

the **vine**line Summer 2024

Official Newsletter of the NATIONAL WATERMELON ASSOCIATION



# CELEBRATING THE AMERICAN WATERMELON INDUSTRY



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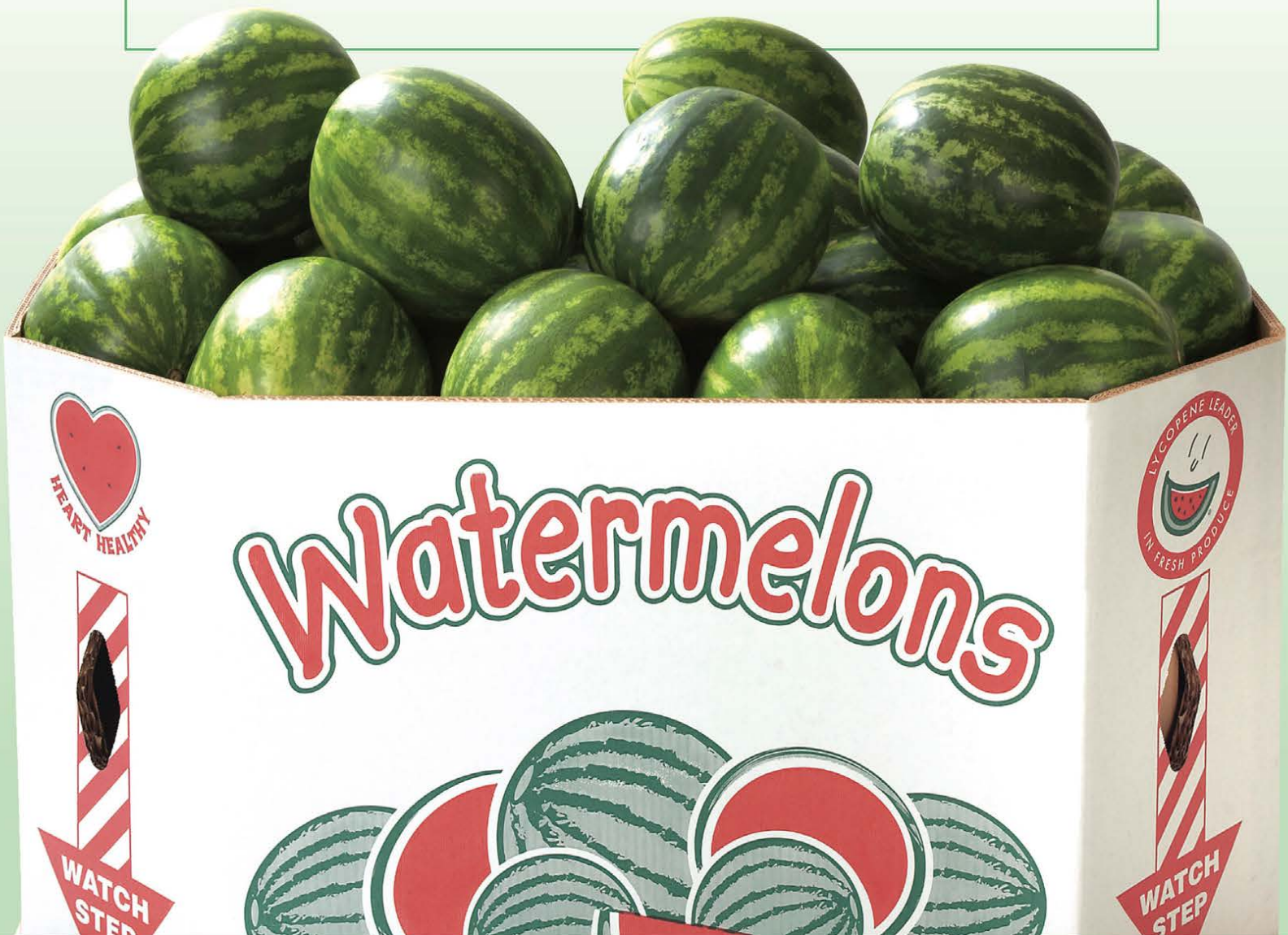
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Welcome to Summer, the busiest time of year for our growers, and the peak season for enjoying watermelon!

As the summer sun shines brightly, our fields are bustling with activity, and watermelons are making their way to family gatherings, picnics, and Fourth of July celebrations across the country. It's a season that truly embodies the joy and community spirit that watermelon brings to our lives.

In this issue of the Vineline, we have a wealth of exciting updates and stories to share with you. The National Watermelon Promotion Board is back with their highly anticipated retail merchandising contest and the "Simply Watermelon" campaign, both designed to boost consumer awareness and love for our favorite fruit.

On the research front, we're delving into the latest findings on Watermelon Crinkle Leaf Virus. Our commitment to supporting cutting-edge research continues to drive us forward in ensuring the health and productivity of our crops.

Policy and advocacy are always at the forefront of our efforts. Earlier this summer, we participated in the IFPA Washington Conference, where we brought together a coalition of watermelon industry leaders, attended educational sessions, and relayed our priorities in visits to congressional offices. We also hosted an activation as part of the Joy of Fresh event, sharing delicious watermelon slices and valuable information with congressional members and their staff. A significant focus was on Ag Labor issues, particularly addressing the challenges with the H2A visa program.

Of course, our watermelon queens remain a shining beacon of our industry. Their dedication and enthusiasm continue to inspire us all, and we are proud to feature their achievements and contributions in this edition. They were a highlight in DC, and continue to be our ambassadors throughout the country this season.

The cover of this magazine celebrates the pure joy that our watermelon community brings to consumers during this bustling season. It's a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in bringing watermelons from the field to the table.

We're proud to bring you this Summer edition of the Vineline. The staff (Monica, Tami, Kerri, and Queen Jules) and I are dedicated to supporting you and the watermelon industry, especially during this pivotal time of year. Thank you for being a part of this journey with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "GFS", is placed over a decorative background of watermelon slices and leaves.

George F. Szczepanski  
Executive Director  
National Watermelon Association



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# National Report

NWQ Jules has been in full swing promoting, educating, and “selling” watermelons since her reign began in beautiful Arizona.

