



What & Why Newsletter

Volume 69, No 2
Fall 2019

Georgia Plant Food Educational Society, Inc.

1017 Pearson Road • Sylvester, Georgia 31791 • (229) 881-0254
www.gpfes.org

Mark Your Calendar

Sunbelt AG Expo
October 15 – 17, 2019
Spence Field • Moultrie, GA
www.sunbeltexpo.com

Georgia Crop Production Alliance
Golf Tournament & Annual Meeting
October 29 – 30, 2019
Tifton, GA
www.gcpaonline.com

GEORGIA PLANT FOOD
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
October 31, 2019
Camilla, GA
www.gpfes.org

Alabama Crop Management Association
Winter Meeting & CCA Training
Dec. 11 – 13, 2019
Auburn, AL
https://alabamacrop.net

GEORGIA PLANT FOOD
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY
WINTER MEETING & TRADE SHOW
January 14 – 15, 2020
UGA Tifton Conference Center
Tifton, GA
www.gpfes.org

Florida Fertilizer & Ag Chemical Association
Winter Business Meeting
January 16 – 17, 2020
Hutchinson Shores Resort
Jensen Beach, FL
www.faa.org

GEORGIA PLANT FOOD
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY
SUMMER MEETING
July 27 – 29, 2020
The Ritz-Carlton Resort Hotel
Amelia Island, FL
www.gpfes.org



CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS *Brian Wood*

As I write this, Hurricane Dorian has battered the Bahamas and is slowly trying to begin its' northerly track up the East Coast. My thoughts and prayers go out to all those who have been affected by Hurricane Dorian.

I thought the GPFES Summer Meeting went very well. We could not have asked for better beach weather! Our slate of speakers did an excellent job updating us on current issues in our industry and I would like to thank each of them for taking time out of their busy schedules to be with us. The 5-K Run was well attended, and the Silent Auction was a huge success! The auction generated \$28,000! On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Silent Auction Committee, thank you to those who contributed your time, money or an item to the auction. Another huge thank you is extended to all of you that made a purchase! The support of our membership makes not only events like the 5-K Run and Silent Auction successful but gives GPFES the strength it needs to be impactful within our industry and with our leadership in government.

The program committee will meet in a few weeks to begin planning the Winter Meeting. There is much uncertainty within our industry, and we hope to put together an informative group of speakers to address some of these uncertainties. The Board of Directors will meet on October 31st in Camilla. I wish everyone a safe harvest season and look forward to seeing you at the Winter Meeting in January. If I can be of any service to you, please don't hesitate to call.

Until Then....
Brian

BLAIR W. DAVIS OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD



The Blair W. Davis Outstanding Service Award was presented to Ty DeMuynek during the Summer Meeting

Island. This award is the highest award presented by GPFES and is reserved for individuals who have provided outstanding Service to the Society and to Agriculture.

Ty has been a long-time member of GPFES and has served as Chairman of numerous committees as well as serving as Vice-Chairman and as Chairman of The Board of Directors in 2011 – 2012. He continues to serve the society as Chairman of the Educational Projects Committee.

**NOTES: Please forward any program recommendations you have for upcoming meetings to:
Tim Forshee, Chairman, Arrangements & Program Committee,
tforshee@carolina-eastern.com**



President's Paragraph

Jimmy Champion, President

Someone once said something to the effect that if it were not for problems there would not be opportunities. If there is any truth in that, we should have plenty of opportunities. Agriculture is not alone in facing problems but right now we have more than our share. Weather is always an issue but the extremes of the last few years have brought more devastation than most of us have ever seen. In my area a tornado followed by a tropical storm and then a hurricane has changed the landscape forever. Recovery will be ongoing for years and things will never look the same during my lifetime.

In addition to weather challenges, market conditions continue to add to our stress levels. Loss of markets due to tariffs and many other factors equal commodity prices that are below the cost of production. Government aid, mostly in the form of promises, could be of some help – if it ever shows up. There has been a lot of promising going on. Politicians to growers and growers to bankers and suppliers. Maybe, sooner than later some of these promises will become reality.

