

## Class X newsletter

### Seminar II In This Issue:

- Director's Dialogue - p.1-2
- Class X welcomes Baby Atchley! - p. 3
- Nearly 30 Years of Judge Jill Walker - p.3
- Starting Off Seminar II - p. 4-6
- Analyzing the Oyster Industry - p. 7-8
- An Introduction to Forestry - p. 9-10
- "A Cup of Joe" with Dr. Joe - p. 11
- Coordinator's Corner - p. 12-13

# Let's Reflect.

## Director's Dialogue *-Dr. Hannah Carter, Program Director*

We not only stand on the shoulders of giants, we are named after one.

As we crossed the bridge into Apalachicola on the Wednesday of Seminar II, I received word that Mr. George H. Wedgworth had passed away. While not a complete surprise as I knew he had been in declining health, it still knocked the wind out of my sails. We arrived at our lunch location and while the class was getting settled, my phone began blowing up as word spread. As I mentioned in an email to the alumni association—it was somewhat fitting to be in a Wedgworth seminar during this time—as while we mourn the loss of one of the truly great leaders in Florida agriculture, we continue to do the work that he, and so many others who have gone before him began. Their legacy truly lives on in each one of you and collectively in each class of this program.

With each Wedgworth class, I have indelible memories, those moments that will never fade in my mind—I had one of those with this class, and I'm profoundly grateful to Valerie McKee (our program coordinator and the grand niece of Mr. Wedgworth)—she did



an amazing job in leading a moment of prayer and quiet reflection on Mr. Wedgworth and his impact on this program and on the people who go through it—who we call "Wedgworthy". Because really, to be a part of this program, you have to be worthy—worthy of the opportunity, worthy of representing the program, which represents so much more.

Class X is Wedgworthy. In our second seminar together, they further solidified the bonds of a Wedgworth class and really impressed me with their questions, their reactions to experiences and their willingness to "take it all in". In four days, they covered many miles and discovered a great deal about a part of Florida that most people do





not spend much time in. The class was bookended with Richards as we began in Marianna with Richard Williams (Class I) and ended in Perry with Richard Schwab (Class VI). In between we visited Apalachicola, Panacea and Crawfordville. A fun trivia fact for this seminar is that Representative Halsey Beshears' (Class V) district encompasses most of counties that were a part of this seminar and we were fortunate to have him join us in Apalachicola to share his insights on the District, serving in political office and about being a part of this program. As he was speaking, I realized that my first trip to Apalachicola was with Class V sixteen years ago—where does the time go?

The writers for this newsletter have done a wonderful job detailing what the seminar entailed. But they may not mention that before we said our good byes on Friday, they presented me with a card

they had all signed to give to the Wedgworth family and had taken up a collection to send flowers and make a donation. Again, they are meant to be a part of our Wedgworth family.

We all have so much to be thankful for—at this time of year I am profoundly thankful to be able to interact with such amazing people who are a part of this program on a daily basis. I hope everyone has an amazing holiday season with those you hold dear. And here's to an extraordinary 2017!

On behalf of the WLIANR Program, we would like to extend the sincerest condolences and sympathies to the Wedgworth family.

May the Wedgworth name continue to represent an honorable life, a worthy legacy, and unquestionable leadership through the lives touched by this program.

Mr. George H. Wedgworth  
1928-2016





# Class X welcomes Baby Atchley!

## *It's a Girl!*

Class X would like to extend very special congratulations to fellow class member Cathy Atchley and husband Rob Atchley on their newest addition to their family. Katherine Ann ("Kate") Atchley was born on December 6th, 2016.

We are so excited for you, Cathy, and we look forward to meeting your precious baby girl very soon!



