

# 2011 FSHS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

## RICHARD V. TYSON



**Richard V. Tyson, FSHS President, 2011**

I would like to welcome everyone to the 124th Annual Meeting of the Florida State Horticultural Society. It has been an honor to serve as your president the last year and work with an outstanding group of dedicated volunteers who put on the annual meeting and make the society work throughout the year! I would like to especially thank the Chairman of the Board, Jeff Brecht; the leader of our long range planning group and the annual meeting Program Coordinator, Eric Simonne; and our Secretary/Treasurer, Chris Oswalt, for their patience and support answering the many operational questions I posed to them during the year. Another individual who devoted a tremendous amount of time to the publication of our proceedings was Jan Narciso, as Editor-in-Chief, and of course our marketing/website coordinator, Mark Ritenour. There were over 50 other individuals who volunteered in some capacity this past year as sectional vice presidents, paper

reviewers, awards committee judges, and local arrangements, among other duties ... we all can't do everything but we can all do something to make this society the premier place that we can connect with people who love Florida horticulture. On behalf of the society I would like to thank all of you.

I have very good news for the society today. We are very financially solvent with sufficient money in reserves and our membership has leveled off to around 250 members on average for the past 5 years. So we have some stability moving forward. Thanks to an anonymous gift and the society's matching funds, we have been able to support more student scholarships to attend the meeting. In addition, we increased the award amounts for students participating in the best paper and oral presentation contests. Many of us had our first exposure to professional associations by presenting as students years ago and I can say that this tradition continues and our outreach to students is strong.

This past year we had a major effort to develop a long range planning team and about 20 members met for several days to identify and prioritize the current and future directions of the society. Several by-laws changes will be voted on at tomorrow's

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business meeting that grew out of, in part, this long range planning effort. In addition, before embarking on other new directions for the society, we felt it would be prudent to survey the members and get a sense of the level of satisfaction members have with the general direction the society is moving in. It would be counter-productive to make major changes unless there is strong support among members to do so. How many people remember the book titled *Who Moved My Cheese?* It describes ways to positively deal with change. But if the cheese has not moved, then we don't want to redecorate the room. You will be receiving a written survey at the end of the general session. Please fill that out and return it to the registration desk before close of the meeting tomorrow and help us decide if the cheese has been moved or not.

Let me first discuss the by-laws changes since members will be voting up or down on those tomorrow. The first change is an addition to the membership categories. The board would like to make a significant effort to keep retiring members engaged in the activities of the society by establishing a Life Members category. Current members who are age 65 or older may choose to pay a one-time membership fee to become life members and will not be required to pay membership fees again. They will have all privileges of membership including access to the proceedings and newsletters. Of course, they will still have to pay to come to the annual meeting as all other membership categories do. The Society membership has been stable over the last five years, averaging around 250 active members, but we are beginning to lose touch with many of our retired members, and the addition of a Life Members category will help prevent that.

I am a member of several other associations as many of you are. As we look around for ways to improve FSHS we can draw from the best that these other societies are offering. The Florida Association of County Agricultural Agents, for example, maintains about 150 active members annually but has over 90 retired Life Members, with many coming to their annual meetings. There is a Life Members' luncheon where members who have passed away in the previous year are honored. This would be a wonderful potential tradition to start here at FSHS, for Life and Honorary Members, as their numbers increase, and I noticed that it was "lunch on your own" for Monday's schedule and this Life Members memorial lunch could fit that time slot!

The second by-laws change is to start a new educational breakout section. This was done in anticipation that the former members of

the Soil & Crop Science Society would want to keep meeting as members of the Florida State Horticultural Society. If this does not occur then having a separate section for special topics of interest to the society or a place for other groups to meet with us is still reason enough, I believe, to plan on having the space available at our annual meetings. Having more workshops geared toward growers, on a hot topic of practical importance, was one of the recommendations of the long range planning group. There will be time for group discussion about these changes at the business meeting tomorrow, but I would encourage everyone to vote "yes" on the upcoming board-recommended by-laws changes.

Another area that the long range planning group studied were ways in which members could more effectively network and communicate among themselves during the year. We have an outstanding website and newsletter but that is about it in terms of communicating with members. There are many events that occur throughout the year and many professional problems members have that other members could help solve, given the opportunity. Should we get a blog, should we be on Facebook or tweeting? Member communication was a big problem for me as I formed committees to conduct the work of the society during the year. I only had email addresses for about half of the membership. One of the survey questions will address this issue.

FSHS has played an important role in the development of horticulture in Florida over the years and there is no reason why this society can't continue to do that into the future. All of our published annual proceedings are available on the world-wide-web going back into the 1800s with the exception of about 3 years, which we are still trying to get up on the internet. Publishing in FSHS now gives members the potential for worldwide recognition in your field thanks to Mark Ritenour and the Citrus Research Station in Lake Alfred. Do you want to know how plasticulture got started 40 years ago in Florida? Just Google search FSHS Plasticulture and you will find a half dozen individual papers on the subject. Do you want to know how the recommendations were developed for tomato production? Google FSHS Tomatoes. Do you want more information on that topic then, Google FSHS Tomatoes Locascio, and more papers on the subject will pop up. Florida Citrus varieties in the 1930s ... all searchable on the web. Quite an accomplishment. We want to keep the tradition alive and the information coming into the 21st century. Thank you for attending and supporting the Florida State Horticultural Society!