



# Requested Changes to the Truck Regulations

The National Watermelon Association joined with our friends at Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association to request changes to the Hours of Service and Electronic Logging Device regulations that are deemed necessary for the perishable fruit and vegetable industry. The petition was submitted in March to the Administrator (Raymond Martinez) of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.



As many of you are aware, the challenges and hardships that have resulted from the implementation of the ELD Ruling have caused disruptive markets and variations that are causing unnecessary delivery delays, a deterioration of product quality, potential impacts on food

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# The Principles of Agricultural Labor Reform

Some of you may recall that the U.S. House of Representatives voted on two immigration reform bills last June that would have moved AG Labor from the U.S. Department of Labor over to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Both bills failed, and we remain in the same position today as we have for many years - - without a solution.

You should know what occurred last June, and why the bills failed. Without getting into the partisanship that the bills held, and splitting within the majority party at that time, there was a fractioning within the AG Industry as well, which did not bode well at all.

Going back a decade, a few of us recall meeting with U.S. Senator Lindsay Graham who suggested to us that, ‘AG must come together with a common set of principles and remain on the same page.’ Truer words have never been said, and for many years AG was together (until last year, that is).

When former Congressman Bob Goodlatte introduced his AG Worker bills, AG split into two obvious camps - - one for and one against. On one side was the American Farm Bureau and scattered organizations across the country. On the other side were the major national and super regional produce associations. Both sides did all that they could do to influence Congress to either pass the bills or vote against. Seemingly, both sides won, as the bills failed, and their legislators voted (in most cases) as they wanted them to vote.

Since then, AG has come together to try to rally and regroup. The Agriculture Workforce Coalition (AWC), made up of over 100 produce associations, has been asked to take the lead and rally the produce industry in a unified effort moving forward. The AWC set

PRINCIPLES continued on page 8

# Immigration Reform: Is This the Year?

For many years, we have hoped for, lobbied Congress and the White House, discussed and debated the numerous elements of a guest worker program, reviewed the issues related to the H2-A program, and continue to talk about it in the hopes that our federal leaders will finally solve this issue - - create and provide a viable workforce that will help us to plant, grow, harvest, pack and ship fresh fruits & vegetables.

In 2018, we were keenly tuned-in as two bills actually made it to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives for votes, with both failing for various reasons. A third bill (promised to the House right after the summer session, never came about due to a lack of votes to move it forward.

Without going through the varying factors as to the Why’s (and Why Not’s) of the failure of our federal officials to come even close to an agreement that will help us to solve this issue - - the #1 issue facing the produce industry - - we watch, we stay tuned-in, and we continue to lobby our legislators in the hopes that they will get it done, and soon.

Recently, a sub-committee in the U.S. House Judiciary Committee held a hearing to discuss the topic of protecting ‘Dreamers’ and recipients of ‘Temporary Protected Status’. Although these two topics may not seem germane to AG labor needs, in fact they could set the stage for the larger conversation - - Immigration Reform.

As we pay attention to this and other anticipated early-stage immigration policy debates, we may get a look at how potential legislation could be structured, how it could pass one chamber, and how it may be addressed (or not) by the other chamber. We will stay tuned-in, and keep you posted as any development arise.

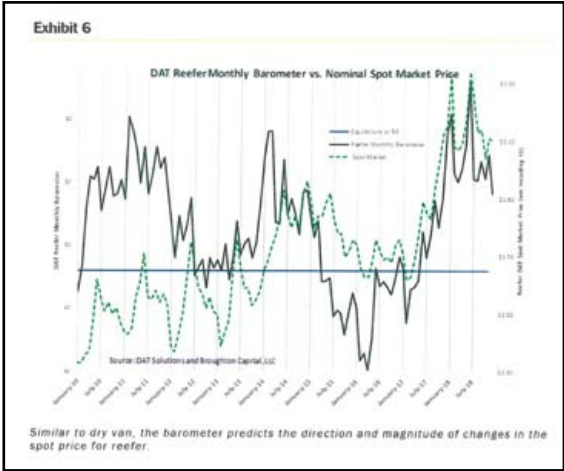
# Hold Off Trucking at This Time, If You Can

All of our shippers that move loads during the month of June may and probably remember the truck rates in 2018, which spiked to an all-time high in June of 2018. Would you like to know why?

The primary culprit is a group called the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), which has taken the responsibility each year (under the ELD Ruling) to inspect every truck on America’s roadways within a span of three days. That led to long lines at truck stops last June, and a spike in price rates that has never been seen before.

Well, the dates have been set, and we are in store for another round in 2019. This time the dates are June 3-5, 2019!

We are suggesting that you may want to hold off (if you can) for a few days or realize what is already being predicted as the highest rates of 2019. Last year’s road check program caused long lines, delivery delays, and almost three weeks for the trucking industry to recover. The chart (below) shows that the two highest rate spikes incurred during the ELD Implementation and the Road Check program in June.



HOLD OFF continued on page 8



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# National Report

What an awesome convention in Hawaii! We congratulate our 2019 National Watermelon Queen Miss Katelyn Honeycutt. Katie is the 21 year old daughter of Barry and JoAnne Honeycutt of Angier, North Carolina. She is a senior attending North Carolina State University double majoring in Agribusiness Management and Agriculture Education. I'm sure a busy and fantastic year awaits you!

Congratulations also to our First Runner-up, Mar-Del Watermelon Queen, Miss Gabrielle Hastings of Bethel, Delaware, and to our Second Runner-up, Alabama Watermelon Queen, Miss Sarah Jane Levine of Enterprise, Alabama. Congratulations to our Miss Jubilee, Texas Watermelon Queen, Miss Hannah Crisp. I have to honestly say this was an amazing group of young ladies this year. Congratulations to each of you for the outstanding job you did representing your states, you certainly did them proud!

We at NWA wish to thank again, Miss Savannah Christensen for the fine job she did representing us this year! We wish you every happiness. May you continue to enjoy God's richest blessings.

Special thanks to all the Scholarship Sponsors that contributed to Katie's scholarship fund; NWA; Multicorr; Oren Childers Memorial Scholarship fund; Adam Jackson Memorial Scholarship Fund. A very special thank you to Melon1 for the luggage purchased for Katie; Beach bag full of goodies purchased by Seedway for our queen; A gold watermelon bracelet purchased by Seedway; Watermelon purse purchased by Melon1. Thank you all for these contributions. They are so appreciated.

Savannah's very successful tour wraps up with the following sponsors and promotions; The Fresh Produce of the America's Convention, Nogales, Arizona, sponsored by the following; North County Fruit Sales; Big Chuy; Cactus Melon; Growers Alliance LLC; Ag Solutions; NWPB Grant; Texas Watermelon Convention; Multicorr; Luke Brown Watermelon; Seedway; NWPB Grant Money; Florida Watermelon Convention; Florida Watermelon Association; South Carolina Watermelon Association; Kinard Farms; Vincent Farms; Georgia Watermelon Convention; Georgia Watermelon Association; Mar-Del Watermelon Association Convention; Mar-Del Watermelon Association; Gulf Coast Watermelon Convention; Gulf Coast Watermelon Association. Thanks to each for sponsoring and your continued support!

Eleanor Bullock,  
229.322.9933;  
etb.nwa@gmail.com;  
Face book, National Watermelon Queen

Congratulations to Miss Hannah Crisp, 2019 Miss Jubilee



Savannah crowns Miss Katelyn Honeycutt, N C Watermelon Queen, the 2019 National Watermelon Queen



Congratulations Katelyn Honeycutt, 2019 National Watermelon Queen



Congratulations to Miss Gabrielle Hastings, First Runner-Up and to Miss Sarah Jane Levine, Second Runner-Up



Thank You Again to these fabulous judges!



Thank you to this group and the entire team at Multicorr for the scholarship money for Katie



Thanks Jordan Carter for presenting the Oren Childers Memorial Scholarship to Katie from Oren's nephew



Congratulations from all the former queens attending, welcome to the sisterhood!