# Nearly 30 Years of Judge Jill Walker

Judge Jill Walker of Florida's 2nd Judicial Court at the Wakulla County Court House has been one of the most memorable speakers of every leadership class of this program. We are thankful for the time, wisdom, and inspiration Judge Walker has given to our leaders over the years. Cody Hoffman, Class X, had these words to say after meeting her:

"After concluding our meeting at the Chamber of Commerce we met with Judge Jill Walker of Florida's 2nd Judicial Court at the Wakulla County Court House. Judge Walker graciously canceled court for the day to meet with our class, a testament for her high regard to the Wedgworth program. Judge Walker, or "Judge Jill" as many refer to her as, was not just an impressive and fair justice but an incredible person as well. Her story of running for judge as an outsider "foreigner" to the area, winning, and retaining her seat for nearly 12 years was remarkable. She made a point to get to know the community and understand the socioeconomic problems it faced. Her work to steer "good people making bad decisions" back in the right direction is moving. The people of Wakulla County continue to vote her in as she treats all those with their day in court fairly and caringly. I felt that the group left wishing that all our hometown justices were as



connected to the community and put as much passion into their job as Judge Jill Walker does."



# Meet Class X Member Cody Hoffman



Cody Hoffman is a sales representative for Syngenta in southwest Florida. He sells a wide variety of crop protection products for them primarily in sugarcane, citrus and vegetable crops. Cody also manages their summer citrus internship program. Originally from Montverde Florida, he graduated with his Bachelor's degree in Food and Resource Economics from the University of Florida in 2007. He resides in Fort Myers Florida with his wife Lexie and daughter Lydia. Cody and his family enjoy the outdoors and saltwater fishing.

## Starting Off Seminar II -Cody Hoffman

It has been two months since getting to know Class X of the Wedgworth Leaders back in September, so it was great back on the road and see everyone together again for our next meeting. Seminar II was spread across an unfamiliar region of the state to me, the Florida panhandle. Although I've driven through the area on I-10 many times, I have never actually spent any time there and so I was excited to learn more about this region of the state. Day one began with our arrival at CareerSource Chipola in Marianna, Florida.

Mr. Richard Williams, executive director at CareerSource Chipola met us there and presented an overview of the services they provide, the rural economy and workforce. Career Source is a state funded, integrated talent support solution that collaborates with the local workforce and businesses. Mr. Williams explained that their mission is simply to "Help people get a skill, then get a job, then get a better skill, then get a better job, and then get a better life." While much of the state of Florida has benefited from positive economic growth the last few years, rural north Florida has not experienced the same upward trend. This came as a bit of a surprise to me because living in South Florida my perception of Florida's economy is that everywhere in the state is currently in growth mode. This is certainly not the case in rural communities of north Florida. One of many resulting economic issues in this region is funding of public schools. When families move out of the area in search of better opportunities, school attendance goes down. So



too does school funding to the tune of \$7,500 per student according to Mr. Williams.

In some districts of the panhandle it's getting to the point where schools simply do not have enough students to maintain adequate funding from the state to operate. The hardest hit area in the district budgets are salaries and benefits for teachers and school staff. Each salaried position lost is one less paid employee who will spend their money in the local economy. A vicious downward circle. A key take away point from our meeting with CareerSource Chipola was the importance of connecting and engaging with your local workforce board to better understand how decisions are affecting your local communities, especially rural communities with less voice and funding to begin with. Before moving on we watched a YouTube video called "Humans need not apply." The video focuses on the reduction of jobs now and in the future by the introduction of automation and robotics. This video provoked thoughts about how







jobs are being threatened by new technology in all industries. I highly recommend watching this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Pq-S557XQU>.

Next on the agenda for the day we traveled to a Family Dollar distribution center nearby where we met operations manager Pete Cleary. The Family Dollar business model focuses on bringing a high value product to lower income communities and aims to provide access to big-box store goods in rural communities. Since merging with Dollar Tree in 2015, there are a combined 14,000 store locations in North America.

There are surprisingly more Family Dollar locations than McDonalds and Starbucks combined! Most Americans know where the local Family Dollar is and frequently stop in to grab a basket full of good deals, but few stop and think about what it takes to keep the stores stocked with product. It all starts at distribution centers like the one in Marianna, Florida we visited. Located just off of Interstate 10, the Marianna distribution center is one of eleven such centers across the country. It alone services Florida, Georgia and Alabama. The center we were visiting covered nearly 1 million square feet, houses 6 miles of conveyor belts, employs over 400 people, and operates 24/7.