Queen Jules first stop was to Holly Hill School. She was joined by GCWQ Tory where they read books and answered questions. Young consumers will be encouraging their parents to purchase watermelon all year long! Thank you to GCWA Promotions Coordinator, Sarah Jane Levine, for setting up this promotion. **Pic #1, #2**

NWQ Jules has made beautiful posts on her social media platforms, and they have received a lot of great interactions which keeps watermelon on everyone’s mind! **Pic #3, #4, #5**

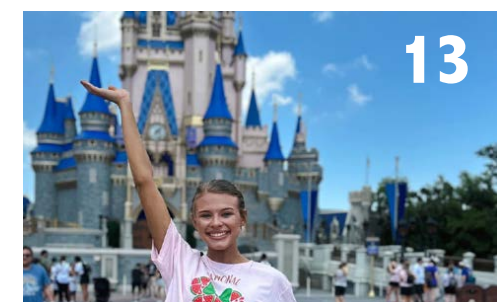
SCWA Promotions Coordinator, Ms. Ann Bryant, set up their association’s annual Cooper River Bridge Promotion. It began with a tour of the Charleston area and later NWQ Jules was joined by other state queens and distributed watermelons with Harris Teeter at an Expo for the marathon runners. They were interviewed by Rick Rush @ 103.5 WEZEL. The next day began by sharing a “slice of happy” with over 27K runners and spectators which totaled over more than 65,000 lbs. of fresh cut watermelon!

**Pics #6, #7, #8, #9, #10, #11**

Next on the agenda was a day spent at Walt Disney World with all NWQ Jules’s watermelon sisters. Many memories were made that they will carry with them all for a lifetime. **Pic #12, #13**

Our annual Queen Training was FULL of knowledge of all things watermelon. The NWPB staff always does a first-class job with this educational day for all the new queens by preparing them with professionalism and guidance for them to have a successful year as ambassadors for our industry. **Pic #14, #15**

*continued on page 7*



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# National Report

We were welcomed and hosted in Lakeland, FL by Mr. Steve and Mrs. Becky Nichols of Global Produce. While we were there, we toured the beautiful Lakeland area, learned so much of the town's history, laughed, ate, and of course, promoted watermelons! The 2nd Annual Bonnet Springs Watermelon Festival was a huge success where NWQ Jules and FWQ Elanie, distributed over 4,000 slices of fresh watermelon. We were accompanied by several of our NWA team members that helped us make the day a success. We also celebrated Mrs. Monica McCook's birthday! **Pic #16, #17, #18, #19**

Next, we saw the watermelon process from beginning to end. NWQ Jules promoted the sales and consumption of watermelon in two different locations of the well-known Publix grocery stores where we had a couple of special visitors/shoppers. At the end of the day she visited the watermelon packing facility, courtesy of Veg-King International, where we all were able to get an inside look at their watermelon process. Without these special grower stories our jobs would not be possible! A special thank you to Ms. Debra Harrison, FWA Promotions Coordinator, for making this promotion possible. **Pics #20, #21, #22**


Florida Grower Tours continued while we visited Turner Farms, Kids Choice, Melon 1, Par-Ley Produce, LLC, Farm-Wey, T Smith Farms, Terry Parrish Farm and Raymond J Land Watermelon Sales. We enjoyed these visits so much and treasured each conversation! The FWQ and NWQ got to join Ross Chastain along with Chef Justin from Fresh from Florida as they filmed footage for their cooking segment that features watermelon. **Pics #23, #24, #25, #26, #27, #28, #29, #30, #31, #32**

*continued on page 9*



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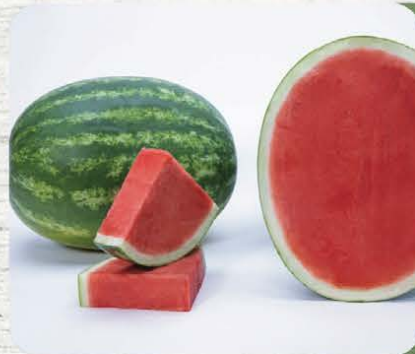
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# Repeat The Reward



# National Pictures

As our Florida Tour continued, we were excited to be invited to the Enza Zaden Field Day to become more educated to better help the queens educate consumers. We are so appreciative of their support of our promotions program. We were joined that day by our great friends at Seedway and we are grateful for their support, as well. **Pics #33, #34, #35**

We moved forward on our Florida Tour and visited several schools along the way of some of our association members and their children. We began with Treasure Coast Classical Academy where Mrs. Heather Raulerson's youngest son, Emmett, attends. The queens read books to the students, planted watermelon seeds for all the students, and taught the farm to table process. Next, we visited the Anderson Elementary School, where we had the privilege of serving watermelon slices to over 400 elementary school students. Thanks for the help and sponsorship from Mr. and Mrs. Trey Smith for making this visit possible. The last school visit was with sweet Mrs. Carrie Thomas and her beautiful daughter, Miss Ashlee Thomas with Diamond 99 Watermelon Sales. While at the Bell Elementary School NWQ Jules had the opportunity to speak with the entire 3rd grade where a story was read, questions were answered, and a slice of happiness was shared! A very special thank you to The Smith family for their unbelievable hospitality while we were in the Trenton and Bell area. **Pics #36, #37, #38, #39, #40, #41**

The next trip marked the beginning of our Texas adventure. The queens went straight from the airport to the HEB grocery store where NWQ and the TWQ jumped straight into action. They assisted customers in selecting the best watermelons, handed out stickers and coloring books, along with recipe cards to families eager to try new dishes that contained watermelon. **Pics #42, #43, #44**

*continued on page 11*





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# National Pictures

Texas Day 2 was filled with six wonderful visits through deep south Texas. The first stop was with Wiggins Farms and Jesse Wiggins Farms, next Mr. Will Beckwith with Beckwith Produce, Ben Hill was after that with Rio Fresh. On to see Colton Neuhaus with Neuhaus & Sons, Mr. Jack and Mr. Jackson Wallace with JW Farms, Mr. John Prukop with Prukop Farms and finally was the Borders family where Mr. Dalton, Mr. Kelton and Mrs. Ranell Borders allowed us to sample one of their watermelons and allowed the queens to participate in the harvest of their watermelons. Mr. Wayne Willoughby was able to join us, as well. **Pics #45, #46, #47, #48, #49, #50, #51**