Matt from Jackson Farming presents the Adam Jackson Memorial Scholarship from Brent and Debbie Jackson



Thanks so much for the gold bracelet and goodies from Seedway



Thanks to Melon1 for the luggage and other auction items



Presenting Miss Katelyn Honeycutt, 2019 National Watermelon Queen



Queen Savannah reads to 5 Kindergarten classes in Nogales, with Susan Harrison



Thank you Ag Solutions for your hospitality and your sponsorship



Thank You Cactus Melon for your support



Thanks to the Big Chuy team for sponsoring



Thanks to Peter Zaferis and the North County Fruit Sales team for sponsoring



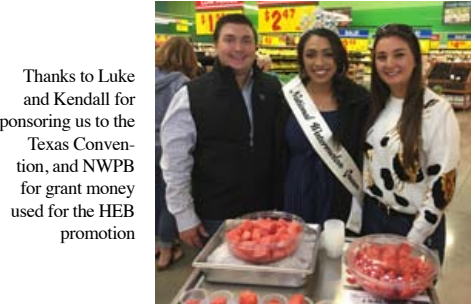
Thanks to the Growers Alliance LLC team for sponsoring us to the United Fresh Produce of the America's convention in Nogales



Thanks to Susan, Brent and Eden for sponsoring and your gracious hospitality



Thanks to Chuck Elam and Seedway for sponsoring us to McAllen



Thanks to Luke and Kendall for sponsoring us to the Texas Convention, and NWPB for grant money used for the HEB promotion



Thanks to Steve Crowder of Multicorr and Chuck, Seedway for helping sponsor us to the Texas Convention



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# CHEP Partnership is Running Wide Open



Since the program’s inception in early 2008, the incentivized partnership between CHEP and the National Watermelon Association has produced revenues that now have exceeded \$200,000. How, you may ask? Ask you will.

In a comparison of our membership database with their customer base, we are able to identify commonalities amongst watermelon shippers. Every member company that utilizes CHEP pallets is in essence contributing to the program by using CHEP. Once we reach the established goals each year, the incentive kicks in and begins to build.

For a decade we have worked with CHEP to build the partnership by promoting the use of CHEP with our members that make those choices. Those that use CHEP are helping their association to build a partnership that provides benefits; benefits that allow us to expand our program offerings for all of our members to enjoy. It is unique and very beneficial to the NWA.

For more information about CHEP, please contact your local representative or [www.chep.com](http://www.chep.com). For more information on the partnership program, please contact the National Watermelon Association.

# Justice Department Sides with Court Ruling ObamaCare Invalid

A Wisconsin judge issued a temporary block on a series of laws signed by then-Gov. Scott Walker (R) that limited the powers of his Democratic successor, Tony Evers, according to The Associated Press.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) announced that it is siding with a district court ruling that found the Affordable Care Act unconstitutional. The DOJ previously argued in court that the law’s pre-existing condition protections should be struck down. Now, the administration argues the entire law should be invalidated.

Many legal experts in both parties think the lawsuit, which was brought by 20 GOP-led states, will not ultimately succeed. The district judge who ruled against the law in December is known as a staunch conservative.

The case centers on the argument that since Congress repealed the tax penalty in the law’s mandate for everyone to have insurance in 2017, the mandate can no longer be ruled constitutional under Congress’s power to tax. The challengers then argue that all of ObamaCare should be invalidated because the mandate is unconstitutional.

Most legal experts say legal precedent shows that even if the mandate is ruled unconstitutional, the rest of ObamaCare should remain unharmed, as that is what Congress voted to do in the 2017 tax law that repealed the mandate’s penalty.

The logo for the Agriculture Workforce Coalition (AWC) features the letters "AWC" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with "AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE COALITION" in a smaller font to the right.

### Principles for Agricultural Labor Reform

*Mission Statement: The Agriculture Workforce Coalition (AWC) brings together organizations representing the diverse needs of agricultural employers across the country. AWC serves as the unified voice of agriculture in the effort to ensure that America’s farmers, ranchers and growers have access to a stable and secure workforce now and in the future.*

The agricultural industry has united to present a legislative framework that provides actionable solutions for agriculture’s labor needs. Any legislation must include assurance of a future workforce both from a flexible and efficient visa program and by retention of current workers. A legislative solution must address:

**Respect for and recognition of the importance of our current experienced workforce to the sustainability of US based agricultural production and food security by providing:**

- a mechanism for qualifying farmworkers to continue working in agriculture and/or reside in the United States based on agricultural work experience and commitment;
- a mechanism to earn legal status to work and/or reside in the United States based on agricultural work experience and commitment; and
- a mechanism to protect immediate family members.

**Recognition of the critical need for access to a current and future workforce for the sustainability of US based agricultural production and food security by providing a flexible and efficient agricultural worker visa program that includes:**

- availability to all agricultural producers without regard to the temporary, seasonal or year-round nature of the job;
- a fair and predictable market-based approach to wages and benefits that does not unduly impede US competitiveness;
- flexibility in the length of visas to address the needs of different agriculture sectors;
- mobility; and
- ability to meet any future industry production expansion labor needs with no arbitrary limits.

PRINCIPLES  
continued from page 1

guidelines that they want from any legislation that deal with a guest worker program and immigration reform.

As Washington moves down their calendar and approaches the immigration debate, you can count on the NWA (and in conjunction many of our peers to include the AWC) to be at the front door. AG Labor is the #1 need ion the produce industry, bar none. Your NWA will be there again, and again, doing what we can to make a difference. Stay tuned. Maybe this is the year!?

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safety, missed delivery times and resulting fines, and more. It is as a direct result of those negative impacts that we are asking for modifications and consideration of such changes to important segments of the ELD and HOS requirements.

It is our belief that the modifications that have been requested will help FMCSA to better align with other federal agencies and requirements that our industry must follow, such as the USDA’s quality requirements and the FDA’s food safety requirements. Some of the HOS and ELD requirements have caused conflicts and confusion with these other regulations and should be revised to provide workable solutions for all parties, regulations and practices to meet and follow.

Specifically, the petition asks the FMCSA for consideration of the following:

1. Add an allowance for drivers to rest at any point during their trip without counting this rest time against their HOS allotments. This change can actually improve driver safety and prevent any driver to push-through periods of fatigue during their haul. Simply put, allow a driver to stop when they want to stop, and don’t count that time against their drive time period. This will have positive effects on driving performance and road safety, without the unnecessary stress of penalties from HOS restrictions.
2. Exclude loading and unloading times from HOS calculations. Most drivers report that they do not know how long a loading or unloading stop will take until they reach the shipping point. Field/farm variables, labor availability, weather considerations, machinery malfunctions, and more contribute to unpredictable timeframes. Most drivers report loading times (sometimes 6-8 hours) which often result in an almost immediate need for a 10-hour rest period before getting back on the road. Allowing loading and unloading time to be excused from HOS calculations outside of the 150 air mile provision could provide much needed resting time and stress relief to drivers of perishable food.
3. Revise the sleeper berth provision to allow drivers to split sleeper berth times into 5/5, 6/4 and 7/3 hour

blocks. The current sleeper berth provision allows drivers to take eight-consecutive hours in a sleeper berth, plus a separate two-consecutive hours either in the sleeper berth, off duty, or a combination, of which do not count toward their 14-hour on-duty time. This is referred to as an 8/2 split. However, the combination of these 10-nonconsecutive hours does not fully reset the HOS clock for a new 11-hour driving, 14-hour on-duty period without the driver taking an additional 10 consecutive hours off-duty. The inclusion of the additional berth time periods would allow a full reset of the 14-hour on-duty, driving period.

4. Allow drivers to complete their trip, regardless of HOS requirements, if they come within 150 air miles of their delivery point (if the delivery takes place on any day beyond the original departure work period). This rule modification would allow the driver to appropriately take into account the need for safety and the need to rapidly transport perishable fruits & vegetables to their final destination. Because of the perishable nature of F&V, the extension of this provision would allow a more efficient delivery without sacrificing a produce crop’s lifetime while it sits on a truck with an endpoint in reach. Additionally, this provision could alleviate many of the documented speeding and unsafe driving violations that have been documented as a result of drivers trying to get done before the clock runs out.

Lastly, we understand that some of the requested modifications are more feasible for immediate implementation than others, while we also implore the Administrator to consider the urgency of this request as many states have already begun their domestic harvest. The petition also requests that if FMCSA cannot modify the HOS and ELD rules as requested, that we urge a delay of enforcement of the rules for 2-4 years to allow for improvement in the regulations affecting the safe transport of perishable fruits and vegetables. We believe that these provisions (adjustments) will lead us to one conclusion: there must be safe and efficient way to alleviate stressors on drivers so that they can safely deliver quality fresh fruits and vegetables. We hope that the Administrator (and FMCSA) will take positive action on our petition

HOLD OFF continued from page 1

Additionally, our intelligence is suggesting that some truck firms may shut down that week, not to avoid the inspections, but rather to perform maintenance on their equipment and/or avoid the long lines and hassles.

No matter if any or all of these predictors occur (or not), it is a safe assumption that truck rates in early June will once again reach higher than normal rates. Proceed with caution.