Our group toured the inside of the facility and

had a chance to see all the action. We walked in, around, and atop a portion of the warehouse among conveyor belts, forklifts, and workers moving products in different directions like a well-oiled machine. Having a business in Jackson County of this magnitude is a really big deal to an area with a struggling rural economy. Family Dollar chose this location over other possibilities in the region due to the intense planning by Jackson County and the City of Marianna. They quickly worked together to propose a complete turn-key location to Family Dollar. They had every detail down to the utilities permits prepared. Marianna won the bid and the resulting mega-distribution center was built. When the positions were posted for the center's 400+ openings, 7,000 people applied from across multiple surrounding counties and states. The Family Dollar center has brought workers back to the area who had left due to the lack of jobs and certainly helped to boost the economy in Jackson County.

Our next stop was Southern Craft, a creamery in Marianna where we met owners Mr. and Mrs. Dale and Cindy Eade. Southern Craft creamery produces small batch, handcrafted, non-homogenized products from their very own cattle. This small family owned and operated business model was a nice shift in pace from the large national corporation we visited earlier. Our tour began with an ice cream tasting of all the delicious flavors currently available. This was some of the best ice cream I've ever tasted and I think the rest of the







group felt the same as there were no leftovers and I may have saw a few folks jump in line twice.

The Eade family's entrepreneurial story of starting with a few cows, slowly growing their herd, attending courses on ice cream production, and finally building a creamery was inspiring. The passion Dale had for creating a high quality product was obvious and we left with a new appreciation for what goes into a handcrafted ice cream. Southern Craft has outgrown their current facility capability but have plans to open a new creamery nearby next year. The new factory will allow them to produce on a larger scale and showcase the creamery all while keeping their small batch market niche in-tact. After dessert, we had dinner that evening at Oaks Restaurant in Marianna. We listened to Mr. David Melvin, president of Melvin Consulting Engineers, speak about economic development in small

communities.

Mr. Melvin had designed the proposed facility location for Family Dollar distribution center that ultimately landed the winning the bid and was built in just about a year's time. It takes leaders like Mr. Melvin working with others on local economic development boards to bring such opportunities to north Florida. He recommended that we all read a book that inspired him, "The Coming Jobs Wars." I plan to read this soon as Mr. Melvin is well connected, accomplished, and in-tune with the needs of his community.



# Meet Class X Member Sambhav

Sambhav is the Applied Research Manager for Driscoll's on the East Coast of Florida. In his role, he manages research for Driscoll's in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and New Jersey. Prior to Driscoll's, Sambhav worked with Monsanto in their Sweet Pepper breeding program. He graduated from the University of Florida in 2010 with a Master of Science degree in Horticulture. Sambhav currently resides in Tampa, Florida. In his spare time, Sambhav enjoys reading fiction, biking, gardening and cooking.



-Sambhav

## Analyzing the Oyster Industry

“In the end, it wasn't so much that there was an alternative narrative--there always was--but it came down to belief: Which one did you want to believe. Which one suited you best? Or, perhaps more to the point: Which one told the story you were already telling yourself?”

Michael Paterniti asked his readers to ponder over different narratives in his bestselling book couple of years back. For all we know, he could very well be writing about the Oyster Industry in Northern Florida.

Oysters require a specific mix of brackish water to thrive. Apalachicola Bay in Northern Florida, once famous for its delicious oysters is now facing a murkier future, just like the water of the river. The decreasing freshwater flows from the Apalachicola River have led to increase in salinity. It also leads to more saltwater predators for the oysters, and that oyster spat have difficulty attaching in saltier waters. Apart from ecological ramifications, this has also led to a lawsuit between the states of Florida and Georgia over fresh water flows in the Supreme Court. The long-running dispute hinges over withdrawals from Lake Lanier, a federal reservoir on the Chattahoochee River that provides water to ever-expanding metro Atlanta. This very situation of 'push and pull' over growing population and urbanization, fragile ecology and



local economy can be extrapolated to various parts of the country and world.