On our final day of our Rio Grande Valley Texas Tour there were packing shed visits, grower tours, IFPA Conference and retail store promotions! The first stop on the agenda was to visit Mr. Eddie Vasquez of Farmer's Marketing Service, a multigenerational farm operation. Next was a visit with Mr. Darren and Mr. Jesse Wiggins packing shed operation, the queens and coordinators got hands on experience and Mr. Jesse explained the critical labeling process for each bin for food safety requirements. Our third stop was with Mr. Gerry Lozano at Sandia Depot, Mr. Chip and Mrs. Kim Berry were next at Chip Berry Produce, then Mr. Greg Lothringer with Lothringer Family Farms where the queens saw another crucial step in growing delicious watermelons. IFPA Q & A Panel discussion where key industry topics such as H2A/ Labor, the Farm Bill, and Food Safety were the topics of the discussion. Our final stop of the evening was to Sprouts Grocery Store, there the queens' educated consumers about watermelons, pass out samples and delight kids with coloring pages and stickers. As with all retail visits it is a pleasure for the queens and coordinators alike to share the farmer's stories. A special thank you to Mrs. Barbara Duda for her help and hospitality in making this tour possible. **Pics #52, #53, #54, #55, #56, #57, #58, #59, #60, #61, #62, #63, #64**

As we conclude this article, we want to thank each friend and sponsor for everything you do to help make this program possible! The monetary donations, the meals, the hospitality and all the kind and encouraging words along the way AND all the knowledge you share with the coordinators and queens never goes unnoticed. Have a blessed season everyone!

Sincerely,  
 Kerri Lee Wiggins





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# Vinline *NWPB News*

## NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES

Each year the Board strives to increase the demand for watermelon through research, education and promotion. Here are some ways the tools and resources can be utilized by the industry. Be sure to read the monthly Watermelon Update to take advantage of your resources.



### “SIMPLY WATERMELON” CAMPAIGN

The “Simply Watermelon” campaign by the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) for 2024 focuses on positioning watermelon as a convenient and versatile kitchen staple. This campaign aims to ensure watermelon becomes a regular feature on weekly grocery lists by highlighting its simplicity and versatility. The key messaging emphasizes that watermelon is easy to enjoy in various forms—whether sliced, diced, blended, or frozen. By showcasing watermelon as a simple, delicious, and craveable fruit, the campaign intends to drive consumer interest and demand. Visuals of big bowls of juicy watermelon chunks and glasses of refreshing juice will be used to attract attention, supported by recipes with short, easy-to-follow ingredient lists.

### WATERMELON RETAIL MERCHANDISING CONTEST

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) is inviting entries for its 16th annual Watermelon Retail Merchandising Contest. Retail chains, independent retailers, and commissaries can compete for over \$10,000 in cash and prizes, including a grand prize of \$5,000. Second and third place winners will receive \$2,500 and \$1,000, respectively, with \$500 for three honorable mentions. The contest begins this month (June), earlier than in previous years to capture the early summer market, and the first 25 entries will get a \$15 gift card as an early bird incentive.



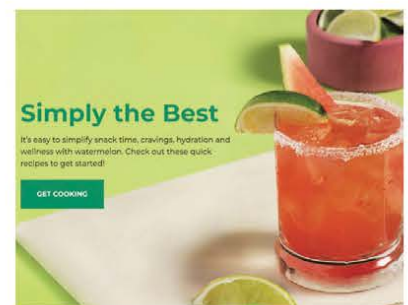
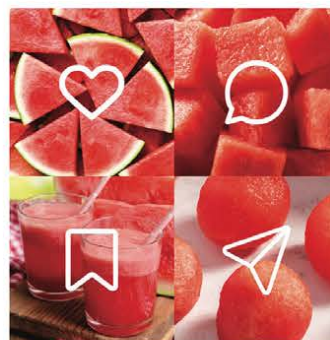
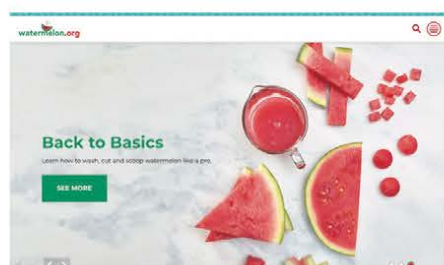
For industry members, this campaign provides a wealth of resources to leverage in their own marketing efforts. The campaign includes 24 new recipes and vertical recipe videos featuring five or fewer ingredients, which can be repurposed across digital channels. Additional promotional strategies involve podcast ads and sweepstakes on iHeart podcasts from June through August, as well as partner content on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. The campaign also highlights the nutritional benefits, value, and sustainability of watermelon, making it an appealing choice for consumers. By utilizing these resources, industry members can effectively reach consumers and enhance their marketing efforts to promote watermelon as a simple, delicious, and essential part of a healthy lifestyle.

This year, the NWPB continues its collaboration with Tajín®. The first 100 entries featuring watermelon and Tajín® seasoning in displays or marketing efforts will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card. This partnership enhances the contest’s appeal and offers a unique cross-merchandising opportunity.

Encourage your customers to sign up for this beneficial watermelon merchandising opportunity.

### WATERMELON.ORG: YOUR 24/7 RESOURCE!

In addition to these timely opportunities we encourage the industry to take advantage of all the tools and resources found at watermelon.org. From recipes to foodservice cutting and yield, these resources can be used with new and existing customers every day. Please be sure to check back regularly for new research; 18-34 Age Group Consumer Research, the weekly Watermelon Market Report and Retail Ad Tracking, and monthly Scan Data Reports can help inform your business decisions.



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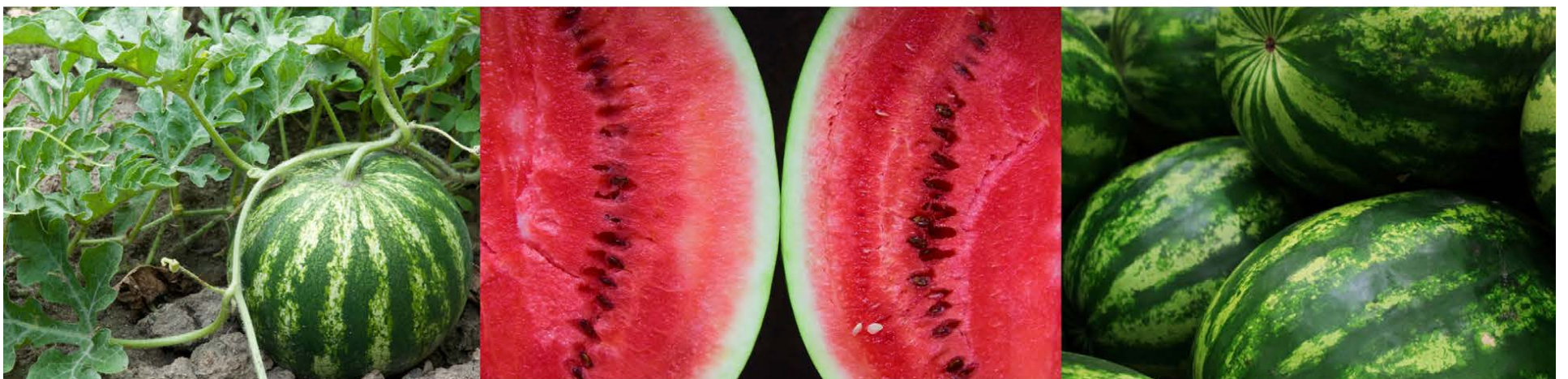
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# Vinline Research News