During times such as these it is easy to focus on today and not on the future. The truth is crops will continue to be planted and harvested and the need for good fertility programs will continue. We will still need educated young people to fill the positions being vacated by retirement and we will continue to need technology to help us become more efficient.

Bottom line. We need your support more than ever. Support through membership, through participation and through contributions are necessary to maintain the strength GPFES has exhibited for the last 68 years. Please do your part.

LIFE MEMBER AWARDS PRESENTED

Three long time members and supporters of GPFES were appointed Life Members at the 2019 Summer Meeting. All three are highly respected and have made numerous contributions to the organization over many years. This award is presented, on occasion, to individuals who have been loyal supporters of GPFES for many years. The awards were presented by Awards Committee members and Past GPFES Chairmen Raybon Anderson and John Gladden.

The first honoree was Lamar Beamon of Southeastern Lime and Stone. Lamar has been active in GPFES for many years and served as Chairman of the Board of Directors in 2009-2010. Lamar has been instrumental in the development and publication of our Membership Directory. He resides near Marshallville, Georgia.

Tommy Cullens who is affiliated with Trademark Nitrogen Corporation lives in Winter Park, Florida. Tommy has been in the fertilizer materials business for many, many years and has been as active member of our organization since 1957.

The third honoree is Howard Holton. Howard has been a strong supporter of GPFES for many years and has served at chairman of numerous committees and as it's President in 1983. He was also heavily involved with the development of our 501 (c) (3) foundation and served on the Foundation Board for several years. Howard is with Agri-Business Technologies, Inc. and lives in the Albany area.





Wow, what an awesome GPFES Summer Silent Auction! **Together we raised \$28,000!!!!** This is the largest amount of money ever raised at one of our Auctions. This is money we get to invest back into the future of agriculture to continue to share and promote our love for the Agriculture Industry. We are given an opportunity to come together to create an investment that works to protect the future of our industry, which is an industry built on family businesses and generations of doing business with one another.

For more years than anyone knows, Judy Sherling almost single handedly made sure that a Silent Auction was part of the GPFES Summer Meeting. She did a great job and everyone always enjoyed those crowded hallways filled with laughter and tough bidding against one another. When Judy became Chairman of the Board, she asked our Hays family to head up the Auction. For the next six years, we shopped, staged, packed, loaded U-Hauls, unpacked and enjoyed every minute of trying to find items that our membership would enjoy. During that time, the majority of the items at the Auction came from the shoppers at Hays -LTI. After the Auction in 2018, we felt that we had worn our membership out with our ideas and items and that it was time to move the Auction to the next level of greatness. After some consideration and conversation with GPFES Board of Directors, the decision was made to request that items be donated from our members. We always felt that our membership contributed the most personal, unique and interesting items. We often noticed that items donated by our membership did really well and were usually the highest selling items in the auction!

With the help of our Board Chairman, Brian Wood, numerous requests were sent out asking for donations, as well as help setting up the Auction, running the Auction with checkout and cleaning up after the Auction. Our membership rose to the occasion. On Sunday night at 9:00, we were blown away when 40 of our members showed up to unload the U-Haul, unpack and display items. Then on Monday, additional members showed up to help with items arriving on Monday and putting the final touches on the Auction displays. The night of the Auction, members again showed up to help run the auction, check membership out after the auction and most of all clean up! We were so excited for every helping hand. THANK YOU!!!! 40 members contributed 108 of the 350 items. In addition, 12 companies were cash donors. It was exciting to have such unique items like hunts and trips as part of our Silent Auction! No Auction succeeds without those willing to come and shop. Thank you to every single person who bid on items and took items home. We especially enjoyed our young bidders! Thank you for every dollar you spent and every compliment you gave on the items available.

GPFES Summer Auction 2019 goes down in the record books! Together we will work hard to top it in 2020. We are asking for volunteers to help lead the Auction in the years ahead. We are grateful for the families that submitted their names as volunteers for 2020. If you would like to help lead the Auction, please contact Brian Wood at bwood@growersinc.com. Be on the lookout for great items or new fresh ideas for GPFES Summer Auction 2020. Share those ideas with our Board Chairman, Brian Wood. Most of all, thank you for making the GPFES Summer Meeting a priority. It is so important for us to come together to enjoy each other and celebrate our industry. Thank you for every part you played in making the Silent Auction so successful. We are humbled by your friendship, kindness and participation.