# National Pictures



Our queens, Savannah and Hannah



Thanks to Kendra Kennedy, former National Queen for all you do!



Savannah and Hannah congratulate the 2019 Texas Watermelon Queen



Savannah with the lovely Queens at the FWA Convention



Visiting Queens and the contestants at the Seed Spit



Thank you Camri for a beautiful job!



Savannah congratulates the 2019 Florida Watermelon Queen



Thank you Rusty Kinard for sponsoring us to the South Carolina Convention



Thank you to Vincent Farms for sponsoring us to South Carolina



Thank you to Vincent Farms for sponsoring us to South Carolina



Katie, Emily and Savannah at the S C convention, thanks Emily for a great job



Katie, Emily and Savannah at the S C convention, thanks Emily for a great job



The girls congratulate Courtney 2019 South Carolina Watermelon Queen



Savannah, Courtney, Savannah Hartley, and Camri congratulate the 2019 Georgia Watermelon Queen



The Gibson Produce Team with Queens, Savannah, Savannah Hartley, and Camri at the GWA Convention in St Simons Island, thanks for all you do!



Chuck Elam poses with Savannah and Camri at the GWA Convention



Chuck Elam poses with Savannah and Camri at the GWA Convention



Thanks to this great group for all you do!



Sarah Jane and Savannah pose with Queen Gabby at the Mar-Del Convention



Katie and their beautiful girls pose with Savannah at the Mar-Del Convention



The queens congratulate the 2019 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen



NWA President Ray Vincent and wife Teresa at the Mar-Del Convention



NWA President Ray Vincent and wife Teresa at the Mar-Del Convention



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# Florida Report

Greeting from Florida the Sunshine State!!

As our 2019 year begins our 2018 Queen Camri Campbell attend-  
ed several conventions in the month of January and February.

On January 25, Queen Camri and I traveled to St. Simons Is-  
land, Georgia to attend the Georgia Watermelon Convention  
at the King & Prince Resort. Congratulations to Meredith  
McGlamory for being crowned the 2019 Georgia Water-  
melon Queen. Special Thank you to “Melon 1” for sponsor-  
ing us to attend this convention and the beautiful bracelet for  
Queen Camri.

The second weekend in February, Queen Camri and I headed to  
Biloxi, Mississippi for the first Gulf Coast Watermelon Con-  
vention formerly known as the Alabama Watermelon Convention.  
President Heather Raulerson did an outstanding job putting on  
this convention “The Watermelon Ball”. Everyone enjoying  
dressing up on Friday night with their favorite watermelon outfit.  
A weekend of fun being sponsored by Terry Parrish – Clifton  
Seed Company, Heather Raulerson – International Paper, Paul  
Sawyer – Seigers Seed Company, Chris Hogg – Seedway, LLC.  
Congratulations to Taylor Skipper for being crowned the 2019  
Gulf Coast Watermelon Convention.

Queen Camri enjoyed her last promotion on Saturday before  
Nationals being a part of the “80th Annual Edison Festival of  
Light Grand Parade”. This night parade is Southwest Florida  
largest and longest parade held every year in Fort Myers,  
Florida. Over 200,000 plus people attend this parade each year.  
Thanks Sawyer Smith – Wilbur Smith Attorney at Law for  
sponsoring us to the event.

Queen Camri and I traveled our last adventure together as we  
headed to Hawaii for the National Watermelon Convention being  
held at the Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort & Spa in Waikoloa,  
Hawaii to compete for the National Watermelon Queen Title.  
Queen Camri did an awesome job representing her home State  
of Florida. We are all very proud of you Camri of the job you did  
this past year representing the watermelon industry. Being in the  
family industry Queen Camri not only put her heart in this job  
but her hard work as well. Thanks to everyone that attended and  
supported Queen Camri at Nationals. Congratulations to Katie  
Honeycutt of North Carolina for being crowned the 2019 Na-  
tional Watermelon Queen and Gabrielle Hastings of Mar-Del for  
first runner-up and Sarah Jane Levine of Alabama being second  
runner-up. Also congratulations to the Texas Watermelon Queen  
Hannah Crisp for winning the “2019 Miss Jubilee Award”. All  
the State Chapter queens did an awesome job representing each  
of their state chapters.

Now a little bit about our 51st Annual Florida Watermelon Con-  
vention “A Land Remembered” which was held this year on  
Jan 10-12 at the beautiful Vinoy Renaissance St. Petersburg Re-  
sort and Golf Club in St. Petersburg, Florida. This year theme  
was a tribute to Florida’s rich farmland and its hard-working  
farmers. Thank you FARMERS!! Congratulations to Avianna  
Liuzzo of Gainesville for being crowned the 2019 Florida  
Watermelon Queen. Avianna attends the University of Florida.  
First Runner-up is Ashley O’Steen of Lake Butler and second  
runner-up is Kiersten Waldron of Sebring. Congratulations to  
Avianna Liuzzo for also winning the “Miss Jubilee” Award.

Wishing everyone a successful Watermelon season this  
year..... Until next time!

Debra Harrison - Florida Watermelon Promotions Coordinator  
Email: [debra@flfwa.com](mailto:debra@flfwa.com)  
Cell: (863) 633-8306



“Congratulations” to Meredith McGlamory for being crowned the 2019 Georgia Watermelon Queen



Chuck Elam visiting with our National Watermelon Queen Savannah and Florida Watermelon Queen Camri in Georgia.



Thank you “Melon 1” for sponsoring us at the Georgia Watermelon Convention.



Congratulations to Jody and Laura Land for receiving the “Life-time Achievement Award”.



Our dearest and beautiful “Has Been’s” with our newly crowned FWQ Avianna Liuzzo.



Our “2019 Florida Watermelon Judges” with our new 2019 Florida Watermelon Queen Avianna Liuzzo.



Congratulations to our “Best Watermelon Costume” Winners.



“Welcome Dr. Michael Liuzzo and his family to our Watermelon Family”.



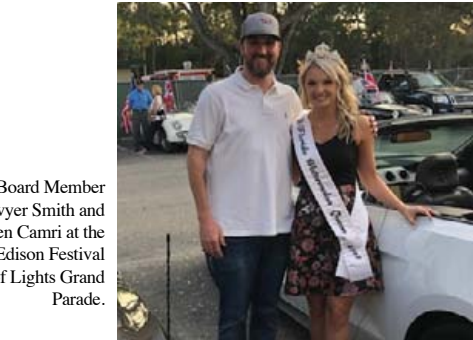
Congratula-  
tions to  
the 2019  
Gulf Coast  
Watermelon  
Queen Taylor  
Skipper.



Queen Camri with Ms. Cheryl Hicks at the Gulf Coast Watermelon Convention. Thank you Ms. Cheryl for all the gifts and everything you do for all the associations.



What a delight is was in Alabama to see Paul & Jackie Sawyer and enjoying Paul singing and playing his guitar. So much fun thanks Paul Sawyer!



Board Member Sawyer Smith and Queen Camri at the “Edison Festival of Lights Grand Parade.



No caption needed for this except “Beautiful Queen”. Good Luck Camri on your next adventure in life. Can’t wait to see what god has planned for you.



Our gorgeous Florida Watermelon Queens in Hawaii - 2017 Queen Savannah, 2016 Queen Katy Mae and 2018 Queen Camri.



FWA #15 – “Beautiful young ladies in Hawaii”.



Congratulations to Gabrielle Hastings – first runner-up, 2019 National Watermelon Queen Katie Honeycutt, second runner-up- Sarah Jane Levine.



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# Georgia Report

## Greetings from Georgia!

The Georgia Watermelon Association is proud to report on a successful annual conference in St. Simons this year. The King & Prince Beach and Golf Resort was the setting and host hotel for all activities throughout the weekend! Attendees enjoyed their time relaxing, golfing, shopping and visiting with each other throughout the weekend!

The GWA Annual Convention had a great attendance this year with 250 growers and watermelon agribusinesses who joined us for the weekend. The live auction was a great success raising over \$235,000. A BIG THANKS to our load donors, buyers and other auction supporters for this 2019 event. This association will thrive due to your support and passion for the industry and we're excited about the upcoming year. Also, thanks for the support given by our CORPORATE sponsors for the meeting; it would not be possible without your generous donations.

For our annual queen contest this year we were excited to have some very lovely, talented and well-spoken ladies all competing for the position of the 2019 GWA Ambassador. THANK YOU Pal-King Pallets, Browning and Sons, LTF Greenhouses, Borders Melons East and Seedway for your support of the contestants! Congratulations to our 2nd runner up and Miss Jubilee winner, Jade Bloser, sponsored by Borders Melons East and 1st runner up, Emily Stewart Peters, sponsored by Browning and Sons. Finally –congratulations to our 2019 Georgia Watermelon Queen, Miss Meredith McGlamory! Meredith is from Abbeville, Georgia and will be graduating from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in December with a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Communications and a minor in Animal Science. Meredith was sponsored by LTF Greenhouses.

