

# Woman of the Year

*in Agriculture*

# 2014

*Belinda Chason*



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner



As a fifth-generation cattle rancher and citrus grower, I know first-hand the vital role women play in agriculture. Since 1985, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Florida State Fair Authority have recognized the significant contributions of women in the Florida agriculture industry with the "Woman of the Year in Agriculture" award. This year the Department names Belinda Chason as recipient of this distinguished award. I am extremely proud to honor Mrs. Chason and her outstanding work.

Mrs. Chason is a true champion of Florida agricultural education. During her 41-year career with the Florida Department of Education, Belinda has been an enthusiastic advocate and leader of numerous efforts to advance the future of ag education. Her dedication to mentoring young people and serving as an advisor, administrator and friend to each one has garnered the respect and admiration of her colleagues around the nation.

Not only has Mrs. Chason served FFA and agricultural education, she also served as the state's FFA Advisor for more than 15 years. Some of her many accomplishments include serving as the first female Executive Director of the Florida FFA Association, the first female State Supervisor of Agricultural Education, the first female State FFA Advisor, the first female to serve on the National FFA Board of Directors and the Director of Career and Technical Education. While serving on the National FFA Board of Directors, Belinda was instrumental in organizational changes including relocating the National FFA Convention and moving the National FFA headquarters from Virginia to Indiana.

The impact of Belinda's career in agricultural education stretches across the United States, but perhaps her most notable achievements have been made in her home state of Florida. She worked to bridge the gap between the ag industry and classroom education by organizing Agriscience Technical Committees throughout the state. These committees allowed industry representatives to work with ag teachers to develop rigorous and relevant classroom curriculum in an effort to prepare the future workforce of Florida agriculture. In honor of her extraordinary contributions, an FFA endowment has been established to fund the Belinda G. Chason Legacy Program Award which is presented annually to an agriculture education program recognizing its excellence in the total Agriculture Education Model, including classroom/laboratory instruction, Supervised Agricultural Experience and FFA.

Through her extraordinary efforts, Mrs. Chason has ensured the future of ag education will continue to thrive. Mrs. Chason joins 30 other women who have earned the respect and admiration of their peers by making outstanding contributions to Florida agriculture. Therefore, it is my distinct pleasure to congratulate Belinda Chason on being named the 2014 "Woman of the Year in Agriculture."

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adam H. Putnam".

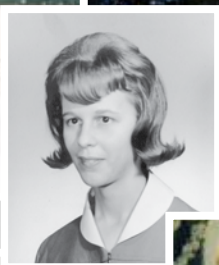
Adam H. Putnam  
Commissioner of Agriculture







Belinda Chason has served as the state's Future Farmers of America (FFA) Advisor for more than 15 years. Some of her accomplishments include serving as the first female Executive Director of the Florida FFA Association, the first female State Supervisor of Agricultural Education, the first female State FFA Advisor and the first female to serve on the National FFA Board of Directors.







Belinda's impact in agriculture is not limited to her partnerships with agricultural agencies, but can be observed in the many successes of her former FFA students, ranging from growers and ranchers to industry leaders and marketers to successful attorneys and state representatives.







Left page, top, Erin Freel (FFA officer 1991-92), owns and operates the agricultural marketing firm The Market Place in Weirsdale; bottom left, Jake Raburn (former FFA member) is the District 57 State Representative; bottom right, Brad Etheridge (FFA officer 1993-94) is a rancher in Williston. Right page, top left, Ronnie Simmons (FFA officer 1998-99) is current FFA Executive Director; bottom left, Steve Yoder (FFA officer 1992-93) is a grower in Altha; below, Todd Hingson (FFA officer 1991-92) is an attorney in Tampa.



Belinda continues to foster relationships with many of her former FFA students.



Belinda's dedication to mentoring students as well as teachers has made an immeasurable impact in agricultural education and agri-science for Florida and the nation.







Belinda has advanced agricultural education and agri-science through her work with numerous organizations, including: Florida Farm Bureau; Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association; Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; and 41 years of service with the Florida Department of Education.







Above, from left, Belinda's family: son Gil; daughter-in-law Sandi; granddaughter Victoria; granddaughter Christina; Belinda; Bo, her husband of 45 years; granddaughter Mallorie.



Belinda nurtures and cultivates plants with love and care -- just as she has with those who she's influenced and encouraged throughout the years.







# Previous Winners

## Woman of the Year in Agriculture

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**2013**

Lynetta Usher Griner

**2012**

Imogene Yarborough

**2011**

Sarah K. Childs

**2010**

Ann Holt

**2009**

Marcia Lightsey

**2008**

Patsy Nathe

**2007**

Colleen H. Boggs

**2006**

Iris Pollock Wall

**2005**

Marlene Strickland

**2004**

Martina "Teena" Borek

**2003**

Jennie Lee Zipperer

**2002**

Annette Barnett

**2001**

Barbara Carlton

**2000**

Helen Houck

**1999**

Vina Jean Banks

**1998**

Nancy Gurnett Hardy

**1997**

Gertrude "Trudy" Carey

**1996**

Norma Stokes

**1995**

Louve "Vee" Frierson Platt and Patricia Robbins

**1994**

Anne Wardlaw Dickinson

**1993**

Sarah W. Bailey

**1992**

Carol C. Murphy

**1991**

Ruth M. Tucker

**1990**

Jeanette Barthle

**1989**

Belle Jeffords

**1988**

Carolyn Reed Kempfer

**1987**

Dorothy Conner Shipes

**1986**

Ruth Wedgworth

**1985**

Jo Ann Smith



*"I never wore the blue jacket,  
but the blue jacket has sure made  
an impact on me." – Belinda Chason*