Donna H. Stewart
Hays-LTI

GPFES Summer Meeting Recap

The 2019 GPFES Summer Meeting was held at the Ritz-Carlton on Amelia Island, FL July 15-17. Brian Wood, current Chairman of the Board, opened the well-attended meeting at 1 PM on Monday with a welcome, some introductions and leading the membership in attendance in the pledge to the American flag. The Honorable Gary Black, Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture, then kicked off the speakers list with an update from Atlanta and included some interesting stories as usual. Andy Jung, from the Mosaic Company was next and gave an interesting talk on the current potash and phosphate situation worldwide and impacts on Georgia agriculture. After a break with refreshments and fellowship sponsored by Yara North America, Dr. Glen Harris, Dr. Wes Porter and Graduate student Simerjeet Virk then tag-teamed on a presentation about fertilizer spreader field issues and calibration. Georgia Plant Food was a recent co-sponsor for training county agents on how to calibrate fertilizer spreaders and spreader calibration clinics also involving GPFES and equipment industry partners are to be scheduled this winter. Will Bentley with the Georgia Agribusiness Council wrapped up the afternoon talks with an update on legislative issues relevant to GPFES. A brief Board of Directors meeting was then held and adjourned by 5 PM. A reception was held in the lobby from 6-7 PM, sponsored by The Mosaic Company and Nutrien followed by dinner on your own.

Tuesday morning commenced with a Prayer Gathering in the lobby at 6:45 AM. Then folks started to gather around 8 AM outside the lobby for a group picture and the start of the 8th Annual Fertilizer “Fun Run and Walk” at 8:30. After a day of leisure at the pool and the beach and shopping (but not in the ocean due to a shark sighting)...the much anticipated Silent Auction and reception was held from 5:45 to 7:15. The silent auction was bigger and better than ever and thanks to the Hays Family and numerous volunteers was a resounding success. After the silent auction, the banquet was served and after enjoying a nice meal and more fellowship, recaps of the 5K Fun Run and the Silent Auction were presented.. The evening was concluded with two important and well deserved awards. First, a lifetime membership was awarded to Lamar Beamon, Tommy Cullens and Howard Holton. Next the Blair W. Davis Award was presented to Mr. Ty Demunk. On Wednesday morning from 8:30-Noon, the traditional CCA CEU training for Nutrient management, Crop production and soil and water credits was held with Dr. Wes Porter giving a presentation on new irrigation technologies. Grad student Simer Virk then gave a more detailed presentation on fertilizer spreader calibration and Dr. Glen Harris gave talks on how to handle land application of by-products and soil fertility research with new fertilizer products.



8TH ANNUAL “FERTILIZER FUN RUN/WALK”

The 8th Annual GPFES Fertilizer Fun Run and Walk was held on Tuesday morning July 16 at the Ritz- Carlton in Amelia Island. Approximately 50 runners, joggers and walkers gathered at 8:00 AM to enjoy a scenic and mostly canopied route. The t-shirt this year was a light-weight grey with purple “foot” design. This event would not be possible without the support of the GPFES members who participate and our corporate sponsors. The sponsors for this year’s event, as seen on the back of the run t-shirts, were: RW Griffin, Brandt, SQM, Agri-Business Technologies, CNI AgriMinerals, Hays LTI, Embry Farm Service, Mosaic, Tessengerlo Kerley, Eurochem, Newton Crouch, FMC, Italtollina, Helena and Marion Reeves Equipment Sales. Thanks to these sponsors a total of approximately \$4500 was raised for GPFES Undergraduate scholarships! Thanks again to our sponsors and participants for making this year’s fun run and walk a great success. We hope to see you in 2020 for the 9th Annual “Run”!



Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful, and most noble employment of man.
George Washington

One of the most fascinating movies I have seen in the past few years is the Brad Pitt movie, ‘Moneyball’. I refer to it as ‘How to win with Data’. Do you know how to win with data?