## Watermelon Crinkle Leaf Associate Virus 1 and 2 are Emerging and Widespread in Georgia.

**Sudeep Bag**

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**Theodore Mcavoy**

Department of Horticulture, University of Georgia, Tifton GA, 31793  
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Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) is an important crop in Georgia, with a farm value of \$142 million, according to the 2022 Farm Gate Value Report. Two new viruses, watermelon crinkle leaf-associated virus 1 (WCLaV-1) and 2 (WCLaV-2), have been recently observed and identified in Georgia watermelon fields. First reported in China (2017), these viruses belong to the genus *Coguvirus* in the *Phenuiviridae* family and have since been reported in multiple countries including Australia (2022), Brazil (2022), and the USA [Texas (2021), Florida (2022), Georgia (2022), and Oklahoma (2023)]. While these viruses mainly affect watermelons, they have also been found in yellow squash in Florida. They often appear together, but WCLaV-1 is more prevalent.



Watermelon plants exhibiting yellow mottling, chlorosis, wrinkling, bunching, and upward curling observed in the fall of 2023, on Watermelon trials in Tifton GA.

Symptoms of these viruses, observed in commercial watermelon farms and open fields, include yellow mottling, chlorosis, bunchy and upward curling leaves, crinkling, mosaic patterns, and stunted growth (Figure). Insect vectors for these viruses are currently unknown. Limited information is available on mechanical transmission and further studies are needed to reveal the transmission mode fully. In controlled environmental conditions, plants infected with WCLaV-1 alone exhibit crinkling and mosaic patterns in China. In Australia, symptoms include subtle leaf bubbling, leaf distortion near the petiole, and vein breaking. The study also suggests that the susceptibility to WCLaV-1 may differ among watermelon cultivars. Because these symptoms can vary due to mixed infection with other viruses in commercial open field production, molecular tests are necessary to confirm the presence of these viruses.

With stakeholders' support, researchers at the University of Georgia's Tifton Campus are studying the spread and biology of these viruses. In the fall of 2023, symptoms including yellow mottling, chlorosis, wrinkling, bunching, and upward curling were observed in watermelon plants in experimental and commercial fields in Tift and Colquitt counties. The disease incidence was 100% in both locations. Using molecular assays, the team identified WCLaV-1 and WCLaV-2 in these samples. Other whitefly-transmitted viruses previously reported in Georgia were also detected including cucurbit chlorotic yellows virus (CCYV), cucurbit yellow stunting disorder virus (CYSDV), and squash vein yellowing virus (SqVYV). Limited information is available about the biology and transmission of WCLaV-1 and WCLaV-2. With the support of the National Watermelon Association and Georgia Watermelon Association, research is ongoing to understand their impact on watermelon production and yield in Georgia. For further updated information, please visit the websites listed below.

Additional resources:

<https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-11-21-2521-PDN>

<https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-01-24-0161-PDN>

<https://ecucurbitviruses.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/WaCLaV-May-2023.pdf>

<https://apsjournals.apsnet.org/doi/epdf/10.1094/PHP-02-23-0014-S>



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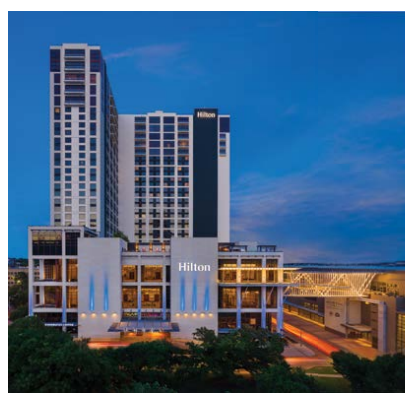
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# Vinline *Public Policy*

## NWA Shines at IFPA's Washington Conference: Advocating for the Future of the Watermelon Industry

The National Watermelon Association (NWA) proudly participated in the International Fresh Produce Association's (IFPA) Washington Conference, held in Washington, D.C., from June 10-12. This premier event brought together all segments of the fresh produce and floral industry to address the most pressing public policy matters with the U.S. Congress and Administration. The NWA's presence was both impactful and memorable, as we joined forces with other industry leaders to advocate for the issues that matter most to our members.



### Uniting Watermelon Industry Leaders

NWA's delegation to the Washington Conference was a robust coalition of watermelon industry leaders from various regions. Our team included growers, shippers, and suppliers, all united by a common goal: to ensure the continued growth and success of the watermelon industry. By participating in this influential event, we demonstrated our commitment to addressing the legislative, regulatory, and political challenges facing our industry.

### Engaging in Education Sessions and Coalition Meetings

Throughout the conference, our delegates attended numerous education sessions and coalition meetings. These sessions provided valuable insights into the latest policy developments and offered opportunities to network with key policymakers and industry experts. Armed with this information, we were well-prepared to relay our priorities during visits to congressional offices. Our primary focus was on advocating for labor and workforce reforms, better nutrition and increased consumption, and modernizing the Farm Bill and agriculture policy.

### Highlighting the Role of Watermelon Queens

One of the unique aspects of NWA's participation was the inclusion of our state and national watermelon queens. These ambassadors for the watermelon industry played a vital role in our advocacy efforts. Their presence added a personal touch to our interactions with lawmakers and their staff, helping to humanize the issues we discussed. The queens' enthusiasm and knowledge about the industry were invaluable assets during our Congressional Meetings on Capitol Hill.



