel also pointed out the "Gulf" growers are implementing citrus BMPs to enhance water quality.

### Water Permit Renewals

Following concerns expressed by grower members regarding consumptive water use permit renewals in the Lower West Coast Region, GCGA called a special meeting between growers and management of the SFWMD. Bob Moresi, the district's new Water Use Division Director and Keith Smith, Deputy Director of Water Supply met with the group on October 3rd to discuss some of the key issues precluding a timely and "user-friendly" renewal process as "promised" during an intensive rule-revision process two years ago. Tops on the growers' list were issues regarding "wetlands impacts and documentation" and complications with proposed water use accounting/calibration and reporting of water use. Based on grower testimony at the session, the SFWMD staff noted that "improvement" in this process is needed, and they pledged their support to address the concerns expressed by the growers.

# “Gulf” Classic Tournament Marks 10th Successful Year

The 10th annual “Gulf” Classic Golf Tournament held May 12th at Heritage Palms Golf and Country Club in Ft. Myers continued years of tradition as one of the association’s most fun and festive events! This special day ranks as one of GCGA’s key events to support the association’s community and governmental relations programs.

Thirty-six teams competed in this year’s tournament, making the 10th annual outing a great success. The moderate temperature, bright sunshine and light breeze made a nearly perfect day for golf. Director of Golf, Bob Kelly and his staff at Heritage Palms did an excellent and professional job of managing the tournament.

The team taking first place in this year’s “Gulf” Classic was the Tropicana team which included Mitch Willis, Tim Davis, Craig Hampton and Matt Sullivan. Coming in second was the Monsanto team comprised of Mike Prescott, Hunter Prescott and Ricky Bass. The third place team was sponsored by Ag-Tronix, Inc. and included Sonya Tuten, Sam Carnes and Tom Avalos.

Individual winners were Tony Koger for “most accurate drive”; Matt Sullivan and Sam Carnes for “longest drive”; Hunter Prescott for “longest putt”; Gary Rashford for “closest to the pin” (mens) and Sonya Tuten for “closest to the pin” (ladies).

The 2006 “Gulf” Classic Tournament Committee included chair Jeff Campbell, Oswald, Trippe & Company, Inc.; David Bridges, Farm Credit of SW Florida; Walter Fluegel, Heidt & Associates, Inc.; Julie Forrest, Stallings Crop Insurance Corp.; Carlos Garcia, Hertz Equipment Rental Corp.; Sarah Hatton, Valent USA; Andy Hill, Alico, Inc.; Stacy McCullough, Farm Credit of SW Florida; Robert Murray, Florida Favorite Fertilizer; Sonya Tuten, Ag-Tronix, Inc.; Rachel Walters, Bayer CropScience and Richard Woodruff, WilsonMiller, Inc. These volunteers worked many hours to assure a “first class” and “fun-filled” tournament. Please thank them for their leadership!



**Tropicana Products, Inc. Team Takes 1st!**  
(L to R) Matt Sullivan, Tim Davis, Mitch Willis and Craig Hampton “teamed-up” to place first in the “Gulf Classic”. GCGA congratulates these winners.



**Even “Registration” Is Fun at the “Gulf Classic”!**  
A nearly full field of golfers from throughout Florida’s citrus industry made the 2006 annual tournament a success. Funds raised from the event support the association’s community and governmental relations programs.

## 2006 Gulf Classic Sponsors

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association would like to say “thank you” to the following Gulf Classic sponsors:

### Tee-Off Breakfast

Tropicana Products, Inc.

### Awards Luncheon

Douglass Fertilizer & Chemical, Inc.  
Florida Community Bank  
Oakley Groves, Inc.  
Triangle Chemical Company

### Beverages

Culligan Water  
Gulf Citrus Management, Inc.  
Helena Chemical Company  
Lutgert Insurance  
Steele Truck Center, Inc.