Queen Meredith will begin her year very soon with 'Feed My School' visits, retail promotions, Queen Training with the NWPB, Cooper River Bridge Run in Charleston, SC and many other events throughout the spring.

If you are interested in booking our new Georgia Watermelon Queen, please call ahead to schedule a date for our 2019 tour by contacting Dawn Cheplick at 706-845-8575 or [dcheplick@asginfo.net](mailto:dcheplick@asginfo.net).

Looking forward to seeing you all this summer!

Sincerely,  
Dawn Cheplick, Promotions Coordinator  
706-845-8575  
[dcheplick@asginfo.net](mailto:dcheplick@asginfo.net)



2019 GWA Queen, Meredith McGlamory



"Tell us how you would sell a watermelon in 30 seconds!"



Your 2018 GWA Queen, Savannah Hartley poses with our new 2019 Queen Meredith!



Thank you to LTF Greenhouses, Neal Kicklighter and Mallory Tyndal, for sponsoring Queen Meredith at the GWA Conference and Annual Meeting!



"Straighten that crown and move forward like the Queen you are!"



Queen Meredith and Outgoing Queen Savannah with Dick Minor, 2017-2018 GWA President



Past GWA Queens 'line up' with Queen Meredith!



Thank you to our panel of judges for giving up their time to attend the conference and judge the Queen Competition!



2019 GWA Queen Contestants – what a tough competition!



Showcasing those auction items!



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MAHALO! GRACIAS! MERCI! GRAZIE! DANKE! EFHARISTO! OBRIGADO! ARIGATO! SHUKRAN! THANK YOU!

OBRIGADO! ARIGATO! SHUKRAN! THANK YOU! MAHALO! GRACIAS! MERCI! GRAZIE! DANKE! EFHARISTO! OBRIGADO! ARIGATO! SHUKRAN! THANK YOU!

MAHALO! GRACIAS! MERCI! GRAZIE! DANKE! EFHARISTO! OBRIGADO! ARIGATO! SHUKRAN! THANK YOU! MAHALO! GRACIAS! MERCI! GRAZIE! DANKE! EFHARISTO! OBRIGADO! ARIGATO! SHUKRAN! THANK YOU!

# Donors are Our Life Blood

It could go without saying, but we must continue to pinch ourselves and give a HUGE SHOUT-OUT to our lead donors; those shippers and growers that donate full loads of watermelon to our annual watermelon auction.

This year, forty loads were donated to the National Watermelon Association from thirty (30) donors, with two additional loads dedicated to support Moffitt Cancer Center (Tampa, Florida) and the military through our keynote speaker, Major Ed Pulido (more on page 34).

- Big Chuy
- Browning & Sons
- Cactus Melon
- Capital City Fruit
- Celli Brothers
- Coosaw Farms
- DMC Farms
- Eagle Eye
- Frey Farms
- Gibson Produce
- Giumarra Companies
- Healthy Harvest
- Keith Connell
- Kids Choice
- Kirschenman Enterprises
- Leger and Son
- McMelon, Inc.
- Melon Acres
- Mesilla Valley Produce
- Mouzin Brothers Farms
- Pappas Family Farms
- Premier Melons
- Schmieding Produce
- Southern Corporate Packers
- Sunstate Produce
- Sweet Mama Produce
- Van Groningen & Sons
- Vincent Farms
- Warren Produce
- Wiggins Wholesale

To all of our donors, we say a huge MAHALO (Thank You). You continue to inspire us with your generosity, your support, your commitment, and your dedication to what we are doing for you every day at the National Watermelon Association. Mahalo. Gracias. Merci. Grazie. Danke. Efharisto. Obrigado. Arigato. Shukran. Thank you!



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- Eagle Eye Produce
- Western WM Association
- Helena Chemical
- WQS Certification
- Sakata Seed



MAHALO! GRACIAS! MERCI! GRAZIE! DANKE! EFHARISTO! OBRIGADO! ARIGATO! SHUKRAN! THANK YOU!



# Gulf Coast Report

Greetings from the Gulf Coast Watermelon Association!

This year has already started with a busy January and February. Queen Sarah Jane and I had wonderful time at the Florida and MarDel Watermelon Conventions. Each convention was amazing and it was great getting to see our watermelon family from all over. There is nothing like celebrating our favorite industry at the National Convention in Paradise.

The Gulf Coast Watermelon Association went all in for Watermelon at our convention in February at the Beau Rivage Resort in Biloxi, Mississippi. This year's convention was a huge success and could not have been possible without our convention sponsors: Clifton Seed Company, Coast to Coast Produce, Continental Produce, Genecco Produce, International Paper, LFT Greenhouses, Multicorr, Nunhems USA, Inc., Seminis, Syngenta, Borders Melons, Browning & Sons, Big Charlie's/Lil Brian's, Freight Movers, LLC, Geneva Farms LLC, Matrana's Produce, McMelon, Inc., National Watermelon Association, National Watermelon Promotion Board, Rouses Supermarkets, Billy Smith's Watermelon, CHEP USA, H.M. Clause, Intergro, Jeff Martin Auctioneers, Morgan Wood Products, Siegers Seed Company, and Valdosta Plant Company. Your support is greatly appreciated!

This year we had four wonderful young ladies competed for the position of the 2019 Gulf Coast Watermelon Queen. Congratulations to the 2019 Queen Taylor Skipper from Ashford, Alabama and the 1st runner-up Raeleigh Baldwin.

Queen Taylor and I are both very excited to get started this year. We will be attending the Cooper River Bridge Run in South Carolina and the National Watermelon Promotion Board Queen training in Atlanta, GA in April. Following the training we will start the 2019 Queen Tour handing out watermelon at races, visiting elementary school, attending watermelon festivals and farmers' markets, completing farm tours in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida and many other exiting promotions.

Last but not least, the Gulf Coast Watermelon Association would like to congratulate our 2018 Queen Sarah Jane Levine on placing 2nd runner up in the National Queen Competition. A special thank you, for all your hard work and dedication over the past year. You have represented the Alabama Association with a kindness, vivaciousness, and elegance! In addition, thank you to all that have helped make her year so special!

See you all soon,

Jordan Sawyers  
Promotions Coordinator  
334-791-6230  
j.skipper94@gmail.com



Queen Sarah Jane and Alabama President Heather Raulerson.



Congratulations to 2019 Gulf Coast Watermelon Queen Taylor Skipper, 1st runner-up Raeleigh Baldwin.



Queen Taylor with Queen Sarah Jane and Visiting Queens.



Getting Island Style!



Queen Taylor with our New President Terri Parrish and is wife, Ronda, and Jeff and Bobbie Joe Garrett.



Queen Sarah Jane and National Queen Savannah.



Queen Sarah Jane and the BEST fill in coordinator, Katie Eubanks.



Queen Sarah Jane delivering her speech during the queen competition.



Queen Sarah Jane with her wonderful Family!



Sarah Jane, the GCWA is so proud of all that you have done this year. You have represented us with such grace and class throughout all of your promotions. Thank you for all of your hard work this year!



National Queen Evening Gown Competition, Alabama Queen Sarah Jane Levine.



Congratulations to the New National Queen Katelyn Honeycutt from North Carolina, and 1st runner up Gabby Hastings from MarDel, and 2nd runner up from Alabama Sarah Jane Levine. You all did fabulous!



We Love Mr. Jim!



Queen Sarah Jane with our wonderful supporters from International Paper.



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# Illiana Report

Greetings from Illiana!

2019 is off to a great start here in Indiana and Illinois! Queen Brilee made the most of convention season, traveling to the Florida Watermelon Association convention, the National Watermelon convention in Hawaii, and to our convention in beautiful French Lick, Indiana!

Queen Brilee had a wonderful time meeting Florida Watermelon Association members and watching Queen Camri crown the next Florida Watermelon Queen. She enjoyed spending time with the other visiting queens, it was a great way for all of the girls to get excited for Hawaii!

Next up was the National Watermelon Association convention where Brilee competed for the National Watermelon Queen title in beautiful Hawaii! It was truly paradise and an amazing way to celebrate Brilee’s year. To kick off the competition a few of the queens took a whale watching sunset cruise, talk about a once in a lifetime opportunity! Queen Brilee conducted herself beautifully both on stage and off and we as an association could not be more proud!