### Joy of Fresh Activation: A Sweet Success

A highlight of our participation was the Joy of Fresh event, where we hosted an activation that captured the essence of our industry. We set up a vibrant display in the courtyard of the Rayburn House Office Building, offering slices of watermelon to congressional members and their staff. This gesture was more than just a tasty treat; it was an opportunity to engage with lawmakers and their staff on a personal level and share information about our industry's priorities. We provided follow-up materials on how to learn more about our issues and visit our farms, emphasizing the importance of supporting U.S. agriculture.

### Advocating for Ag Labor Reforms

No single policy priority was more critical for us than addressing ag labor issues, especially the H2A visa program. The current system is cumbersome, overcomplicated, and expensive, posing significant challenges for our industry. During our Congressional Meetings, we stressed the urgent need for reforms to make the H2A program more accessible and efficient. Our message was clear: a strong and reliable workforce is essential for the watermelon industry's continued success.

### Conclusion: Making Our Voices Heard

The Washington Conference provided a powerful platform for the NWA to advocate for the future of the watermelon industry. By bringing together a diverse coalition of leaders, engaging in meaningful discussions with policymakers, and hosting a memorable activation event, we ensured that our voices were heard. The insights and connections gained during this event will inform our advocacy efforts in the coming months, as we continue to fight for the policies that will help our industry thrive.

*We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the NWA members who participated in the Washington Conference. Your dedication and passion for the watermelon industry are what make our association strong. Together, we will continue to work towards a bright and prosperous future for all.*



# Texas Report

Hello everyone. We hope your season is going well and that the market and weather will be just what you need for a great year.

Amelia and I started off the spring with a trip to South Carolina and the Cooper River Bridge Run. It was the first time our association took part in the event and we enjoyed it immensely. The first day the girls took a carriage ride through Charleston to learn some of its history, then they visited the Charleston Marina Convention Center with Harris Teeter to pass out watermelon at the expo. The next day everyone was up very early to watch the runners and pass out watermelon to all the folks that wanted it. We are so thankful to Ann Bryant, SCWQ Kinlyn Hinson, Gracen Vaughn, and Blakely Johnston Atkinson who set up our stay at the beach, drove us to the different locations, and made our stay exceptionally fun.

Our next trip in April was to Houston, Texas for the Viva Fresh Expo. Amelia enjoyed getting to meet many people in the Texas industry and discuss what her job entails with the folks that wanted to know. Thank you to Mr. Dante Galeazzi and TIPA for putting on a great event.

Following the expo we attended Queen Training in Orlando, Florida. Amelia and all the state queens had a fun day at Disney World, then spent the next day in training learning about how to use social media to promote watermelon in the best way. They also learned about doing in-store promotions, educating the public on the health benefits and versatility of watermelon, and other aspects of what the job entails. Thank you to Stephanie Barlow, Juliemar Rosado, Katelyn Miller, Kel Gibson, and Kerri Wiggins for the excellent training.

Amelia's next trip was to the Rio Grande Valley for farm tours and two store promotions. She started with an HEB store promotion, then went on to visit Wiggins Farms, Beckwith Produce, Rio Fresh, Neuhaus & Sons, J.W. Farms and Prukop Farms. She visited Mr. Chip Berry, Mr. Gerry Lozano, and Mr. Eddie Vasquez at their packing sheds. She also met with the Borders family at their farm, and Mr. Greg Lothringer at his farm. On one afternoon she also attended an IFPA informational meeting about issues affecting farmers, then went on to a Sprouts store for a promotion. We would like to thank Gowan Seed, Seedway, Enza Zaden, and Nutrien Ag Solutions, J.R. Supply and Jesse Wiggins Farms for spending time with us at the farms and treating us to great meals.

In the coming months we look forward to going to Washington, D.C. for the IFPA Washington conference then taking part in more store promotions, festivals, and farm visits when possible.

May you all be blessed with health and a prosperous season.

Best regards,  
 Barbara Duda  
 TWA Coordinator  
 Bcduda62@gmail.com  
 Captions for June 2024 Vinline

TWA #1  
 Happy to have a horse drawn carriage ride.



Queen training begins.



Excited to help at the Cooper River Bridge Run!



Amelia and Marisol Elizondo at queen training



Watermelon anyone?



The girls with NWPB staff after a great day of training



Ready for the Viva Fresh Expo.



At Will Beckwith's farm



It was great to see our NWPB friends.



Having fun at Borders' farm with Kelton Borders



Amelia and Jared Leadbetter at the TWA booth



With the Wiggins family at their farm



Having a great time at Disney.



It was great seeing Mr. Eddie Vasquez and his son.

# South Carolina Report

WOW, what a busy year for Ms. Kinlyn! On March 22, we traveled to Myrtle Beach for a FFA camp cutting. It was a huge success and more of these are planned throughout the year.

April 4-7, found us in Charleston for the Cooper River Bridge run where we were joined by North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Gulf Coast, MarDel, Texas, and Nationals. A day touring downtown Charleston was enjoyed by all the girls before the hard work started. Friday was the expo where watermelon cups were served during our visit at the Harris Teeter sponsored event. Saturday was a very early morning where the girls served 160,000 pounds of watermelon in 18,000 cups to the nearly 40,000 runners and spectators. Many thanks to Harris Teeter and Mike Hildebrand for sponsoring the run and also for the tremendous help to the SC Watermelon Association. Of course, without the help of our sister associations, this event would not be possible.

Queen Training was held in Orlando, Florida, on April 18-21. A trip to Disney was undertaken by all the queens on Friday and a full day of training followed on Saturday. The NWPB did another fantastic job with the Saturday sessions and the queens learned a lot of valuable information for the year. Thanks to the NWPB for all you do.

May started with a trip to Sumter and the “Making It Grow Show” on May 7 (to be aired in June). Kinlyn talked about the many ways to use watermelon at an economical cost. She also presented a tasty watermelon salsa recipe for the viewers.

May 8, found us in Blythewood and the Blythewood Farmers Market. With the exception of a severe thunderstorm, the promotion was a very good one. Watermelon slices and promotional materials were passed out to the crowds.

May 14-15, started our school run with Mitchell Road Elementary in Greenville. May 16-17, finished the week with Sue Cleveland Elementary in Piedmont on May 16-17. Both schools had over 650 students. May 20-21, found us double booked with Plain Elementary School in Simpsonville, and Grove Elementary in Piedmont. We utilized our first runner-up, Adisyn Lyles, for the double booking.