In April 2019 the 2017 Census of Agriculture was made available by the USDA. At over 800 pages it is a wealth of statistical information available if you are willing to make that deep dive.

Here are my ‘highlights’:

USDA Census – State of Georgia

Number of Farms 2017 vs 2012:	42,439 (2017)
	42,257 (2012)
Average Size of Farm 2017 vs 2012:	235 acres (2017)
	228 acres (2012)
Estimated Market Value -Land & Buildings- Average Per Farm:	\$822,958 (2017)
	\$702,282 (2012)
Average Per Acre:	\$3,509 (2017)
	\$3,085 (2012)
Approximate Land Area Greater than 2000 Acres Per Farm:	755 Farms (2017)
	734 Farms (2012)
Number of Farms between 1 and 9 Acres:	4516 Farms (2017)
	3025 Farms (2012)
Number of Farms between 10 and 49 Acres:	13,444 (2017)
	13,834 (2012)
Total Average Per Farm Production Expenses:	\$167,609 (2017)
	\$177,213 (2012)
Property Taxes Paid Per Farm:	\$48,013 (2017)
	\$40,411 (2012)
Commercial Fertilizer, lime & soil conditioners Acres Treated:	3,446,808 (2017)
	3,393,219 (2012)

An interesting data point is that the number of farms in Georgia over 2,000 acres has statistically remained flat between 2012 and 2017. Here’s where Retail Farm Supply Owners and Managers should pay attention.

Did you observe the number of farms in Georgia between 1 - 9 Acres and 10 – 49 Acres. In 2017 these two segments add up to 17,960 farms or 42.31% of all our farms in Georgia.

Many sales people tend to be dismissive of the smaller farmer, instead providing perks and special treatment (jackets) to ‘big’ growers. We’ll push them to the front of the line for services. But by catering mostly to larger farmers you increase your credit risk concentration. You increase the risk that one or two of them going out of business will have a significant impact on your revenue stream, not to mention loss of working capital. I know you have more labor than you used to. Don’t let the fear of more work for smaller customers deter you. As a Financial Analyst our analysis clearly showed that the smaller customer was willing to pay a higher price for products and services. In 2017, there were over 4500 Farms between 1 -9 Acres. How many small farmers do you have? That you make sales calls on? If you are highly concentrated in large customers, that may give your salesmen bragging rights but are you really missing out on a customer base that will remain steady. How many farmers with under 50 acres are going bust next year?

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BETWEEN THE ROWS...and On the Phone

Dr. Glen Harris, Educational Advisor

I don't have a lot of regrets about how I've done this job over the last 25 years. I wish I took more pictures of field problems and documented them with tissue results. I wish I could do more on-farm trials with agents... but then I'd have to cut back on my research and teaching program. And I wish I had documented my phone calls right from the start. I remember my first work phone. It was a "bag" phone you plugged into the cigarette lighter. It didn't get very good signal. I don't remember my first true mobile/cell phone but pretty sure it was a "flip" phone. Cleanest my screen has ever been. I had young kids in school and they had phones so I had to learn how to text. I remember having to press the buttons one, two or three times to get the right letter...

But I get all kinds of work calls from all kinds of people. I wish I kept track so I knew what percentage of calls I get from county agents, industry folks, growers, colleagues etc. I also wish I could track the subject of the calls. How many calls do I get about fertilizer recommendations? Problems in fields? Basic soils questions, like pH. If I had to guess, I get more questions about soil pH than anything else. Usually it starts out... "Dr. Harris I took a soil sample and the pH should not be this low. Why do you think it's not right?" ...which you know could be due to a number of things,. I also seem to get the same questions over and over. Maybe that means I am not doing a good enough job educating/extending information. But mostly these common calls are things like "how late is too late to put nitrogen on corn?" Answer: after tasseling and the silks turn brown. I think I keep getting that one because they are always in a last minute panic about running out of N. I understand that.