Less than a week after returning from the NWA convention, Brilee made her last public appearance at the Knox County Dr. Seuss Day. The event was held to encourage area children to use their imagination and to strengthen their love for reading. It was the perfect way for Brilee to end her year since the Illiana Watermelon Association is a proud supporter of Knox County schools!

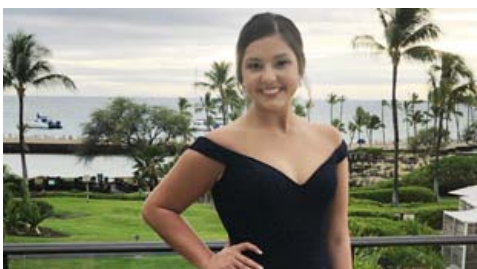
Lastly, we had our convention in French Lick, Indiana! We enjoyed the food, fun, and fellowship of everyone in our watermelon family. At the end of the convention Queen Brilee passed on her title to our 2019 queen, Miss Madison Heiden of Vincennes, Indiana. We will all miss Brilee and look forward to seeing what she will accomplish in the future. We are excited for

Queen Madison’s year and know she will do a wonderful job promoting Illiana watermelon!

Here is to a prosperous 2019 season!  
Kind Regards,  
Lana Brothers  
(314)724-6305  
iwapromocoordinator@gmail.com



Illiana and Florida queens at the FWA convention



Ready to hit the stage!



2018 queens having fun at the FWA convention



Last night as the reigning Illiana Watermelon Queen



President Kelly Tyner and Board Member Brad Johnson in Florida



Fun at our convention, bowling with queen contestants



Ready for the 2019 National Watermelon Convention to begin!



Thank you to National Watermelon Queen Katie and Miss Eleanor for attending!



Whale watching!



Crowning the 2019 queen, Miss Madison Heiden



Luau fun in Hawaii



Here she is, our 2019 queen!



IWA family in Hawaii



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We are pleased to announce that **Enza Zaden** recently started a watermelon breeding program. Red Opal, Red Garnet and Red Amber round out the trio of currently available Enza Zaden varieties that are together establishing the company's position as a **flavor and overall innovation partner** in commercial watermelons.

Agriculture requires a long-term vision. As a **family business** we tend to think in generations rather than in quarterly figures. Enza Zaden is your **hands-on partner** delivering innovative solutions through meticulous, **non-GMO seed breeding**.

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Mar-Del Report

They always say time flies when you are having fun. We can not believe watermelon season is quickly approaching once again! Our 2018 promotion year was a success! Queen Gabby was able to represent the Mar-Del Watermelon Association at a couple end of year promotions. She attended the Delaware and Maryland Agriculture dinners. It is always rewarding to see the strong presence of the department of agriculture in both Maryland and Delaware. Queen Gabby was also able to attend the Florida and Alabama watermelon conventions. We always enjoy spending a weekend with our watermelon family!

Mar-Del Watermelon Association kicked off their annual convention weekend with a Blue Jean and Diamond theme! It was a successful weekend and we always enjoy hosting our convention in Cambridge, Maryland. We wished Queen Gabby the best of luck at Nationals and thanked her for doing a wonderful job as the 2018 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen. Gabby did her last walk as the Mar-Del Queen before crowning our 2019 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen, Miss Summer Thomas.

Queen Gabby headed off to warmer weather and the National Watermelon Convention in beautiful Hawaii. She did an awesome job competing and representing the Mar-Del Watermelon Association. Gabby placed as first runner! We are so proud of Gabby! A big congratulations to the 2018 North Carolina Watermelon Queen and the new 2019 National Watermelon Queen, Katie Honeycutt!

Mar-Del Watermelon Association is gearing up for another promotion year and watermelon season. We wish everyone the best of luck and we are looking forward to a successful year with our 2019 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen, Summer Thomas.



Queen Gabby with other state queens during the Florida Watermelon Association auction.



Always a great time at the Alabama Watermelon Convention.



Delaware Agriculture Dinner this way! Queen Gabby was proud to represent Delaware Agriculture throughout her year.



Queen Gabby supporting Alabama Queen, Sara Jane during her convention.



Gabby enjoyed seeing some of our Mar-Del members at the Delaware Ag dinner.



Beautiful girls ready to watch a beautiful sunset in Hawaii.



Gabby welcoming 2019 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen, Summer Thomas into her new role!



Beautiful girls ready to watch a beautiful sunset in Hawaii.



Maryland Ag dinner was a success!



Queen Gabby ready for the 2019 National Watermelon Convention



Queen Gabby and Delaware Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Kenny Bounds at the Maryland Ag Dinner.



Queen Gabby ready for evening wear at the Saturday night final banquet of National Convention.



Great turn out from our Mar-Del members at the Maryland Ag dinner.



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# North Carolina Report

What a fun year it has been for the NC Watermelon Queen Miss Katie Honeycutt. Katie was the perfect watermelon ambassador and we would like to thank her for her dedication this season. Always happy to be promoting watermelons no matter the time or place. We must also congratulate Queen Katie for being selected as the 2019 National Watermelon Queen in the NWA Queen Pageant in Hawaii. This opportunity will allow Katie another year to spread the watermelon message. We know she will be an excellent ambassador for nationals just like she was for North Carolina. Katie wanted an opportunity to say thank you to the North Carolina Watermelon Association and all of her supporters this year.

----- **Watermelon Letter from Queen Katie:**

Dear North Carolina Watermelon Association,

Thank you for one of the best years of my life! This year has been full of learning, advocating, fun, and watermelon. I have so much to be grateful for when I reflect on this year.

During each of my travels and events, I was overwhelmed with the hospitality and love shown to me across the state of North Carolina. I have participated in watermelon festivals, TV promotions, in-store promotions, farm visits, farmers markets, out-of-state promotions, and so much more! I have learned so much about watermelons through my talks with farmers, consumers, and industry professionals.

Thank you to everyone for your willingness to answer my questions and teach me. I am thankful for the unique experiences I have had to promote my favorite fruit across the state and nation. It has been an immense pleasure to serve this association. I am so blessed to have found a platform that combines my love for people, agriculture, and service.

I cannot wait to see where my passion for watermelon and agriculture leads me while I serve as the 2019 National Watermelon Queen. I look forward to this wonderful opportunity to meet more people and see more places while teaching everyone about watermelons. .

Thank you,  
Katie Honeycutt

-----

Be sure to check out our next article for scenes from the 38th Annual NCWA Convention.

Sharon Rogers  
Promotions Coordinator 336-583-9630  
ncwatermelonqueen@gmail.com



Queen Katie at the Southeast Fruit & Vegetable Expo



Katie at the NWA Convention auction



Eleanor, Queen Savannah and Katie at the SC Watermelon Association Convention



NCWA Vice President Frank Howell and Lynette present Queen Katie a watermelon necklace and earrings for her year of service to the NCWA.



Queen Katie and newly crowned 2019 SC Watermelon Queen Courtney Kubu at the SC Watermelon Association Convention



Katie looked great in her promotion wear outfit at the NWA Convention



Queen Katie checking out the future locations for the NWA Convention



2018 National Queen Savannah Christensen and NWA first vice president John Gee present Queen Katie the 2019 National Watermelon Queen title.



Queen Katie and her parents Barry & Joanne Honeycutt all ready for the luau at the NWA Convention.



2019 National Watermelon Queen Pageant, first runner-up Gabrielle Hastings, Queen Katie Honeycutt and second runner-up Sarah Jane Levine



Queen Katie really enjoyed meeting convention guest and sharing the beautiful leis at the NWA Convention Luau.



NCWA members congratulate Queen Katie at the NWA Convention.



Queen Katie and her sister Queens getting ready for the authentic Hawaiian Luau



Past National Queens welcome Katie to the watermelon family.



All the state Queen's looking forward to the seed spit competition.