Kinlyn taped a show to be shown on Memorial Day with “Your Carolina” in downtown Greenville on May 23. She presented a watermelon bruschetta for this segment. May 24 and 25, found us in Food Lion stores in Simpsonville and Greer. May finished up with our final school at Southside Christian on May 29 and another FFA Camp cutting in Myrtle Beach on May 30.

We are looking forward to more camps, in-store promotions, parades, festivals, and farm visits in the months ahead.

Wishing everyone a successful and safe season!

Warmest Watermelon Wishes,  
Ann Bryant  
SC Promotions Coordinator  
Abryant028@charter.net  
864-303-3995



Passing out melons at the Cooper River Bridge Run, Charleston, SC.



Queens attending the Expo in Charleston, SC



Working with Harris Teeter at Bridge Run.



Queen Training 2024, Orlando, FL.



Queen Training 2024, Orlando, FL.



Making It Grow, Sumter, SC



Blythewood Farmers Market, Blythewood, SC



Mitchell Road Elementary School, Greenville, SC



Mitchell Road Elementary School, Greenville, SC



Sue Cleveland Elementary School, Simpsonville, SC



Plain Elementary School, Piedmont, SC



Your Carolina, Greenville, SC



Your Carolina, Greenville, SC



Your Carolina, Greenville, SC



Food Lion, Simpsonville, SC



Food Lion, Simpsonville, SC

# North Carolina Report

Greetings from North Carolina,

North Carolina watermelon season is quickly approaching and we can hardly wait to enjoy our favorite homegrown watermelons. Before we jump into our season, Queen Haylee has been busy promoting our favorite melon through Ag day events, festivals, runs and more!

Our spring has been filled with Ag Day celebrations all across the state. Our favorite AG Fest is held at Mt. Olive University. Over 2,500 high school students visit the university to learn more about NC agriculture. Hundreds of tents line the university campus and students can learn through interactive games, a scavenger hunt and one on one conversations with industry professionals. It is a great day of learning for everyone involved. Queen Haylee also attended the Sampson County Ag Day. In our state, Sampson County grows the most acres of watermelons each year so Haylee was right at home at this celebration. Cleveland and North Moore high schools also invited Haylee to be a part of their FFA events this spring.

The Cooper River Bridge Run in Charleston, SC is always a great way to promote watermelon and we were so excited to be back this year. Thank you to the South Carolina Watermelon Association for allowing us help with the event. State Queen's had the opportunity to interact with runners at the pre-race expo and the Bridge Run where they shared watermelon and spoke about its great hydration power.

To ensure the new state Queens have a successful season, the National Watermelon Promotion Board hosted their annual queen training in Orlando, Florida. As always, Stephanie, Juliemar and Summer did an excellent job of helping the young ladies understand the industry and how to promote watermelon to any audience. Haylee most enjoyed learning how to effectively share her individual watermelon message.

In our ongoing partnership with Food Lion, Queen Haylee made a special appearance in the Food Lion Market Place at the Got to be NC Ag Festival. During the festival, Haylee meet attendees and helped them learn more about North Carolina watermelon and Food Lion.

This spring Haylee also enjoyed serving as a judge for the Deans Farm Market Strawberry Festival pageant and meeting tourists at two North Carolina Welcome Centers during National Tourism Week.

Queen Haylee visited Howell Farming Company to learn more about the early stages of watermelon production and to assist in planting a yellow flesh watermelon trial. Thanks to Howell Farming Company for hosting us. We are excited about all the promotional events to come and we hope to see you during the season.

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



Queen Haylee had a great time at the Cleveland FFA Ag Day



Howell Farming Company – Goldsboro, NC farm tour and trial planting



University of Mount Olive Ag Fest



Haylee met lots of watermelon consumers at the Got to be NC Ag Festival



Queen Haylee met lots of people at the University of Mount Olive Ag Fest



Queen Haylee loved assisting in the Food Lion Market Place at the Got to be NC Ag Festival



Assisting in the Jackson Farming Company Booth at the University of Mount Olive Ag Fest



Sharing fun samples in the Food Lion Market Place



Sharing watermelon samples from Harris Teeter at the Cooper River Bridge Runners Expo



The Food Lion Market Place showcased lots of local produce



Queen Haylee and South Carolina Queen Kinlyn getting ready to meet runners at the Cooper River Bridge Run



It was a fun day meeting consumers at the I-85 Welcome Center for National Tourism Day



Learning how to slice watermelons is an important part of the NWPB's Watermelon Queen Training



Enjoying Sampson County Ag Day



Learning all about watermelon from the best at NWPB's Watermelon Queen Training



Spreading the watermelon message at the Sampson County Ag Day

# Mar-Del Report

Spring and watermelon promotions have sprung! Queen Karli Abbott has been on the move this Spring. She started out her queen year by attending Queen training in Orlando, Florida. Karli and the other state queens had an awesome time learning all things watermelon! We can't thank the Watermelon Promotion Board enough for hosting a successful weekend for the girls. The weekend set Karli up for success as she participated in her first promotion, Maryland Agriculture Day! Karli educated consumers about the upcoming Maryland and Delaware watermelon season and provided them with material on the health benefits of choosing watermelon. Karli was also able to attend the Cooper River Bridge Run in South Carolina. The Queens served watermelon to all the runners who participated. It was a rewarding event and watermelon was enjoyed by all. Not only has Karli been busy with promotions but has taken the time to learn more about our local farmers and the beginning steps of growing watermelon. We are looking forward to upcoming farm tours and seeing more of our watermelon family throughout the Summer! Wishing everyone a safe and Mardelicious Summer!



The Queen's and Coordinators had a day of fun before Queen training started.



Queen Karli had a blast interacting with everyone at the University of Maryland Ag Day.



Queen Karli eager and ready to learn all things watermelon!



Queen Karli always smiling when watermelon is around.



Queen Karli won the social media post contest and was awarded a pair of watermelon socks from Kel Gibson.



Farm tours are some of our favorite events. Karli was able to visit Vincent farms and learn all about the seeding and germination process of watermelon.



Cooper River Bridge Runner ready! The Queens ready to serve the runners watermelon.



Vincent Farm Tour Day with Haley Keenen.



Queen Karli at the Harris Teeter Runner Expo.



Karli planting watermelons at DMC Farms.



Watermelon Fuels Athletes



Karli and Ms. Dawn Collins of DMC farms.

# Illiana Report

Greetings from Illiana!

Planting season is upon us, and we are excited to see what the growing season has in store for our delicious Illiana watermelons!