Sometimes when people call you they already know the answer and they just want to confirm they are on the right track and not going to screw up. I understand that too. Sometimes within the time of a short phone conversation you feel like you saved the grower thousands of dollars. Sometime you feel like they are going to do something no matter what you say so you just steer them toward something that won't hurt them and at least has a chance of helping them. And sometimes you hang up the phone knowing damn well they didn't like what you told them and are going to do what they were going to do in the first place anyway. Sometimes you can't really figure out what they are asking or what the real problem is and what to do about it. Which reminds me, and I'll bet you've heard me tell the story before, about the time my student workers were riding with me in the truck. After a few phone calls one of them said "Dr. Harris, we figured out how to do your job". I said oh yeah, how's that? They said well, every time you talk to someone, right before you hang up you say "well just put 30 pounds of nitrogen on it then"!

Finally, and what got me thinking of this topic, is I regret not cataloging some of my more interesting phone calls. I got a call from Homeland Security one time. That was interesting (They wanted a training on how nitrogen fertilizers are commonly used so they could detect when something was unusual). I got one the other day about someone wanting to put a Crossfit gym in and old fertilizer warehouse and would that cause any problem (??). But I may have had my all-time weirdest one just yesterday. And no it didn't involve hemp, although it may have been involved. A young guy called me about growing hops in Georgia. Somehow he found out I was a craft beer enthusiast – and I do have a hop bine (not vine) growing in my yard. But the conversation started with something like "How you doin, man? Like I've been reading about hops and want to grow some, man... Then at some point I asked him the derivation of his last name and he went silent for a second and no lie, he asked me all concerned "Are you all right, man? Which of course I replied yeah I'm alright, man you alright man? I actually think I freaked him out cause after that he got off the phone real quick.

GPFES SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications for the Five Scholarships awarded annually by GPFES have been distributed to each of the universities in the state that offer degrees in agriculture.. An application may also be requested by sending an email to Dr. Glen Harris at gharris@uga.edu or Jimmy Champion at jpchampion3@bellsouth.net. If you know of a student attending any of these institutions who is seeking a degree/career in agriculture please encourage them to apply. Three "J. Fielding Reed Scholarships" for \$2,000.00 each will be awarded. Also to be awarded is the "Hays Family Scholarship" for \$2,000.00 and the "Jimmy & Bunny Champion" Academic Achievement Award in the amount of \$3,000.00.

For questions regarding scholarships, please contact Jimmy Champion at (229) 881-0254.



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GPFES Winter Meeting

January 14 - 15, 2020
UGA Tifton Conference Center
Tifton, GA

Contact: Jimmy Champion
(229) 881-0254
jpchampion3@bellsouth.net

HENRY SINTIM JOINS UGA CROP & SOIL SCIENCES

Dr. Henry Sintim has joined the The University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences as Soil Fertility Specialist. His appointment will be 40% Extension and 60% Research.

His primary roll will be to develop a robust research program on the mitigation of nutrient limitation of row crop production and to investigate new biological products designed to enhance nutrient uptake and efficiency in plants. He will develop educational materials on soil fertility and assist county extension agents through demonstrations, in-service- trainings, and consultations. Dr. Sintim plans to take a sustainable systems approach that will improve

overall soil health in the long term.

A native of Ghana, he received his M.Sc in Agronomy from the University of Wyoming in 2014 and his Ph.D in Soil Science from Washington State University in 2018.



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Recently, the AG Web Farm Journal published a headline "Working Capital is Dissolving... Here's What to Know". The graph 'Working Capital Sinks to New Lows' provided shows a steep decline in AG working capital between 2009 and 2019. Where did it go? I can almost guarantee a lot was lost to bad debt. Who can afford that year after year? In this column we have previously addressed the critical nature of preserving working capital especially against the backdrop of a struggling farm economy. Aren't smaller customers more likely to be cash or 30 day customers? Remember, whether you are an owner or manager there is a finite amount of working capital that is available to you. Even big companies will pull the plug on those who mismanage their investment in working capital.

For many of us, looking ahead is like driving at night with your headlights out. It's hard to even know where you are, much less where you are going. I think it is past time to find out. The answer may be in the numbers.

Judith D. Sherling, CPA, CGMA
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