### Photography

Agraquest  
Bruce Hendry Insurance  
DeSoto AutoMall  
Helena Chemical Company

### “Gulf Classic” Hats

Bayer CropScience

### “Communications”

Industrial Communications

### Prize Holes

Alico, Inc.  
Dow AgroSciences  
Environmental Consulting & Technology  
Gulf Citrus Properties, Inc.  
Heidt & Associates, Inc.  
Monsanto  
Pacific Tomato Growers  
Valent USA

### Tees & Greens

Ag-Tronix, Inc.  
Agri-Property Consultants, Inc.  
BASF Corporation  
Ben Hill Griffin Fertilizer, Inc.  
The Bonita Bay Group  
Cerexagri, Inc.  
Chemical Containers, Inc.  
Citrus Hedging, Inc.  
Coastal Fertilizer & Supply, Inc.  
Creel Tractor Company

Crompton Corp./Uniroyal  
Chemical Company  
Culligan Water  
Diamond R Fertilizer Company  
Duda Farm Fresh Foods  
Farm Credit of Southwest Florida  
First Bank of Clewiston  
Gulfcoast Companies  
Hertz Equipment Rental Corp.  
Jack M. Berry, Inc.  
Louis Dreyfus Citrus, Inc.  
Oswald, Trippe & Company, Inc.  
Pavese Law Firm  
Peace River Citrus Products, Inc.  
Southern Gardens Citrus  
Stallings Crop Insurance, Corp.  
T & M Portable Restrooms, Inc.  
United Ag Products (UAP)  
Valent USA  
Wheeler Brothers, Inc.  
Whiddon’s Hoe Service  
WilsonMiller, Inc.

### Raffle & Goodies

Ag-Tronix, Inc.  
Alvin Press Vending, Inc.  
Bayer CropScience  
The Broken Niblick, Inc.  
CPI & Gulf Harvesting ECT  
Farm Credit of SW Florida  
Fish Hound Custom Rods/  
Justin Hood  
Florida Department of Citrus  
Florida Favorite Fertilizer  
Gulf Citrus Growers Association  
Hertz Equipment Rental Corp.  
Oswald, Trippe & Company, Inc.  
RHT Engineering, Inc.  
Screenprint Plus  
Syngenta Crop Protection, Inc.





## www.gulfcitrus.org Gets “Redesigned”

In efforts to make the association’s website a more useful tool to the membership, the GCGA Community Relations Committee made its “redesign” a top priority. The committee enlisted support from Dr. Walter Rodriguez of Florida Gulf Coast University’s College of Business, a specialist in this field. One of the courses that Rodriguez’s students must take focuses on making web-resources

more useful to their audiences. So, GCGA’s “redesign” efforts became a “class project”. Four student teams were organized with each working to make the GCGA website more “user-friendly.”

Committee members reviewed each of the student-created sites, and provided project grades based on criteria agreed upon by Dr. Rodriguez and GCGA. “The

committee was impressed with the students’ efforts and are using their ideas and creativity to enhance the GCGA site,” said John Hoffman, committee chair.

The committee is currently working to make many of the changes as well as incorporate other ideas into the effort. One of the FGCU students, Rita Wilhelm, who is working on her master’s degree in this field, is now working on the website!

## GCGA Supports Farm Worker Housing Project

Hurricane Charley “relief funds” contributed by “Gulf Citrus” members were recently put to work as part of a public relations initiative for a unique farm worker housing project in Arcadia called Casa San Juan Bosco. The association co-sponsored a special event, a “ground blessing”, for the \$21-million development which is being built by Catholic Charities Housing Diocese of Venice, Inc. The project is in response to

the devastation to the farm worker community of DeSoto County caused by Hurricane Charley, and has received tremendous public support at the state and federal level, as well as private support from agricultural groups.

The Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association, the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) GCGA and Catholic Charities co-sponsored the

“blessing”, which included community and agricultural leaders from throughout the state. Two bishops, John Nevins and Frank Dewane from the Diocese of Venice performed the ceremony.

The project will be built in three phases and consist of 125 homes on an 86 acre site. It is anticipated to house about 700. It will be the “first” housing community of its type in the nation built to withstand 200 mph winds.

## GCGA Awards 2006 Scholarships

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation awarded \$4000 in scholarships for 2006. The association/foundation has provided nearly \$50,000 in scholarships since GCGA began making the awards. The focus of the effort is to recognize deserving students pursuing careers in “citrus”, agriculture and/or related fields of study. Recently the foundation has also supported scholarship programs that are important to the surrounding community as part of its pub-

lic relations program. One of these is the Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce’s education awards.

The 2006 GCGA scholarship recipients are Matt Baker, LaBelle; Jennifer Fuquen, Naples (SW Florida Hispanic Chamber); Chad Masters, Immokalee (SW Florida Hispanic Chamber) and Dhoha Zekri, Lehigh Acres.

Members are encouraged to become members of the foundation.

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the support of

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