In the second seminar of Class X, we were acquainted with different facets of local community. The day started with a visit to Ms. Jennifer Harper at the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve. Ms. Harper gave us an introduction and the work carried out by the Research Reserve. The Apalachicola National Research Reserve is a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, an internationally designated protected area meant to demonstrate a balanced relationship between people and nature. A documentary film on the watershed of the Apalachicola estuary, one of the most productive estuaries in the United States by acclaimed environmental documentary filmmaker, Elam Stoltzfus was shown to us. The 12 minute documentary succinctly told the story of







the water that flows through this system and makes a 542-mile journey down the watershed from the Georgia headwaters of the Chattahoochee River to Florida's Apalachicola Bay.

Dr. Angie Lindsey, Assistant Professor in the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences of the University of Florida spoke about the need to build resilient communities. The emphasis was on enlarging social circles and networks. Her research work after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill has built bridges with the local community.

Mr. Shannon Hartsfield, President of the Franklin County Seafood Workers Association spoke to us on the challenges facing the local community and Oyster Industry, in particular. Mr. Shannon shared his personal story of working in the seafood industry for the last five generations and lamented on uncertain future.

"You got to show up. The world is run by the people

*"You've got to show up. The world is run by the people who show up."*

who show up." This pithy encouragement to engage in local government and active participation in the industry came from Rep Halsey Beshears, a Class V Alumnus who currently represents District 7 of the Florida House of Representatives encour. Mr. Beshears talked about his enriching Wedgworth experience which paved the path for him in public life. He touched a hopeful note regarding the Oyster Industry with Oyster farming lease program.

Mr. Bob Ballard, Executive Director of Wakulla Environmental Institute gave us a tour of the environmental institute, sustainably designed building and talked about the Oyster Aquaculture program being offered by the institute. The Oyster aquaculture program offers technical know-how in growing full water column Oysters in cages. He was certain that the Oyster Aquaculture program will reinvigorate the local seafood economy.

Mr. Rob Olin from Panacea Oyster Co-Op was the next speaker who talked about the benefits

of Oyster farming in the water of Spring Creek, Florida—in cages strung throughout the full water column. He said that the technique provides exposure to a higher quality food source, limits losses to predators and gives a constant tumbling with the tides. When at full production, the oyster ranchers will be producing tens of millions of oysters a year, all on submerged land leased from the state.

This whirlwind seminar gave me a lot to think about the different, sometimes competing narratives just as Michael Paterniti suggested in his book. Unlike him, I had the luxury to think about these things while eating the delicious oysters in local restaurants.





# Meet Class X Member Tom Kirschner

Tom Kirschner is the Vice President and General Manager of Cooperative Producers, Inc., Ranch One Cooperative, Inc., Cooperative Three Inc., and Gulf Harvesting, Inc. Tom has worked for the companies since 2001 and has also worked professionally in the citrus industry since 1996. Tom graduated from Florida Southern with a B.S. in Citrus business in 1995. He was raised in Arcadia and has lived in Fort Myers for 20 years. Tom has one daughter named Grace, age 11.



## An Introduction to Forestry

-Tom Kirschner

**Day Four started** with the group leaving the Panacea area and heading toward Perry. For this leg of the trip we are looking at the timber industry of North Florida. Before reaching Perry we went to our first destination of the day. We had a wonderful drive deep into the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge where we met with Class VI WLI alumnus Mr. Richard Schwab. Mr. Schwab is affiliated with M.A. Rigoni, Inc., a logging company operating in the Perry area of North Florida. The group was pretty surprised to visit a logging operation within a national wildlife refuge, but that's where they were currently operating. The refuge had hired M.A. Rigoni to do selective harvesting of timber within an area that needed forestry improvement. We were able to observe the logging process first hand in the field. Everything from cutting the trees to loading them on a semi trailer, it was all very impressive.

From there we left to M.A. Rigoni's office in Perry and were scheduled to hear from three speakers all involved in the timber industry: Mrs. Jennifer Schwab, CFO of Four Rivers Timber Land & Timber Company and Richard Schwab's wife, Mr.



Scott Mixon, Public Affairs Manager of Georgia-Pacific, L.L.C., and Mr. Kerry Smith of Klausner Lumber One.