2019 National Watermelon Queen Katie and Major Ed Pulido at the NWA Convention



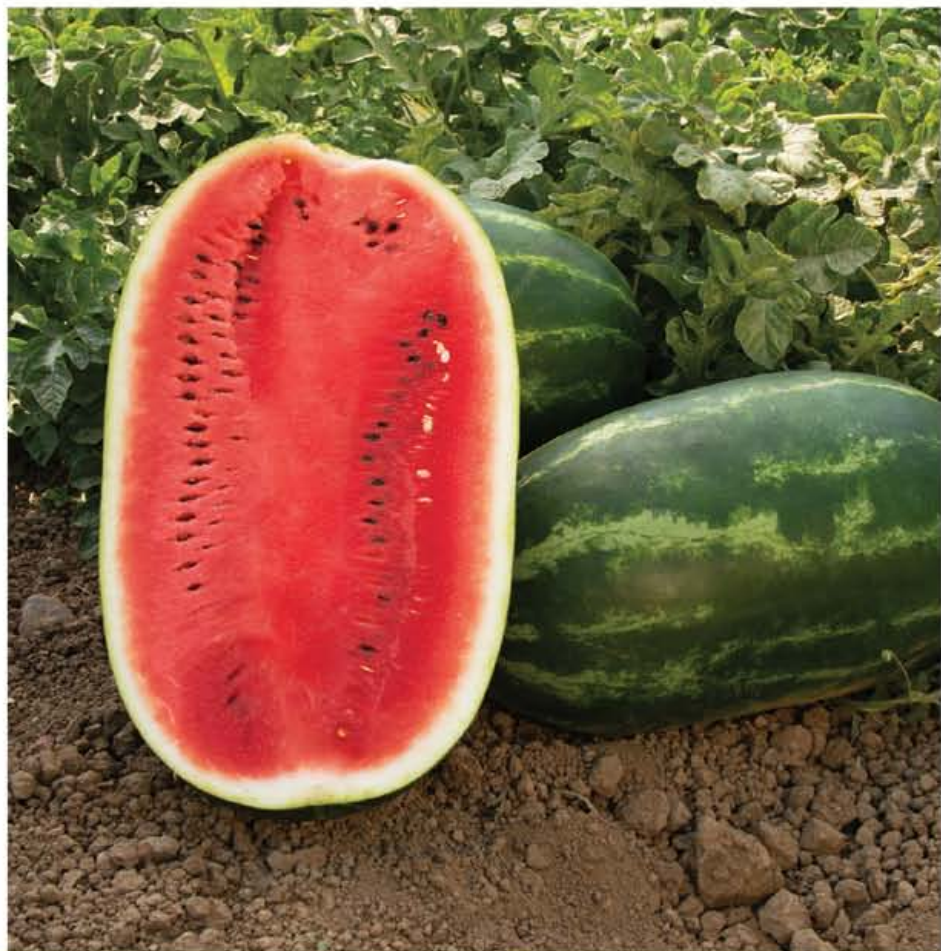
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# South Carolina Report

The South Carolina Watermelon Association would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new 2019 SCWQ, Miss Courtney Kubu. Courtney is the 20 year old daughter of Stacy and Jeff Kubu of Anderson. She attends Clemson University where she is a sophomore majoring in Business and Communications.

After being crowned, Courtney attended the Georgia Convention in Amelia Island, Georgia, and the Gulf States Convention in Biloxi, Mississippi. She will be attending the North Carolina Convention in Wrightsville Beach on March 1-2, where she will be happy to see and visit with the new National Queen, Katie Honeycutt.

On St. Patrick’s Day, Courtney will be riding in the Shamrock Parade organized by the Lexington County Blowfish Baseball Team. This will be the first time that the SC Queen has participated in this event and it is an added building block to the SC Watermelon Association’s relationship with this professional ball team.

The Cooper River Bridge Run will be held on April 4-7, with the Harris Teeter Expo on April 5 th and the Race on April 6th. State Queens will be in attendance along with the NWPB members to help with this large event in Charleston, South Carolina with over 40,000 runners participating.

Queen Training will be held on the weekend of April 12-14 in Atlanta, Georgia.

As May approaches, our calendar is filling up with schools requesting cuttings for their field days as well as other school functions. We are looking forward to another busy and productive year with our watermelon promotions.

Sincerely,

Ann Bryant  
SC Promotions Coordinator  
Abryant028@charter.net  
864-303-3995



2019 SCWQ, Miss Courtney Kubu



Visiting with a sweet admirer at the Georgia Convention.



Courtney with Mr.& Mrs. Jimmy Plunkett.



Queens having fun.



Courtney with her proud parents, Stacy & Jeff Kubu.



Singing along with Paul Sawyer.



SCWA Board with new queen.



Welcome to the Gulf Coast Convention.



Courtney enjoys St. Simons Island, Georgia.



Thanking Cheryl Hicks for the beautiful gift.



Taking in the warm sunshine at St. Simons.



Beautiful ladies at the Beau Rivage.



Welcome to the Georgia Convention.



Crowning of new Gulf Coast Queen, Taylor Skipper.



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# Why Should You Join the NWA?

You may ask yourself (and you should), Why Should I Join the National Watermelon Association? Great question, and here are some thoughts that may help you to say ‘Yes’:

## Federal Public Policy:

- Immigration - - From hearings about border security to DACA to migrant detentions, and bills that are discussed in committees and make it to the floor for votes; this top priority is our #1 priority to move toward a viable guest worker program.
- Health Care - - it affects your business and your family, and we are covering the debates, the discussions, and potential changes.
- Trucking - - with the electronic logging device ruling and Hours-of-Service requirements, we remain engaged with the FMCSA and petitions to adjust the rulings to help our industry.
- Diligence - - There are so many more areas that our government can and sometimes does get involved that can affect your business and livelihoods. Rest assured that the NWA is on top of them (all).

## Food Safety

- Audit Requirements - - this one area alone is worth the price of your membership. Our watermelon food safety guidance (available only to our members) is a vital key to being able to pass an audit. You can possibly save \$1000s by adopting our guidance.
- FDA Guidance - - As the FDA issues guidance from the Food Safety law (FSMA), the NWA is engaged with feedback and input to make the guidance adapt to our industry.
- Food Safety is S.O.P. - - As food safety (and audits) have become standard operating procedures of your business, it is vital that NWA communicates the latest information to our members.

## Research (farm)

- Research Grants - - For over a decade the NWA has awarded research grants to universities and USDA labs/farms to seek solutions to the major pest & diseases pressures in our industry.
- Research Results - - The results of countless projects are available to our members-only through our website, [www.watermelon.ag](http://www.watermelon.ag).
- Training - - There are training videos & materials of various farm functions posted on our website for our members’ benefit.

## Communications

- The Vineline - - our quarterly magazine is a highlight for our members, and features the watermelon queens and their numerous promotions of watermelons across America (and Canada).
- Off The Vine - - this weekly e-newsletter is our opportunity to share timely news here and now that may be vital to your business.



- The Slice - - the monthly e-blast is an opportunity to provide an update to our members of what is happening at the NWA.
- [www.Watermelon.Ag](http://www.Watermelon.Ag) - - this is our members’ website, and a place to gather key details about the NWA while standing as a portal to represent all that we are and do for our stakeholders.

So, did we answer your question? We believe that we do every day. Being diligent; staying committed; remaining aware; seeking guidance; providing leadership; and being true to our members (our

family) is all that we are about. We hope that you will join us and be part of the solution. Let’s get to work and do this (together)!



# Member Benefits

- Access to an expert staff that can provide support and guidance on public advocacy, food safety, traceability, audits, trucking, legal referrals and member engagement.
- Representation year-round in Washington, D.C. to address the issues that can affect your business and livelihood with rules, regulations, legislation and federal law.
- Engage with your U.S. Representatives and Senators through our federal government relations program on the issues that are important to your business.
- Participation and input within various committees and working groups that provide leadership, direction and recommendations on key initiatives of the association.

- Member-only access to the National Watermelon Association’s website including:
    - o Membership lists
    - o Farm research (results from NWA research grants)
    - o Food safety resources & program
    - o Educational tools
  - Choice to participate in two partnership programs that provide benefits to the association - - CHEP Pallets and Allen Lund Trucking.
  - Complimentary online subscriptions to our member only magazine - The Vineline, our weekly e-newsletter - Off The Vine, and our monthly update - The Slice.
  - Preferred (discounted) rates to the annual National Watermelon Association convention.
  - Exclusive eligibility for you, your family and/or employees for nomination and/or recognition programs such as the Future Watermelon Farm Leaders and Hall of Fame.
  - Involvement with our promotions program through National Watermelon Queen events.
- Join Today, and be part of the association that is constantly seeking to advance and address the issues that may affect your business and livelihood.

# Your Opportunity is Here and Now

The National Watermelon Association has been serving members since our humble beginnings in early 1914. With a focused dedication on the watermelon crop, we work hard to make a positive difference in the livelihoods of our members each and every day.

We have accomplished much across the years, and the path that we have crafted for the future is bright and opportunistic. But we know that we cannot rest on past successes and let our guard down. We’ve got more work to do, and we are prepared to do it. Staying ahead of and being aware of the issues are vital to making that positive difference become a reality.