Queen Maya has been busy this spring, diving deep into our industry to promote Indiana and Illinois-grown watermelons with enthusiasm and expertise. She recently traveled to Orlando, Florida, to participate in Queen Training by the National Watermelon Promotion Board. It was a fantastic day filled with industry knowledge, consumer insights, and communication tips that will be the foundation of her success as our watermelon queen. A huge thank you to Stephanie Barlow and Juliemar Rosado for organizing such a comprehensive training program! Both Maya and our first runner-up, Kaitlyn, left the weekend inspired and ready to champion our industry.

Maya's first official promotion was at the Knox County Eclipse Festival in Vincennes, Indiana. She handed out watermelon slices to runners crossing the 5k finish line and engaged in various festival activities. It was a perfect opportunity to showcase our locally grown watermelons to festival attendees. Additionally, she participated in the Day on the Farm event organized by the Knox County School Corporation, where she met with over 400 third graders at the Southwest Purdue Ag Extension greenhouse. Maya taught them about all things watermelon, and each student took home their own watermelon plant. Some lucky classes even got to try on her "princess crown"! This was a fantastic way to get students excited about their community's agricultural industry.

Queen Maya also visited two fields with IWA President, Mr. Rob Beets, to learn more about Syngenta seed trials. At Freyco, she joined Chairman Mr. Cody Smith and his crew on the setter, and at Mouzin Brothers, she hand-planted trials and even drove the tractor—she's a natural! A big thank you to Freyco and Mouzin Brothers Farms for welcoming Maya to your fields.

In addition, Maya spent time in various elementary schools educating our youngest consumers about the watermelon industry. She read a delightful story to each classroom about Mel, the square watermelon who discovered that his uniqueness made him special and earned him top prize at the county fair. Students loved meeting a queen and were especially thrilled with her watermelon-themed apparel. She also passed out watermelon samples to high school students at the inaugural South Knox Golf Invitational, hosted by Knox County's own PGA golfer Adam Schenk. Thank you, Kelly Tyner, for organizing the event, and Dennis Mouzin, for donating watermelons to keep the players, coaches, and spectators happy and hydrated on that hot day.

Finally, Queen Maya traveled to Union, Kentucky, to promote Illiana-grown watermelons at Kroger's bourbon event with Mouzin Brothers Farms. Using her queen training skills, she helped customers pick out the best watermelons alongside fourth-generation farmer Brady Mouzin. Thank you, Mouzin Brothers, for including us in this fantastic event!

As we enter the Illiana watermelon season this summer, Queen Maya's activities will ramp up, and we're looking forward to a fantastic season ahead!

Warm regards,  
Lana Brothers  
(314) 724-6305  
iwapromocoordinator@gmail.com



Queen Training in sunny Orlando, Florida



Day on the Farm ready



Maya and Kaitlyn at Queen Training



Planting seeds of knowledge



Thank you NWPB team!



Sweet hugs from Maggie Tyner, daughter of Kelly Tyner



Our IWA solar eclipse glasses were total-ity awesome!



Fore!



Running for a slice of the sweet stuff



South Knox Golf Invitational



WE LOVE WATERMELON!



Kroger in-store promotion



What makes us different makes us special



Happy to help promote Mouzin Brothers Farms watermelons

# Gulf Coast Report

Happy Summer!

Queen Tori has hit the ground running this season. She is continually learning more about our industry so she can promote watermelons to the best of her ability in the Gulf Coast region and across the United States.

She traveled to Orlando, Florida with our 1st runner-up Maci Cross to participate in Queen Training hosted by the National Watermelon Promotion Board. A very special thank you to Stephanie Barlow and Julimar Rosado for hosting such a knowledgeable weekend for our queens.

A few of Queen Tori's promotions she has already completed this season are listed below:

- The South Carolina Watermelon Association hosted all the queens for the Cooper River Bridge Expo and 10K Run.
- Tori had her 2024 Queen Photoshoot. These photos are great promotional materials throughout her year.
- Queen Tori was asked to throw the first pitch at a D1 Troy Softball game. During the game she was able to be part of the entertainment and asked the crowd watermelon trivia.
- Tori has attended many grocery store visits including Commissaries and Piggly Wiggly's. Her success at the grocery stores have been extremely successful.

The remaining watermelon season will be filled with farm tours, farmer's markets, grocery stores, festivals, parades, plant visits, cooking demonstrations, congressional visits, and lots more! If you would like to book the 2024 Gulf Coast Watermelon Queen please email Sarah Jane at [gulfcoastwatermelonqueen@gmail.com](mailto:gulfcoastwatermelonqueen@gmail.com) to schedule a promotion.

Be sure to check out and keep up with our queen on the Gulf Coast Watermelon Association Facebook and Instagram pages to see all of our watermelon promotions. Queen Tori and I wish you the most successful watermelon season!

Many Blessings,  
Sarah Jane Levine

Gulf Coast Watermelon Association  
Promotion Coordinator  
(337) 348-4465  
[gulfcoastwatermelonqueen@gmail.com](mailto:gulfcoastwatermelonqueen@gmail.com)



Queen Tori Photoshoot



Queen Tori helping customers select a perfect watermelon.



A military veteran receiving a slice of watermelon.



Memorial Day Weekend Promotion with Mr. Scott Davis of Military Produce Group.



Queen Tori passing out watermelon to a race finisher at the Cooper River Bridge Run.



Two girls receiving watermelon stickers.



The National Watermelon Promotion Board with Queen Tori at Queen Training.



Queen Jules and Queen Tori with military personnel.



Produce Department of a Piggly Wiggly during Mother's Day Weekend.



Queen Tori throwing the first pitch at the Troy Softball Game.

# Georgia Report

Greetings from Georgia!

It's summertime in Georgia and we are excited watermelon is at our local retailers across the state and beyond. These times are sweeter than ever!

GWA Brand Ambassador promotions are in full swing, and our 2024 Ambassador, Maycey, has been hard at work! March was a busy month for Maycey as she visited schools across the state and shared in their farm day experiences. With over 3500 festival goers, watermelon was a hit at the 2024 Georgia Food + Wine Festival in Atlanta, Georgia. The National Watermelon Promotion Board hosted Ambassador Media Training in Orlando, Florida, where all the state Queens and the National Queen participated in the communications skills workshop, social media posting tips and Tik Tok demonstration practices. The ambassadors teamed up to show their creative skills in a Tik Tok challenge! Thank you to Ross Chastain and Melon 1 for inviting Maycey to join his team at the Wright Brand 250 Truck Race at N. Wilkesboro Speedway May 18, 2024. Ross, Maycey, and GWA gained a lot of media coverage and NASCAR fans, along with the pit crews, enjoyed fresh slices of watermelon! We always love handing out watermelon at athletic events and that's why we were excited to return to the Cooper River Bridge Run in Charleston SC. Maycey and her fellow state ambassadors handed out fresh cut watermelon at the finish line. Thank you to Harris Teeter and the SC Department of Agriculture for supplying the watermelon! Thanks also to Ms. Ann Bryant for all her hard work in organizing this promotion!