First, Mr. Mixon spoke and gave us a background of Georgia Pacific's Foley Cellulose Mill. The Foley Cellulose mill is a major producer of specialty fibers from slash pine and other hardwoods in the area. The mill was constructed by Procter & Gamble in 1954, the facility was acquired by a private business partnership in 1993 when P&G sold its Cellulose and Specialties Division. The partnership evolved into a publicly traded company,







Buckeye Technologies, Inc., in November 1995, before finally being acquired by Georgia-Pacific in the summer of 2013. These cellulose fibers are found in products that people around the world use in everyday life, including: clothing, food products, tires, shampoo, diapers, filters, and towels. There is quite a bit of “history” with this mill. The Fenholloway River has received byproduct from the mill for decades. This byproduct is known as effluent and is traditionally high in salts and dioxins. Since 1990 Georgia Pacific has spent \$120 M in mill process improvements and has created a pipeline to take this byproduct to the tidal portion of the river to address the salt content of the treated effluent going directly into the fresh water portion of the river. The Fenholloway River and the mill seem to be a sensitive issue in the area since the community is highly dependent on the mill for jobs.

The next speaker was Mrs. Jennifer Schwab from Four Rivers Timber Land and Timber Company. Four Rivers is a vast land holder and is a major timber producer in the area. It consists of 560,000 acres and is the largest undeveloped private land east of the Mississippi River. This enormous tract of land was owned by the Foley Timber and Land Company before being sold and renamed Four Rivers. This land holding is close to 900 square miles between Tallahassee and Gainesville along the gulf coast

just south of the panhandle and is nearly the size of Rhode Island.

The final speaker was Mr. Kerry Smith of Klausner Lumber One. Klausner Trading USA, Inc. was established in 2006 and operates as a distribution company with headquarters located in Myrtle Beach, SC. The company is the sole distributor of products from Klausner US worldwide and Europe sold in North America.

Klausner Lumber One and Klausner Lumber Two are the two state-of-the-art Southern Yellow Pine sawmills. Klausner Lumber One is located in Live Oak, Florida. Klausner Lumber Two is located in Enfield, North Carolina and is currently under construction. The Klausner Group was founded in 1991, when Austrian Fritz Klausner built his mill in former East Germany as a green field investment. The company and sales management office, Klausner Trading International, is headquartered in Oberndorf, Austria, in close vicinity to the Klausner family’s first sawmill founded in 1918 (closed in

1996). Klausner mills are known to be among the most productive worldwide.

Our Panhandle seminar ended after a question and answer session with the different speakers. I can say I left the trip with a very different view of North Florida’s economy, industries, and the challenges they face.





# “A Cup of Joe” with Dr. Joe



## Inspirational Reading Reviews from Dr. Joe Joyce, Program Faculty Advisor



I had not originally planned to provide insights into a book focusing on the seventh President of the United States, Andrew Jackson. However, the parallels to current US politics made it seem like a good idea. The book by Jon Meacham is entitled “American Lion – Andrew Jackson in the White House” won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 2009.

Andrew Jackson was an orphan who rose from humble beginnings to create what is considered by many as the blueprint for the modern presidency.

The book does not concentrate on Jackson's early years but instead on the period running up to his election and to his death. Meacham notes that Jackson was a Major General whose military highlight was winning the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 during the War of 1812. What would be considered highly controversial today, but in his time was supportive of America's westward expansion, was the displacement of Native Americans. In Florida, he pursued the Indian wars but was not successful in conquering the Seminoles (neither have the Gators lately!). Jackson, also known as “Old Hickory”, had extensive land holding (Hermitage Estate in Nashville, TN), was a farmer and slave owner.

The political backdrop for Jackson's election to the Presidency has drawn parallels to today's political situation. Many in the country felt it was being run by a “ruling elite class” who did not relate to the populous. Very few “common” men were in congress and cabinet and senior level government positions were considered “permanent”. Jackson's first campaign for president in 1825 was against John Quincy Adams and three others. Jackson won the popular vote and had the most Electoral College votes (41%). However, because no candidate received the required majority of Electoral College votes, the House of Representatives, under provisions of the Twelfth Amendment, selected Adams. This incensed Jackson and he started a populous movement which became the modern day Democratic Party. He ran a populous campaign and won the 1828 election with 56 percent of the popular vote and Electoral College