From federal public policy & government relations, farm research, food safety & traceability, transportation & shipping, and so much more ..... we serve with the best of intentions. Our concentration on the watermelon crop alone allows us to be laser-focused on our members’ needs and the issues that affect you the most.

Our focus is to help you to assure that your children and grandchildren can inherit the family business that will be even stronger than the one that you run today.

With your help, I’m confident that we will. Sign up today and begin to make the National Watermelon Association your own. We’d love to have you in our family. Allow us to get to work to make that difference for you too! Thank you very much.

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# Texas Report

Aloha from Texas!

Of course that greeting is because Hannah and I recently got back from Hawaii and the 2019 National Watermelon Association Convention in beautiful Kona. We had a terrific time and it was kicked off with a wonderful luau with great dancers and food. Queen Hannah and I got to connect with people we hadn't seen much this year so that was also a treat. All of the contestants began the competition on Friday with their speeches and promotion wear. During this time we also heard from Major Ed Pulido who was an inspiration to everyone who heard his story. Later that afternoon the queens took part in the seed spit and then helped out with the very successful auction. On Saturday the contestants had their interviews with the judges, their on camera interviews, and the written portion of the judging. Judging must have been difficult because the candidates were all beautiful, charming and intelligent. Saturday evening was the final banquet and the queen contestants looked spectacular in their evening gowns. Before the big announcement was made our Hannah was chosen by the other contestants as Miss Jubilee and all who know her were very pleased because she is such a deserving young lady. When the winner was announced, the 2019 National Watermelon Queen was the lovely Miss Katie Honeycutt of North Carolina. Best wishes to Katie for an awesome year ahead.

As a conclusion to this year, Hannah was asked to give some parting thoughts and here is what she said:

“During my past year of reign as the 2018 Texas Watermelon Queen, I was given an abundance of great opportunities in representing the Texas Watermelon Association in in-store promotions, festivals, farm tours, school events and even running events. To list my “favorite” events would be near impossible because each event had its own unique experience that left a memory of a lifetime. I have loved every minute of sharing watermelons and judging family fun watermelon events at the What-A-Melon Festival in Center, Texas; helping consumers pick out the perfect watermelon in in-store promotions at many Texas grocery stores and in Canada; educating students at school events about the benefits of watermelon; congratulating the Marine Corps Marathon runners in D.C. with a slice of watermelon at the finish line; helping host multiple eating contests, one being in Lubbock, Texas for the Texas Food Bank Drive; to being welcomed on the farm to experience where the watermelon production happens at Nowell Borders’ farm and the Wiggins’ farm. All of these fantastic events would not have been possible without Warren Produce, Nowell Borders Companies and Wiggins Wholesale as my main sponsors but I would also like to mention Watermelons Unlimited, Wiggins Farms, the National Watermelon Promotion Board, and the Texas Watermelon Association. This opportunity of a lifetime has been a true blessing. Being able to represent not only an amazing association but even greater people not only made my job easy and joyful but inspired me to do absolutely everything I could for each one of them. I love watermelons but I grew to love the people and industry far more. Being the 2018 Texas Watermelon Queen has inspired me to always work hard for what you believe in, love and care for others deeply, and ALWAYS strive to achieve what some may think is near impossible.”

I have loved spending time with Hannah. She is sweet, hard-working and always adaptable. I wish her all the best of God's blessings, and I wish all of you the same.

Best regards,  
Barbara Duda TWA Coordinator  
bcduda62@gmail.com



Hannah and a beautiful display of watermelons and flowers



Calmly waiting for the promotion wear and interviews



Hannah and the other state queens with some of the terrific Hawaiian dancers



Finally, the evening gown competition



TWA members, Gerry Lozano and Robert Arriaga receive their leis from Hannah.



Stunning young ladies



Jesse Wiggins can't help but smile when surrounded by beautiful ladies.



Hannah receives the "Miss Jubilee" award.



Ready for the speeches



Some of the TWA contingent



And the winner is Miss Katie Honeycutt of North Carolina.



Another try at a seed spit contest



Hannah and the proud Texas crew



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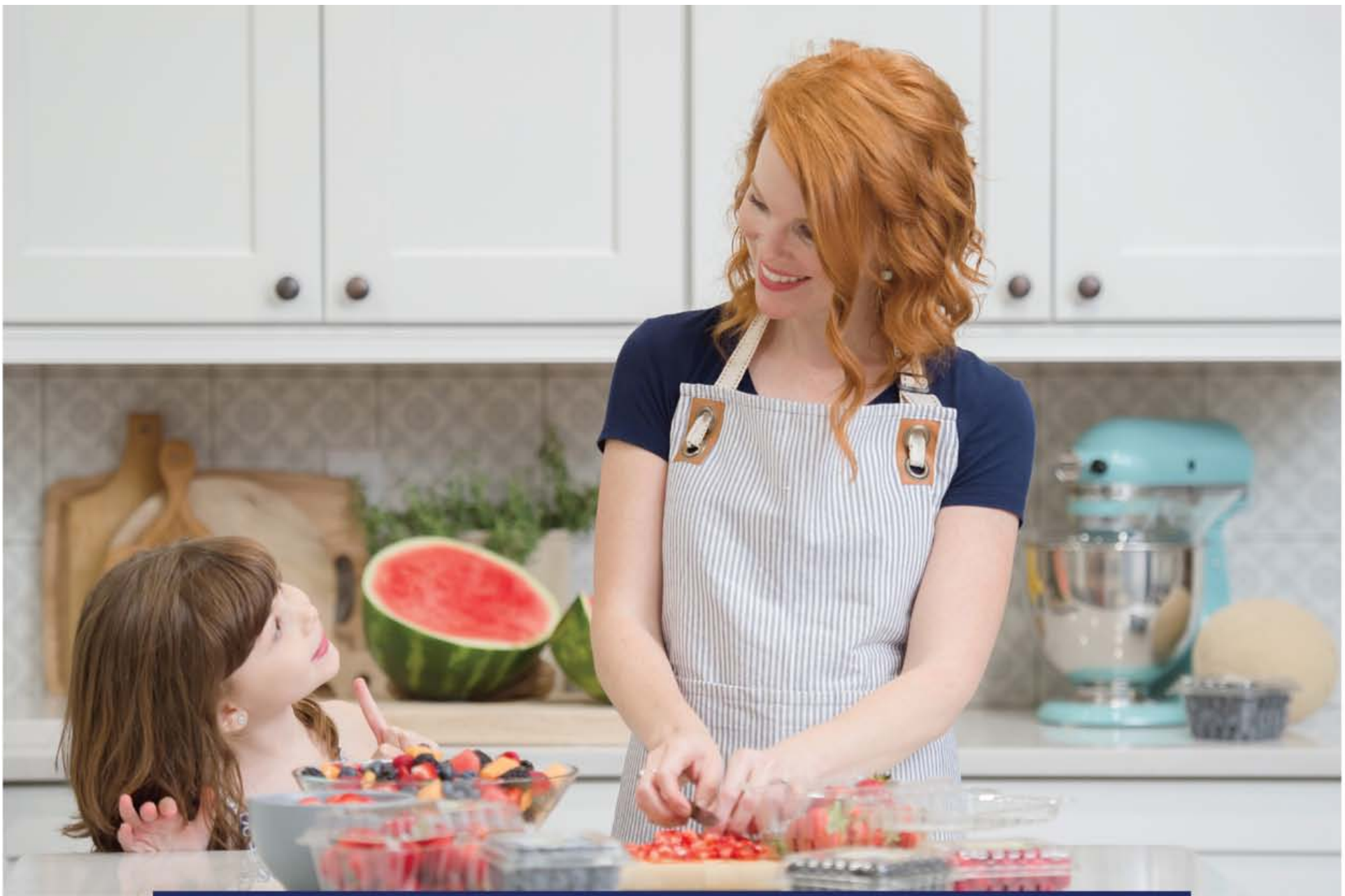












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## Western Report



Spring is in the air out here in the West and we are very excited for the upcoming watermelon season! We kicked off our year with our annual Western Watermelon Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada in January. The convention was well attended and was an overall positive experience for growers, shippers and members of the industry. A big thank you Tashi Zouras for putting on another great event and to everyone that participated this year!

We hope that everyone had a great time that traveled to Hawaii for the National Convention, we always love to see representation from the West Coast! A big thank you to the NWA for hosting such an amazing event year after year.

We are anticipating the 2018 domestic season to be a positive one. We are receiving much needed rainfall out here in the west, helping with ongoing water supply issues. Domestic fruit will be available starting in May, with a steady supply out of the desert regions, and our growers down in Mexico still going strong. Markets have been high with prices reaching upward to .30/lb. out of the Nogales region. We are anticipating a steady market throughout the season with strong demand.