Maycey enjoyed touring International Paper at their Griffin location. Thank you to Mitch Mitchell for arranging this tour so that Maycey could learn about the production process for watermelon bins.

In early June, Maycey joined other state association ambassadors at the IFPA Conference in Washington DC.

The GWA would like to thank Melon 1, Leger and Son, and Jim Rash Inc. for their support of the 2024 brand ambassador promotional program! Be sure to follow Maycey on Instagram @gawatermelonambassador!

Would you like to schedule a date for the Georgia Watermelon Brand Ambassador to visit your location? Please call Dawn Cheplick at 706-845-8575 or dcheplick@asginfo.net to schedule a visit.



Rehydrating the runners is vital! #cooperriverbridgerun



Festival attendees love a little watermelon paired with their wine.



Thank you International Paper for touring Maycey at your operations in Griffin, GA.



NWPB Ambassador Training



Wright Brand 250 Truck Race with Ross Chastain



Media shot at the N. Wilkesboro NC racetrack just before Ross takes off in the #45 truck!



Educating the scholars on the nutritional benefits of eating watermelon!



Training with the NWPB and NWA Queen Jules in Orlando.



# Florida Report

Welcome to Sunshine Shine State of Florida!

We have had a lot of amazing and exciting and wonderful new promotion these past few months with our Florida Watermelon Queen Promotions.

Starting out the first of April doing some video tapings with Chef Justin in the kitchen, then Queen Elanie and I were headed to Charleston, South Carolina for the 47 Annual Cooper Bridge Run where we handed out over 165,000 pounds 18,000 cups of watermelons to all the runners and spectators along with Emcee for the Desoto Watermelon Pageant on that Sunday, then the next week in the field visiting with our south Florida Watermelons farmers and learning how the process from the watermelon field to visiting many packing sheds then ended with the process of planting a watermelon seed to a watermelon plant at Labelle Plant World, from there the weekend ended a day at University of Florida with Orange/Blue Spring Football game, then we were on our way to Orlando the weekend of the 20th for the National Watermelon Queen Training being put on by the National Watermelon Promotion Board, our last weekend of April ended at the USA Beach Championship 10K Run in Cocoa Beach with Fresh from Florida.

Starting our month out in May with many school promotions, Cares Dinner in Live Oak, attending the Florida Children Museum 2nd annual Watermelon Festival, videotaping with Nascar Driver Ross Chastain and Chef Justin with Fresh from Florida, then a field day with Enza Zaden with their watermelon trials, ended our Mother's Day weekend at the Winner Circle with the #45 Truck Driver Ross Chastain smashing the watermelon at "Click it Don't Risk it 200" Nascar Craftsman Truck Race" in Darlington, South Carolina, our month ended with Memorial Day Weekend promoting Florida Watermelon at our local Publix grocery stores throughout the State of Florida! Thank you, Publix.

The months of April and May we also did a lot of sporting events at the University of Florida from men's and woman basketball games, men's baseball games, gymnastics and women's softball games. A little note the woman's softball team is traveling to Oklahoma City for the 2024 College World Series.

As you can see our months of April and May were very busy. We would like to thank our many sponsors for making all of this happen these past few months, with out you it wouldn't have been possible for us to promote something we all love Florida Watermelons. A special thank you to our Florida Watermelon farmers for donating watermelons for these events that everyone enjoyed.

Be sure to follow us with our social media on our Florida Watermelon Facebook and Instagram to see our events.

Our 2024 Florida Watermelon Queen Elanie Mason is doing a wonderful job for us this year as she is continuing with graduate school majoring in agriculture education and communication at the University of Florida this year.

Remember to pick up your Fresh from Florida Watermelons at your local grocery stores this summer.

Hope everyone has a safe, and prosperous Watermelon Season!

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



FWA #1 – being in the Kitchen with Fresh from Florida Chef Justin, from right to left FWA Executive Council Director Laura Land, Vice-President Carrie Thomas, Promotions Coordinator Debra Harrison and our 2024 Florida Watermelon Queen Elanie Mason.



A runner enjoying a slice of "Fresh from Florida Watermelon" donated by Gibson Produce after finishing the USA Beach Championship Race. Thank you, Bob & Rob Gibson.



At the "Cooper River Bridge Run" in Charleston, South Carolina.



Gas up and watch our Florida Watermelon Association Gas Stations Promo with Queen Elanie throughout the state of Florida till the end of June.



Thank Paul Sawyer - Blue Marlin Ag Services for always being there to take us around for many years to help out with our South Florida Farm Tours. Big thank you for lunch that day.



Queen Elanie enjoyed visiting with Stephanie Barlow with NWPB at the Florida Children Museum Watermelon Festival held in Lakeland.



Queen Elanie visiting with Thomas Howard at Labelle Plant World.



Queen Elanie promoting Fresh from Florida Watermelons at our local groceries of Publix. Thank you, Publix!!



at the Spring Orange/Blue Gator Football game the children enjoying getting a J-Slice Coloring book and a slice of Fresh from Florida Watermelon.



A wonderful day in the field learning about watermelon trials with the staff of Enza Zaden. Thank you, Rod Jorgensen and the staff, for inviting us.



Queen Elanie chatting with the Gator Sports Radio Crew at the University of Florida Baseball game about Florida Watermelons.



A very special Mother's Day being at the Winner Circle in Darlington with #45 Ross Chastain and Queen Elanie.



J- SLICE helping out and attending all of our sporting events at the University of Florida. Everyone enjoyed meeting and taking pictures with J-Slice.



A night to remember "Thank you to the Florida Watermelon Association" for sponsoring the "Click it Don't Risk it 200" Nascar Truck Race.



Thank you the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) for always hosting an awesome event for our queens every year.



at Lafayette County Ag-Ventures Day educating 4th graders about Florida Watermelons.

# Monte

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