“...As long as our government is administered for the good of the people, and is regulated by their will; as long as it secures to us the rights of persons and of property, liberty of conscience and of the press, it will be worth defending.”

margin of 178-83. When he came to Washington his inauguration was a “celebration of the common man” and the celebration at the White House was a rancorous and chaotic affair. He coined the phrase “To the victor belong the spoils” and placed those who shared his populous views into key positions. Prior to his election, the political landscape was that the President was more or less subservient to Congress. Jackson changed the relationship and brought more centralized power into the White House. Thus, he is known as the architect of the modern day presidency. He miraculously survived two assassination attempts while in office. He was also the first and only president to pay off the national debt.

Jackson was a staunch defender of the constitution and the federal union. He was responsible for preventing (by force) succession attempts by South Carolina in 1832-33. The conflict was over federal vs state's rights and delayed the eventual civil war. In fact, one of President Lincoln's statements at the prelude of the Civil War concerning state's rights and succession was, “this issue had been settled in Jackson's time”. The following Jackson quote epitomizes his view of populous federalism also known as Jacksonian democracy, “As long as our government is administered for the good of the people, and is regulated by their will; as long as it secures to us the rights of persons and of property, liberty of conscience and of the press, it will be worth defending.” Jackson was a true leader and a change agent in US politics.

One of my favorite Jackson quotes which shows the love he had for his wife Rachael, who died in December, 1828 before he took office was: “Heaven will be no heaven to me if I do not meet my wife there”. Jackson died in June, 1845 and his funeral at Hermitage was attended by over three thousand mourners.

Meacham's book, although long (369 pages), is intriguing, easy to read and highly interesting account of one of America's greatest and perhaps more controversial Presidents. To me it brings home the point that politics haven't really changed they are just more visible!!





# Coordinator's Corner

## *Grace in the Moment*

-Valerie McKee, Program Coordinator

*I blame my parents*, Pastor Cary and High School Educator Fran, for my cursed inclination to see metaphors and lessons in even the smallest of moments. As I reflect on Seminar II, I remember the facts and opinions shared by the incredible speakers we heard from, all of whom representing a variety of industries in northwest Florida. I remember how I felt after listening to Class I member Mr. Richard Williams discuss the obstacles in his community regarding the workforce and the need for decent jobs. I remember how I felt after hearing from Mr. Shannon Hartsfield and Class V member Representative Halsey Beshears, two men with two different perspectives on a way of life that has been around for generations in the Apalachicola community. I remember how I felt when we heard from Judge Jill Walker, one of the most inspirational and admirable county officials I have ever had the opportunity to meet. However, it is a handful of seemingly tiny moments that occurred along the way during Seminar II that still leave me speechless and processing the immense grace I was shown. Grace is getting what you don't deserve, and these moments were incredibly grace-filled.

On Day one of Seminar II, we gathered together as a class for the second time ever. I was anxious to begin taking photos with the program's newly purchased camera. While I had practiced taking photos in a variety of settings around UF's campus, I was nervous about relying on my novice photography skills to capture quality photos of the class. After taking a handful of shots at the CareerOne Center in Marianna, FL, I was feeling pretty confident that I would be able to get by with what abilities I had. We then traveled to the Family Dollar Distribution Center. Upon hearing that we would be getting a tour of the facilities, I proudly made my way to our tour guide, Mr. Peter Cleary, to ask him if I could take photos during our tour... And then it happened. For a solid five seconds, the

*"Traveling across northwest Florida made me see the pockets of grace everywhere in a region of the state that lacks so much."*

world stood still as the sound of a dropped camera gave way to complete silence and shock from everyone within ear shot. My camera strap had come undone, and with it so had my composure. I tried to mask my fear and despair as I picked up the camera and frantically looked it over to see whether any serious damage had been done with my clumsy mistake. Thankfully, the camera was completely intact and functional. However, that honestly wasn't the sweetest part. While I still wanted to hang my head in shame for the duration of the tour, it was the handful of Class X members who, each in their own way, checked on me to make sure I was okay, to make sure that I knew it was an accident, who helped me receive *grace in the moment* and appreciate where I was and who I was with.