With summer right around the corner, we are excited to get our delicious fruit into the hands of watermelon lovers everywhere! Cheers to everyone having a successful and prosperous watermelon season!

Sincerely,

Danielle Ratto

Western Watermelon Association

[Danieller@vgandsons.com](mailto:Danieller@vgandsons.com)

For more information on the Western Watermelon Association, be sure to check out our website at: [www.westernwatermelon.org](http://www.westernwatermelon.org) and



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# CONVENTION SPEAKERS



# GOLF TOURNAMENT







# Syngenta Donation to Support Regional Watermelon Queen Program

In 2018, Syngenta did something through its Full Count plant program that no other transplant program provider has done: it shipped its billionth watermelon transplant. To commemorate the milestone, Syngenta announced that it has donated \$10,000 to the National Watermelon Association. Syngenta is a major sponsor and supporter of the NWA and its national convention each year.

Dean Liere, Syngenta regional portfolio manager, presented the donation check to NWA at the 2019 annual convention in Waikoloa, HI. The donation will be allocated to regional watermelon associations to fund public outreach via their watermelon queen programs.



Dean Liere, regional portfolio manager at Syngenta, presented John Gee, vice president of the National Watermelon Association, with a \$10,000 donation to the NWA state watermelon queen program. The donation commemorates the shipment of the billionth Full Count watermelon transplant.

Since its inception in 2002, the Full Count plant program has provided watermelon growers with quality, reliable transplants that can take the guesswork out of planting. First of its kind in the industry, the program continues to be a market-leading provider of transplants, with demand continuing to climb.

“The Full Count program revolutionized the watermelon transplant industry,” said Liere. “This program took away the challenges growers had buying seed and helped them be as responsive as possible to the needs of the market. At Syngenta, we take pride in breeding superior watermelon varieties. Through this program, we’ve been able to exceed market needs for both growers and consumers.”

This \$10,000 donation is one more way Syngenta is supporting the watermelon industry. Every year, the NWA

# War hero inspires NWA attendees

by John Groh | February 25, 2019

WAIKOLOA, HI — Faced with an uncertain future after an IED attack left him gravely injured, retired U.S. Army Major Ed Pulido summoned the strength and courage to turn a near-death experience into a call to action to help others.

Pulido was serving in Iraq in 2004, when a roadside bomb exploded, causing severe injuries to his leg and arm, as well as a traumatic brain injury. He was evacuated to Germany, and then Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC. There, doctors worked hard to make him whole, but despite their best efforts, they were unable to save his leg.

In a keynote presentation on Feb. 22 to attendees of the National Watermelon Association’s 105th annual convention, Pulido spoke of the experience and the path his life has taken since that day. Alternating between being humorous, serious and emotional, Pulido said he is proud of his new mission in life and wants nothing more than to help others.

“My leg was taken away, but I still have my spirit. I think when I received blood transfusions, I got some female blood because I cry and get emotional all the time,” he said with a laugh.

NWA Executive Director Bob Morrissey, who served as the interviewer of Pulido during the presentation, said he met Pulido five years ago and they felt an instant connection. “I am honored that he considers me a friend,” Morrissey told the audience.

Morrissey then asked Pulido about his thought process just after the attack.

“I saw the light come down on me when the medics were working on me, and I asked God for a second chance,” he said. “I was enlightened. It was at that point that I changed and decided that I needed to do things for others. Sometimes we look at things negatively, but we should realize that we are truly blessed. We need to be purposeful, respectful and honorable to each other and our country. We need more of that today.”

Morrissey asked Pulido how his message might translate to NWA members in their everyday lives and businesses.

crowns a national watermelon queen at the annual NWA Convention. At the regional level, watermelon chapters sponsor their own queens. The watermelon queens are public outreach ambassadors who travel across their regions to educate consumers about the nutritional benefits and economic value of watermelons.

“Our watermelon queen program is integral to our mission of educating the public about watermelon quality, safety and supply,” said Bob Morrissey, executive director of NWA. “We have enjoyed a long partnership with Syngenta and look forward to continuing to advance the watermelon industry together.”



Pulido suggested that everyone needs a guiding principle to follow in his or her lives and careers. “Mine is Mission First, Team Always,” he said. “We all need to cross the finish line. I tell young people that they need to be passionate about what they do in order to achieve success. You here are all obviously passionate, and it is amazing that [NWA] has 105 years of doing what you love.”

Asked by Morrissey what the nicest thing anyone has ever done for him, Pulido said, “When I was going through treatments, one of my therapists told me I needed help. Sometimes people can help you recognize what your failures are in order for you to overcome them. I got the help I needed, and I am thankful for that. Honesty is a very powerful thing.”

Morrissey then applauded Pulido for his ability to maintain a positive and constructive approach to life, saying, “After losing your leg, your life could have gone in a number of negative ways, such as substance abuse or depression, but you chose a positive route and are fighting for war veterans.”

“I don’t look at my situation as a disability,” replied Pulido. “It changed me and made me realize that you can’t give up on life. At the same time, you need to find a way to manage stress, because stress kills. Your industry has a lot of challenges, but you can never give up. You must always persevere.”

In closing the session, Morrissey announced a donation on behalf of NWA to support the military. “Major Ed, it is my honor, on behalf of the National Watermelon Association, that we announce our donation of \$45,000 to support your efforts with the military,” said Morrissey. “Your visit with us this morning inspired our attendees, caused eyes to well up, and was truly heartfelt. You are an American hero to us, and we are blessed that you shared your experience, time and military life with us.”

The National Watermelon Association would like to recognize and thank the following twenty-three member companies for supporting and contributing to the military support efforts of our keynote speaker, Major Ed Pulido. As we heard from major Ed, “Freedom is Not Free”, and you responded with love and support for that price that so many of our military and veterans have paid. We get to do what we do because of that freedom, and you are to be commended for your support.

Thanks go to these companies that make up this wonderful donation:

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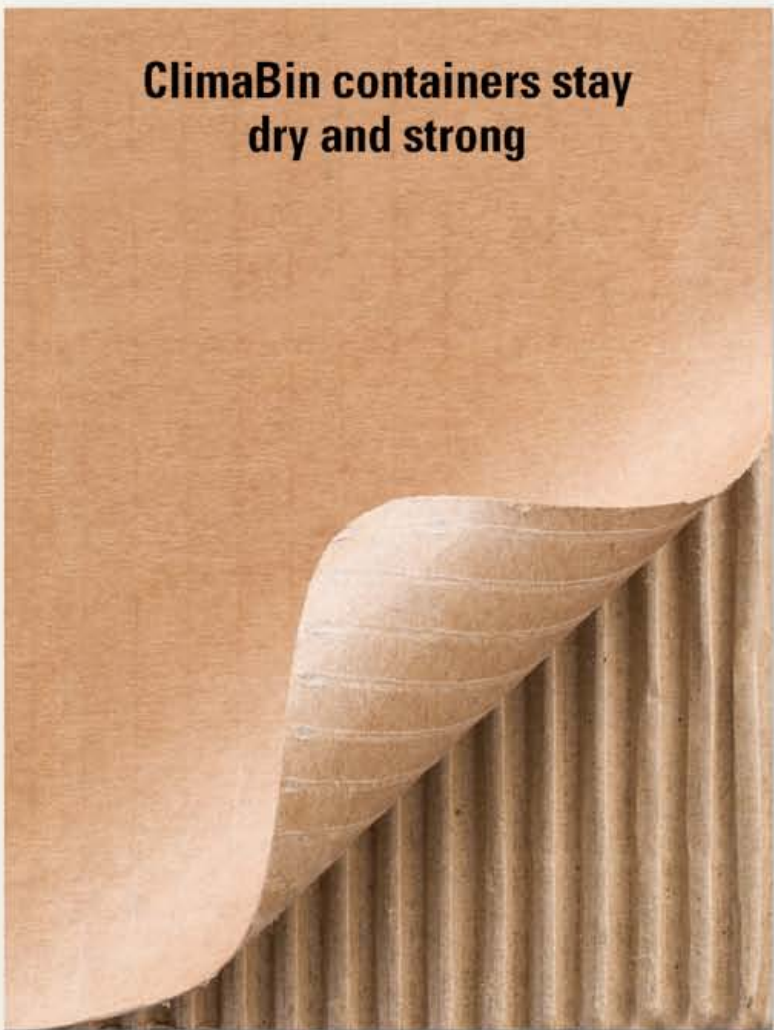


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