On Day two of Seminar II, we found ourselves traveling across Apalachicola Bay after first meeting at the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve for our morning programming. I remember looking out across the Bay, sitting shotgun in our Explorer and thinking about the list of behind-the-scenes program details I was responsible for when my thoughts were interrupted by a phone call Dr.

Carter received. Michael Basore had called to share the news about Mr. George Wedgworth passing away that morning. As Dr. Carter and I took the moment to sit in silence and let the news sink in, tears came to my eyes as I thought of my cousins, Mr. George's grandchildren, and the deep grief they were experiencing. The news quickly spread throughout Class X as we took our seats at the tables on the patio area of the restaurant we were to have lunch at. Dr. Carter asked me to lead a prayer before our food arrived as a way to give thanks for the man whose name had touched so many lives. Suddenly, I found myself feeling similar to the way I had felt post-camera drop—fearful and nervous about the attention I would draw. As I tried to make light conversation with those I sat with, it was Kiley Harper-Larsen who provided me with the *grace in the moment* that I didn't know I





needed. With the affection like that of a dear family member, Kiley came over to me, kissed my cheek, and squeezed me tightly while whispering in my ear her sincerest sympathies for all of my family members. It was that intimate, gracious moment that made me realize I was simply going to be bowing my head in prayer with my extended Class X family, remembering a wonderful man who was also extended family.

On Day three, the last night we would be together for Seminar II, we were treated with dinner at Mrs. Sherrie Miller's restaurant. Dr. Carter called upon the class to share their thoughts on the seminar as part of an impromptu reflection. Each person stood and shared the moments that were most impactful from the trip. As Dr. Carter began to conclude the reflection period with a few announcements for the final day of programming, Ryan Atwood kindly interrupted her, requesting that both she and I share our final thoughts on Seminar II. "You're a part of us too," I remember him stating. It was this small comment, this kind recognition that we might have contributions to the class, that showed me so much *grace in the moment*.

Grace, undeserved, did-not-expect-it-coming grace, has a way of humbling you. Moments of kindness from good people such as those found in Class X can be so impactful, even if the kindness is predictable and in line with the character of the source. Traveling across northwest Florida made me see the pockets of grace everywhere in a region of the state that lacks so much. The way Mr. Richard Williams and Mr. David Melvin are going above and beyond to connect residents with jobs in Jackson County is arguably undeserved and gracious. The way Mr. Bobby Pearce and Judge Jill Walker are loving young people in the face of their mistakes is undeserved and gracious. The way Mrs. Sherrie Miller gives of herself to her Wakulla County community as well as to every class of our leadership program thus far is undeserved and gracious. These individuals have made their lives about spreading moments of grace to those they encounter. Already, Class X has shown me much grace and taught me lessons in those moments. Working for this program, I am shown grace on a daily basis from Dr. Hannah Carter and Mrs. Janice Shephard. With so much grace seen and felt, I'm overwhelmed by my thankfulness for my Wedgworth family. I pray I might be able to extend the same grace to those I serve in this program.



## WEDGWORTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

*Developing Leaders for Florida Agriculture & Natural Resources*

*For more information about the*

**Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and  
Natural Resources**

*please see our website:*

**[wedgworthleadership.com](http://wedgworthleadership.com).**

**Office location:**

University of Florida  
121 A Bryant Hall  
Gainesville, FL 32611

**Mailing information:**

PO Box 112060  
Gainesville, FL 32611

**Program Director information:**

Dr. Hannah Carter  
Tel: 352-392-1038  
[hscarter@ufl.edu](mailto:hscarter@ufl.edu)

**Program Administrative Assistant information:**

Janice Shephard  
Tel: 352-392-1038  
[jeshephard@ufl.edu](mailto:jeshephard@ufl.edu)

**Program Coordinator information:**

Valerie McKee  
Tel: 352-273-2584  
[vmckee@ufl.edu](mailto:vmckee@ufl.edu)

**WLI Alumni information:**

[wedgworthalumni.org](http://wedgworthalumni.org)  
[wli alumniassociation@gmail.com](mailto:wli alumniassociation@gmail.com)

**UF|IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA